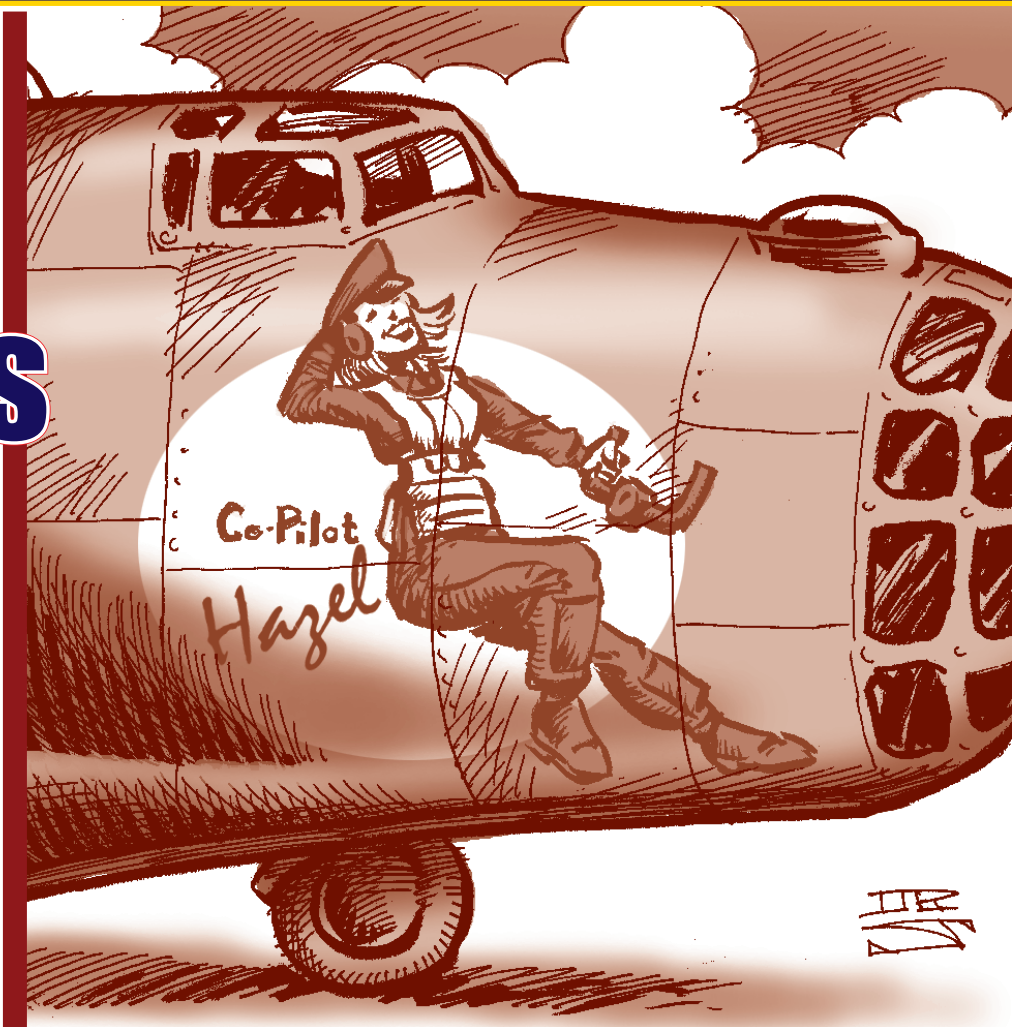


Bomber Tales

My B-24 Experience

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I think maybe the only thing interesting about my flying B-24 Liberators during WWII, is that I was a female pilot. I don't think there are too many of them in the world, so I will write about it.

After graduation from Avenger Field Sweetwater, Texas in May 1944, as a WASP (Womens Airforce Service Pilot) I was assigned to the Air Transport Command in Romulus, Mich., hoping to become a fighter (pursuit) pilot. What I got were B-24's. First we checked out in UC 78's and Norduyn Norseman's and after one flight around the field in the nose of a 24, I went directly to the co-pilot seat on ferry trips. We picked up the 24's from the factory at Willow Run. I understand they were putting out one 24 every hour, and there were usually no test or other flights before we got them. Hence, we were actually production test pilots, though I never thought of us as such until long after the war when I read about this. I remember often the autopilot did not work.

My first trip was the first pilot's 2nd trip, and he was so nervous he actually shook. Here he gets a totally inexperienced WASP as co-pilot. If it weren't for the flight engineer, I don't think we would have gotten to our destination. Actually we started to land at the wrong base, when the engineer called our attention to it. From there, we picked up other 24's to deliver to other bases, and by the time we finished, we knew what we were doing.

I had a different left seat pilot each time, so had to adjust to

their expectations of me. But usually as soon as we got to altitude and synchronized our engines, he and the engineer would go back somewhere and play cards. I would slide over to the left seat and fly the plane to the destination. This made me feel pretty proud – all that horsepower when I had been flying Cubs only a short time before. It was also amusing to see men's faces when we would land at a base and I'd come out of that big plane.

One thing that made my flying 24's unique, is that when they were shipped to Europe to bomb Germany, underneath were my future husband and in-laws, who were German nationals during the War. The men all fought on the Eastern front, as far as I know, and one was captured and sent to Siberia. My husband was in Hitler Youth, and he said he would lie in bed wondering, "Why are they doing this to me? I'm just an innocent kid". Little did he know the plane might have been delivered by his future wife. I heard about this from time to time. My sister in law's father, a Luftwaffe fighter pilot, was shot down and killed by an American fighter pilot. Such is war. It seemed strange at first to visit the former "enemy", but that didn't last long. However, visiting my sister in law on the North sea (Husum) which was always foggy, I would think of those bombers and the fog on those raids which I had heard so much about during the war.