



Sentinel Photo/JASON SILVEY

UP AND AWAY — Crowds gather to look at the B-17 'Sentimental Journey,' and maybe take a ride, at a special three-day event at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. See 'Honoring our Veterans 2008 USA Tour' picture pages on Page 1C of today's Sentinel.

B-17 arrives at Mt. Vernon Airport

Airport hosts event honoring veterans through aviation

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MT. VERNON — Hundreds flocked this weekend to get a glimpse of a relic of World War II and to pay homage to the veterans of the "greatest generation" at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport and the "Honoring Our Veterans 2008 USA Tour."

The facility hosted a three-day event that welcomed the Arizona Wing Commemorative Air Force and

its Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress to the runways.

According to the organization, the AWCAF is dedicated to preserving "a complete collection of combat aircraft which were flown by all military services of the United States in World War II" and to "provide museum buildings for permanent protection and display of these aircraft as a tribute to the thousands of men and women who built, serviced and flew them."

Before the aircraft had even landed Friday, a crowd of enthusiastic adults and children had gathered to watch the silver bird known as "Sentimental Journey" arrive in the King City.

Donated to the AWCAF in the late

1970s, the plane was revitalized and repainted to the colors flown in World War II. Rechristened as "Sentimental Journey," the aircraft was adorned with the image of famous '40s beauty Betty Grable in her most famous pin-up pose.

All weekend, the crew of the plane took people on flights above the city, and in between trips observers could take an up-close look at the aircraft and pay homage to the men and women who fought for freedom.

For bomber veteran Bob Bartle and his wife Virginia of Pinckneyville, it was a trip down memory lane.

Virginia said, "He flew B-29's," noting the differences between that aircraft and "Sentimental Journey."

Wearing a cap with military pins and the words "World War II Veteran," Bartle added, "In the Korean War, more recently."

Both agreed that it was an honor to see such a tribute to World War II veterans.

Airport Manager said previously of the event, "The B-17 was one of the most significant bombers during World War II. To me personally, this is about our World War II veterans ... It's important that we honor these guys and to bring out this plane is a great opportunity to listen to the stories of the guys that were in them."

The event continues today beginning at 10 a.m. at the airport.
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