

Carl H. Moore. *Flying the B-26 Marauder over Europe: Memoir of a World War II Navigator.* Second edition. Jefferson: McFarland, 2013. 264 pp. \$35.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-7864-7357-1.



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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

Carl H. Moore's *Flying the B-26 Marauder over Europe: Memoir of a World War II Navigator* is a veteran's recollection of his "affair with the much maligned and criticized" Martin B-26 Marauder. Moore begins the work by conveying that the book is not a story about the aircraft, nor about the aircraft's role in World War II; it is mainly a story about him, at the age of twenty-four, being "caught up in the military draft" and seeking "to make the most of the experience" (p. 1). To set the stage, in the first few chapters, Moore briefly describes the history of the Marauder, from its development to its role in the warfront, while glossing over some significant milestones of this important medium bomber in the United States Army Air Forces inventory.

The Marauder began its service on March 11, 1939, with Circular Proposal No. 39-640, as one of the first in a series of airplanes to be contracted under a procurement program called "off the shelf procurement" by the army air forces. This process was a deviation from the past, as firms provided test aircraft for periods of experimenta-

tion but now production contracts were awarded based on drawing board plans. Eighty-six firms were invited under the circular to submit plans for an improved design of a twin-engined bombardment plane, with only seven bids received.[1]

Of the seven bids received, only four met the requirements demanded in the circular. The four were then listed accordingly to their standings upon the best acceptable design, with Glenn L. Martin Company receiving 813.6 points for its Model No. 179; North American Aviation, Incorporated, receiving 673.6 points for its Model NA-62 (also purchased under the same circular and designated the B-25 Mitchell, gaining fame on April 18, 1942, for the Doolittle Raid); Douglas Aircraft Company with 610.3 points for its Model B-23; and Stearman Aircraft with 442.7 points for its Model P-23. In the end, the Materiel Division split the award between the top two manufacturers in the best interest of the government, "since it ensures maintenance of war time production capacity of two manufacturers for this particular type of airplane" (p. 6). Brigadier General George Brett, chief

of Materiel Division, recommended the purchase of 201 planes from the Glenn L. Martin Company and 184 from North American Aviation—thus the beginnings of both the Marauder and the Mitchell. [2]

As Moore alludes to in his opening chapters, the Marauder was a good, sturdy, fast, and “marvelous fighting machine,” but it “didn’t forgive mistakes and the young pilots coming out of flight school had little experience with 130 mph landing speeds and single engine operation of multiengine aircraft” (p. 11). Additionally, mechanics were in short supply or were unfamiliar with the plane, leading to a greater number of training accidents, thereby throwing fear into men assigned duty in the Marauder. An investigation into these accidents revealed that the most likely cause was a failure of personnel to become familiar with the operating characteristics, requirements of the system, and technical manuals.[3]

Moore states that by the end of 1943, the Marauder had been withdrawn from the Pacific theater and concentrated in the European theater to help ground troops defeat Field Marshall Erwin Rommel in North Africa. Major General Jimmy Doolittle wrote to Lieutenant General Henry “Hap” Arnold on May 24, 1943, stating that the B-26’s accuracy of bombing was worse than and their losses per sortie were greater than with heavy bombardment aircraft. Doolittle envisioned a future force composed of heavy bombers like the Boeing B-29 Superfortress, medium bombers like the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and Consolidated B-24 Liberator, and light bombers of the Douglas A-26 Invader type along with plenty of escort fighters. The following month, in light of Doolittle’s recommendations, Arnold called for a committee to consider the elimination of the Marauder. The committee recommended two changes: one, to reduce the Martin-Baltimore factory production of the B-26 to roughly 150 planes per month and to close out production as rapidly as possible in order for the Mitchell to be put into

production at that plant; and, second, to close out production of the B-26 at the Martin-Nebraska factory as rapidly as possible to get the Superfortress into production at that plant. However, by the first of the year, Arnold had reversed his decision and authorized an additional 450 Marauders to be produced at the Martin-Baltimore facility in order to ensure continuity at the facility through 1944. By April of 1944, the two Martin plants had delivered 3,725 Marauders to the army air forces.[4]

The core of *Flying the B-26 Marauder over Europe* is Moore’s recollection of his missions over Europe during the fight against the Nazis, giving the reader a brief glimpse into what it felt like to be over the skies of war-torn Europe. He describes the crews’ first combat mission on March 19, 1944, east of St. Omer, France, as a “patchwork pattern of fields, the small villages, and the bright sunshine,” a very different experience from the troops who were engaged in the “struggle for survival” below the Marauder. Once the crew returned to base, Moore felt that “if this is combat, I believe I can take it” (p. 71). However, in later missions, he notes, these feelings were soon proven different.

Flying the B-26 Marauder over Europe is a memoir of a World War II participant from a generation that we are slowly losing. Recollections such as Moore’s allow us to grasp what it felt like to be in the skies above war-torn Europe going against enemy fighters and targets. Given that few memoirs have been published of crew members, Moore’s work could have benefited from more details about the actual missions as well as his time spent in training.

Notes

[1]. Historical Office, *Case History of the B-26 Airplane Project*, Materiel Command, Wright Field, February 22, 1945, 2, http://www.b26.com/page/case_history_of_b-26_airplane_project.htm.

[2]. Ibid.; and Brigadier General George Brett to Major General H. H. Arnold, “Circular Proposal

39-640: Two-engine Bombardment Airplanes,”
Army and Navy Journal 74 (July 15, 1939): 704.

[3]. Historical Office, *Case History*, 3.

[4]. John O. Moench, *Marauder Men: An Account of the Martin B-26 Marauder* (Tucson, AZ: Malia Enterprises, 1999), 40; and Historical Office, *Case History*, 5-6.

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