

# WWII veteran returns to the air after 35 B-17 missions



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**CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (KCRG-TV9)** - Thursday, Marvin Ford, a man originally from Cedar County, was about to do something he hadn't since WWII-- get on board a B-17 bomber.



Marvin Ford (left) sits in front of a restored B-17 bomber. (Forrest Saunders/KCRG)

"I've been on quite a few of them," said the Air Corps veteran as he approached the plane parked on the tarmac of the Eastern Iowa Airport.

Ford, a modest man, often of few words, wasn't kidding. Since beginning his military service in 1942, Ford completed 35 missions as a gunner in the top turret of the "flying fortress."

Ford was often over Germany, fighting off German planes while bombing Nazi facilities. Just surviving was an impressive feat. Early in the war, B-17 losses were as high as 25% each mission.

"When you knew you had to do that many missions, you just thought you'd never make it anyway," said Ford. "You just lived that way, live from day to day."

As bleak as that sounds, Ford was anxious to get flying again.

In the air his eyes were full. The familiar sound of the engines buzzing in his ears.

Ford said it brought back good and bad memories. He recalled a time when his aircraft had lost two engines and started falling behind his squad.

"We was (sic) alone," said Ford. "A German pilot came up beside us and seen (sic) our situation. He just waved and took off. He could have shot us down if he wanted."

Stories like Ford's help keep the Experimental Aircraft Association's restored B-17 flying. Though the EAA offers anyone the chance to experience a flight on the aircraft as it travels across the country, officials said veterans who once flew in B-17s have a special significance to the group.

"It's amazing what they did under the circumstances they had," said Mike Wiedeman with the EAA. "I just enjoy giving something back."

Ford certainly felt he recovered something. While the trip had its painful reminders of the past, he was happy for the opportunity.

"Good experience," said Ford with a chuckle. "Noisy, like it always was."

As you'd expect, Ford had just a few words about the flight, in an aircraft, that he said, saved his life many times over.

For B-17 tickets, [click here](#).



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