

# MEMPHIS BELLE

## Restored WWII bomber makes public debut

By MITCH STACY  
Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — Robert K. Morgan Jr.’s voice wavered with emotion when he talked about seeing the Memphis Belle all put together for the first time in 50 years.

His father, Robert Sr., had flown the legendary B-17F on 25 perilous bombing missions in World War II and worked the rest of his life to make sure the airplane was preserved.

The famed “Flying Fortress,” looking better than new, was put on public display Thursday morning after a restoration project that took more than a dozen years and 55,000 hours of labor at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.

“Dad would be so proud,” said the 72-year-old Morgan, who lives in San Francisco. “I wish he were here. It means everything to me and my family. He’s here in spirit.”

Morgan traveled to Ohio along with families of the other Memphis Belle crew for a private unveiling of the plane Wednesday night and the public opening of the exhibit Thursday at the sprawling museum near Dayton.

The debut came on the 75th anniversary of the Belle’s 25th and final combat mission of the war. Soon after the museum opened at 9 a.m., hundreds of people gathered around the exhibit trying to get the best angle of the famous plane for cellphone photos.

The Memphis Belle was trucked to the museum in corroded pieces in 2005 after efforts to restore it in Memphis ran out of money and steam. It had been displayed outdoors in its namesake city for decades after the war and was in bad shape due to weather and vandalism.

“I promised him when he was dying 14 years ago that I would do anything I could to keep the plane alive,” Morgan said. “He knew before he passed that the plane was going to come to the museum, he knew that we couldn’t keep it in Memphis. And he knew it would be preserved here, he knew it would be restored here. He was extremely glad that it would be here.”

The Memphis Belle was feted as the first B-17 to complete 25 missions and return to the U.S. at a time when most crews in the strategic daylight bombing campaign were lucky to make it to a dozen.

The Belle wasn’t the first B-17 to make the requisite 25 missions, it just happened to be the one that became famous, thanks to newspaper reporters and Hollywood director William Wyler, who decided to build a documentary around the last mission.

A wildly successful 32-city war bond tour around America in the summer of 1943 made national celebrities out of the airplane and crew. Wyler’s 1944 documentary cemented the legacy, and a 1990 movie introduced it to a new generation.

The Belle, with the leggy, swimsuit-clad pinup girl freshly repainted on both sides of the nose, is displayed suspended above the museum floor as if in mid-flight, with bomb-bay doors wide open.

James P. Verinis, 48, came from South Kingstown, Rhode Island, to see the Belle. His father, Capt. James A. Verinis, flew missions on it as co-pilot and later commanded his own B-17.

“I look at it,” Verinis said, “and I wonder if it ever looked this beautiful.”



Photos by AP Photo/John Minchillo

**Veterans gather for a private viewing of the Memphis Belle, a Boeing B-17 “Flying Fortress,” at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, Wednesday in Dayton, Ohio. The World War II bomber Memphis Belle is set to go on display for the first time since getting a yearslong restoration at the museum. The B-17 “Flying Fortress” was introduced Thursday morning as the anchor of an extensive exhibit in the Dayton-area museum.**



**United States Air Force (Ret.) Col. Howard Hunt, center, meets with Memphis Belle fans during the private viewing of the Boeing B-17 “Flying Fortress” at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in Dayton, Ohio.**

### AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN

## Roast chicken and vegetables together without a soggy mess

It’s easy to understand the appeal of preparing chicken parts and root vegetables together on one sheet pan, but without the right technique, you are apt to wind up with unevenly cooked meat and greasy, soggy vegetables.

For a pan packed with well-browned, herb-flecked chicken and vegetables that roasted at the same rate, we arranged our ingredients on a sheet pan with their cooking times in mind. After tossing the root vegetables with fresh thyme and rosemary, we arranged halved Brussels sprouts in the center of the pan and the denser items — chunky pieces of red potatoes and carrots and halved shallots — around the edges.

Likewise, to ensure that the chicken breasts stayed

moist while the meatier thighs and drumsticks cooked through, we placed the breasts in the center of the pan atop the sprouts and the thighs and drumsticks around the perimeter where they would take on (and benefit from) more direct contact with the oven’s intense heat.

Brushing the parts with herb butter promised added richness and browning. Roasted together in a hot oven, the chicken parts and vegetables emerged browned and perfectly cooked in about 35 minutes. Use Brussels sprouts no bigger than golf balls, as larger ones are often tough and woody. If using kosher chicken, do not brine. If brining the chicken, do not season with salt.

### ONE-PAN ROASTED CHICKEN WITH ROOT VEGETABLES

- Servings:** 4
- Start to finish:** 1 hour and 15 minutes
- 12 ounces Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
  - 12 ounces red potatoes, unpeeled, cut into 1-inch pieces
  - 8 ounces shallots, peeled and halved
  - 4 carrots, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces, thick ends halved lengthwise
  - 6 garlic cloves, peeled
  - 4 teaspoons minced fresh thyme
  - 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
  - 2 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary
  - 1 teaspoon sugar
  - Salt and pepper
  - 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
  - 3 1/2 pounds bone-in chicken pieces (2 split breasts cut in half, 2 drumsticks, and 2 thighs), trimmed
- Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 475 F. Toss Brussels sprouts, potatoes, shallots, carrots, garlic, 2 teaspoons thyme, oil, 1 teaspoon rosemary, sugar, 3/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper together in bowl. Combine butter, remaining 2 teaspoons thyme, remaining 1 teaspoon rosemary, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/8 teaspoon pepper in second bowl; set aside.
- Pat chicken dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Place vegetables in single layer on rimmed baking sheet, arranging Brussels sprouts in center. Place chicken, skin side up, on top of vegetables, arranging breast pieces in center and leg and thigh pieces around perimeter of sheet.
- Brush chicken with herb butter and roast until breasts



Joe Keller/America's Test Kitchen via AP

register 160 F and thighs/drumsticks register 175 F, 35 to 40 minutes, rotating sheet halfway through roasting. Transfer chicken to serving platter and let rest for 10 minutes. Toss vegetables in pan juices and transfer to platter with chicken. Serve.