



Michigan men hope to recover WWII bomber southeast of Fairbanks

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Two Michigan men are planning to visit Fairbanks this week to scope out what they need to do to recover the remains of a World War II-era B-25 that is southeast of Fairbanks on a Tanana River sandbar.

The plane, which was turned into a fire retardant bomber, crash landed in 1969 and has been there ever since. The pilot survived the crash, but the airplane was never recovered. The wreck has been scavenged, but the center section remains in place.

The two men from Brighton, Mich., Patrick Mihalek of Legend Of Aces Aviation and Todd Trainor from the Aeronca Aircraft History Museum, plan to go out to the site this weekend.

The plane is dubbed "Sandbar Mitchell" because it is a B-25 Mitchell on a sandbar.

Trainor said they acquired rights to the wreckage from the descendants of the owner and are forming the Warbirds Of Glory Museum to rebuild a B-25, using the remains of this plane and others.

The Air Force owned the plane until 1959 and it was reconfigured into a fire retardant bomber, owned by Edgar Thorsrud.

Trainor said pilot Herm Gallaher had both engines fail on June 27, 1969 after he took off from Fairbanks International Airport with a load of fire retardant.

"Instead of landing in the river or in the forest he landed gear up on a small sandbar in the middle of the Tanana River. He walked away, but the right wing was damaged and the forward fuselage was wrinkled," Trainor wrote.

The engines, props and wheels were removed right away and over the past 44 years many other parts have been scavenged, but "the heart and soul of Sandbar Mitchell, the valuable center section, still remains on the sandbar today."

Trainor said they plan to return to Fairbanks in June with a crew of volunteers. They plan to move the parts by sled or to find someone who can airlift the fuselage to Fairbanks before trucking it to Michigan. They have acquired another B-25 and hope to get a complete one reconstructed some day.

They are seeking funding and donations to help rescue and restore the plane. More information and donation buttons are available at www.sandbarmitchell.org or visit them at www.facebook.com/sandbarmitchell.