Sandbar Mitchell Recovery Planned
by Patrick Mihalek

Patrick Mihalek of Legend Of Aces Aviation and Todd Trainor from the Aeronca Aircraft History Museum, both from Brighton Michigan, are planning to rescue North American B-25J Mitchell Serial No. 44-30733 (civilian registry N9088Z) from her crash site in Alaska. For years it has been nicknamed Sandbar Mitchell because it crashed on a sandbar in the Tanana River near Fairbanks in 1969, where she still rests. Mihalek and Trainor are forming a nonprofit, Warbirds Of Glory Museum, with the express goal of rescuing her from further pillage and to put her into the public trust so she may continue to serve future generations.

After completing her duties with the USAAF from 1944 to 1959, Sandbar Mitchell continued to serve her country as a fire-suppression bomber, identified as Tanker #8. Owned by Edgar Thorsrud, she was one of several B-25s used in Alaska in the late 1960s to help fight forest fires. On June 27, 1969, she was called into duty to help fight the Manley Hot Springs fires. Shortly after takeoff she experienced double-engine failure. Herm Gallaher had very few options, so 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.

After removing her engines, propellers and wheels, she was abandoned. Throughout the next 44 years many people visited Sandbar Mitchell. Unfortunately, many have taken souvenirs and sadly cut off pieces from her outer wings, as well as her forward

and aft sections. Fortunately the heart and soul of Sandbar Mitchell, the valuable center section, remains on the sandbar today.

The recovery efforts of Sandbar Mitchell will occur in June 2013. Using parts from other salvaged B-25s and scrounging for other missing parts, Mihalek and Trainor hope to rebuild Sandbar Mitchell to soar again. More information and donation buttons are available at *www.sandbarmitchell.org* or at *www.facebook.com/sandbarmitchell*. ✈