

IN MEMORY OF #11 CHEROKEE

By

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Our crew made the same flight home as hundreds of other B-24 crews of the 15th Air Force. Our flight was just a bit different.

Our crew was assigned to fly home in #11 Cherokee. Old Cherokee was the most recognizable B-24 in the 764th and was referred to as "Old Cherokee" by all of the air crews. I don't know why she sported a desert tan paint job complete with a nose art picture of an Indian maiden. We thought she may have come over to Italy through North Africa when the Fifteenth Air Force took up bases in southern Italy. The old girl was a survivor and always brought her crews back on many missions and always returned ready to fly another day.

After returning to the US, I was assigned to a B-29 training group based at Alamogordo, New Mexico. The base was next to the White Sands Proving ground and was receiving all kinds of captured German rockets and other weapons. It was an interesting experience.

I was discharged from the Air Force on the west coast in late December 1945. A group of us started to drive back to the East and Midwest. Our route took us through Kingman, Arizona, Storage Depot 41 of the War Assets Corporation. It was the world's greatest concentration of aircraft. The storage area covered 5 square miles. This was the last stop for #11, Cherokee, and thousands of other planes returning from overseas. At one time there were 2,567 B-24 Liberators, 1,832 Flying Fortresses, 478 P-38 Lightning's, 200 P-38 photo planes, 141 B-25 Mitchell medium bombers, hundreds of P-47 Thunderbolts, P-40s, A-26s, A-27s and B-29s all waiting to be scrapped. All of those beautiful planes and only a few were saved for museums and some private collectors. Air Force records show that the planes were purchased by a salvage firm for \$2,780.00. It is rumored that the fuel drained from those planes was sold for more than the purchase price of the planes.

I shall always remember #11, Old Cherokee, and I carry a picture of her in my wallet to show to my vet friends. Cherokee, long gone but not forgotten.