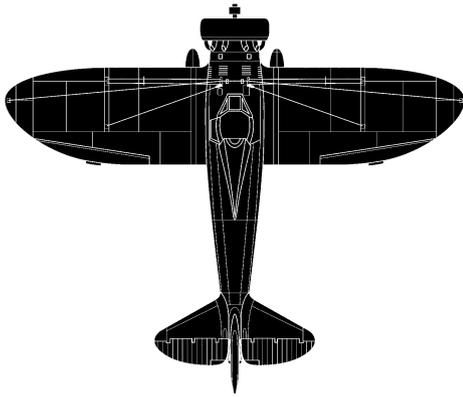


P-26 Peashooter



The Army Air Corps P-26, known universally as the Peashooter, marked the end of one era and the start of the next. This Boeing-built pursuit aircraft was the last AAC airplane with an open cockpit, fixed landing gear, and externally braced wings. It was also the first all-metal, monoplane fighter the US armed forces ever put into production. This “modern obsolete” fighter was beloved by pilots, who lauded its speed and maneuverability.

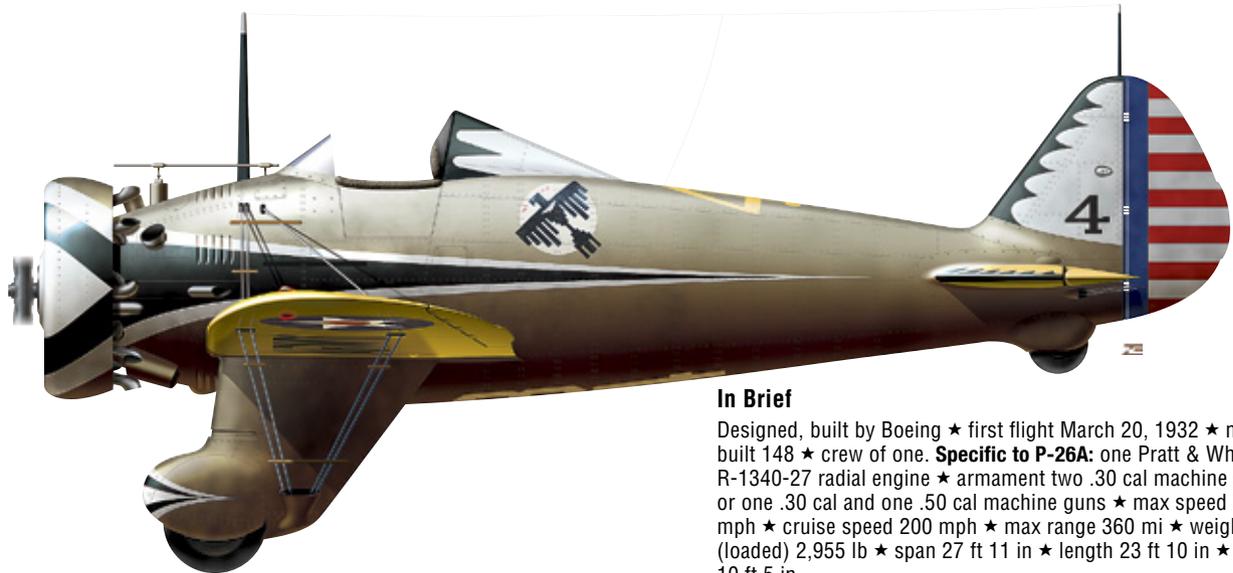
For Boeing, the aircraft was a speculative interwar venture. The company began it in the early 1930s without a contract, putting reliance on its experience with the Monomail and B-9 all-metal aircraft. The Army liked it. The P-26 ended the notion that bombers had become too fast for fighters to intercept; its top speed of 234 mph exceeded

that of the fastest Martin B-10 bomber. Indeed, initial testing showed that its landing speed was too great, forcing Boeing to install split flaps to slow it down. Because the P-26 had a tendency to nose over, Boeing installed a tall armored headrest to protect the pilot.

It was the AAC's primary fighter until 1937, when the service began to acquire large numbers of faster and more-capable aircraft such as the Seversky P-35 and Curtiss P-36. By the time of the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, the P-26 had been relegated to a trainer role; the Japanese destroyed many on the ground in Hawaii. In the Philippines, however, a few operational models managed to bring down several Japanese aircraft.

—by Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: Army Air Corps P-26A—#04—as it appeared when assigned to the 34th Pursuit Squadron, March Field, Calif.



In Brief

Designed, built by Boeing ★ first flight March 20, 1932 ★ number built 148 ★ crew of one. **Specific to P-26A:** one Pratt & Whitney R-1340-27 radial engine ★ armament two .30 cal machine guns or one .30 cal and one .50 cal machine guns ★ max speed 234 mph ★ cruise speed 200 mph ★ max range 360 mi ★ weight (loaded) 2,955 lb ★ span 27 ft 11 in ★ length 23 ft 10 in ★ height 10 ft 5 in.

Famous Fliers

Notables (AAC): Frank Andrews, Glenn Barcus, Albert Boyd, Lewis Brereton, Claire Chennault, Howard Craig, Laurence Craigie, Ira Eaker, Hugh Elmendorf, Lamar Gillett, J. B. Haddon, Haywood Hansell Jr., Millard Harmon, Benjamin Kelsey, Earle Partridge, Elwood Quesada, Hoyt Vandenberg, Ennis Whitehead, Steve Hinton. Wong Pan-yang, Wong Sun-shui (China). Jose Kare, Jesus Villamor (Philippines). **Test pilots:** L. H. Dawson, Oliver Gothlin, Les Tower.

Interesting Facts

Made first flight only three months and 15 days after contract signing ★ used external stainless steel bracing and fixed landing gear to reduce complexity and weight ★ built under largest Army aircraft contract since Boeing's MB-3A of 1921 ★ produced for \$9,999 each ★ given designation of Model 281 for export ★ purchased by China in 1930s with funds raised by Chinese Americans, who placed contribution boxes in Chinese restaurants ★ used by Chinese air force in 1937 to shoot down several Japanese bombers ★ remained in service (Guatemalan air force) until 1957.



A combat formation of Boeing P-26A airplanes in May 1938.