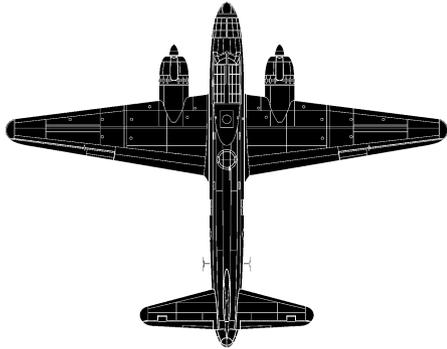


G4M Betty



The Japanese Imperial Navy Air Service G4M Betty was the nation's medium bomber counterpart to the A6M fighter. Both aircraft were designed by Mitsubishi and about equal in wartime prestige and fame. Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto, the fleet commander in chief, had called for a long-range, four-engine heavy bomber able to operate from land bases. Japan's naval leadership instead decided to produce an ultra-long-range twin engine aircraft, sacrificing armor and self-sealing fuel tanks. The result was the rotund Betty, which achieved phenomenally long range but also suffered a stunning loss rate.

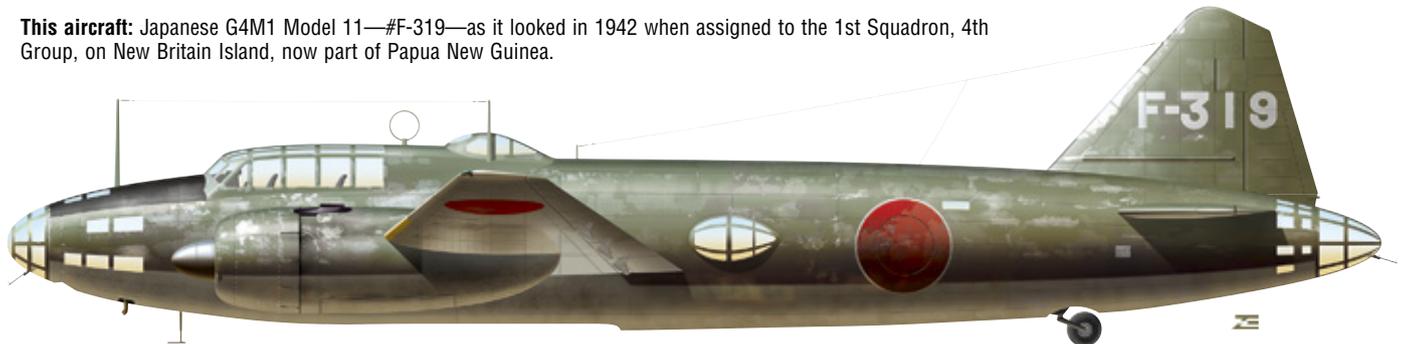
The Betty bomber was a twin-engine, midwing, all metal, stress-skinned monoplane. It was easy to fly and proved easy to maintain in the field. Initially, its 1,100 imperial gallon wing tanks had no protection. Its bomb bay doors were normally closed in flight but had to be removed in some models for bombing missions. The Betty was successful when flown against poorly defended Chinese targets but could not survive in combat against US fighter aircraft or in the face of ac-

curate anti-aircraft fire. Despite having effective tail defense armament, the Betty was so easy to set afire that it was called "Zippo" by US pilots and "Type 1 Lighter" by the Japanese themselves.

The Betty was used in war-opening strikes at the Philippine Islands on Dec. 8, 1941. A 27-ship fleet of Bettys helped sink the British warships HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* off Malaya on Dec. 10, 1941. These were the first capital ships sunk at sea in wartime by airpower. They then participated in every major battle of the war. On March 21, 1945, the Betty fleet suffered heavy losses attempting to launch piloted Okha rocket-powered missiles at US ships. The aircraft's most famous mission occurred on April 18, 1943: US P-38s attacked and downed the G4M carrying Yamamoto as it approached Bougainville Island.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: Japanese G4M1 Model 11—#F-319—as it looked in 1942 when assigned to the 1st Squadron, 4th Group, on New Britain Island, now part of Papua New Guinea.



In Brief

Designed, built by Mitsubishi ★ first flight Oct. 23, 1939 ★ number built 2,436 ★ crew of seven ★ **Specific to G4M1:** two Mitsubishi Kasei radial engines ★ defensive armament one 20 mm cannon (tail turret) and four 7.7 mm machine guns ★ load up to 1,892 lb of bombs or one aerial torpedo ★ max speed 265 mph ★ cruise speed 196 mph ★ max range 3,750 mi (G4M2) ★ weight (loaded) 28,350 lb ★ span 81 ft 8 in ★ length 65 ft 6 in ★ height 16 ft 1 in.

Famous Fliers

Notables: Hiroshi Hayashi, Joji Higai, Jun Takahashi. **Test Pilot:** Katsuzo Shima.

Interesting Facts

Nicknamed "Hamaki," or "Flying Cigar" ★ carried Japanese Fleet Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto on fatal mission (shot down by USAAF in 1943) ★ produced in numbers greater than any Japanese bomber ★ flown in combat from Aleutians in north to Australia in south ★ served as basis for 30 heavily armed G6M "escort fighters" ★ suffered 182 losses (of fleet of 240) in first 90 days of war with US ★ relied on rubber sheets on wing outer surfaces as fuel tank protection ★ transported Japanese surrender-planning team to Ie Shima on Aug. 19, 1945 ★ operated by Indonesian air force after World War II.



A formation of early production G4M1 Betty bombers.