

UNOFFICIAL AIRCRAFT NAMES

by

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At the start of the 1940 war period, when official names for service aircraft began, most ships were given proud "popular names" by which it was hoped that the various models would become known, and this practice has been continued up to the present time. However, the pilots and ground crews who operated these aircraft soon came up with more appropriate names for them. We are going to list a few of these, but all of you ex Air Force people will surely remember many more which you used at your bases

It must be remembered that certain aircraft nick-names would not look too well in print, so we shall stick with those of the "family newspaper" type. When thoughts stray to fighter aircraft who can forget the P-47 "Thunderbolt" which became more affectionately known as the "Jug" to the boys who flew them. Early straight-wing F-84's were called "Blunder-Jets" which was not quite as mighty as the official title of "Thunderjet"; certain other pilots have renamed the proud F-89 "Scorpion" as the "Allison Time Bomb"; the BT-13's were sarcastically called "Vultee Vibrators"; while the Cessna AT-8 and AT-17 was known as the "Bamboo Bomber"; and the current T-33 is better known as the "T-Bird". The old C-4 Ford Tri-motor was called "Tin Goose" by both military and civilian people, the famous C-47 became "Gooney Birds" to the crews, and the later Fairchild C-82 and C-119 "Packets" are just "Flying Boxcars". The old Martin B-26 was well known by several unofficial titles, however we shall use the best known one, "Widow Maker", and allow the others to gather dust. The little known Douglas XB-43 is called the "Frog" and the "Grasshopper" due to its twin pilot bubble canopies, and the little L-4 "Cub" was always the "Maytag Messerschmitt". In addition to these who can forget the Navy's famous "Dumbo", the PBX "Catalina".

The military has no monopoly on these unofficial nick-names, just to pick a few there is the Douglas DC-3 which is often called the "Dizzy Three" by its aircrews, while the familiar Aeronca is called the "Airnocker", and the Taylorcrafts have been so widely named "T-Crafts" that one seldom hears them called by their proper name.

These little known nick-names are a real part of American Aircraft history, giving those of us who were never associated with the plane some idea of how the crews felt about them, and in the final analysis who is better qualified to name the ship than those who flew them, so while you know the aircraft by its official designation and manufacturers specifications take time out to grin a little over some of the intimate nick-names they were called when they were in their prime.

Editors Note: Please send in your additions to this article so that we may compile a comprehensive list over a period of time. In addition we might give some thought to slang terms for other aviation items and conditions etc. If they are suitable to print please send them in and we will start a "Dictionary of Aviation Slang"