

The Bomber Restaurant and Catering

By Megan Clark

When Art Lacey, a young pilot and gasoline station owner, envisioned combining his two passions into a business, people questioned his sanity. The Bomber, located in Milwaukie, Oregon, was once a gas station and a restaurant with a vintage World War II B-17 G bomber—known as the “Flying Fortress”—prominently exhibited in its parking lot. It was quintessential Americana and an Oregon landmark.

Art Lacey purchased the retired war bird at an Air Force base in Oklahoma and flew it to Oregon in 1947. His first attempt resulted in a crash, but that didn't stop him. He finally got it home and hoisted the plane up over the family-owned forty-pump gas station, the largest single-volume gas station in the United States in the 1960s. The gas station closed in 1991, but the bomber remained at the side of the home-style restaurant that served up Bomber Burgers, chicken-fried steaks, and thick shakes. On most mornings, customers could find World War II veterans and their families dining in the restaurant.

The property also had a children's playground and a museum, which was dedicated to World War II and housed an extensive collection of war memorabilia. Veterans met here regularly to share stories. In 2014, the airplane was removed from the property to undergo restoration. The restaurant closed in 2020. The Bomber was a one-of-a-kind establishment, a place for classic American food and a reminder of times past and the men and women who served in World War II.

Sources

The Bomber Restaurant & Catering. www.thebomber.com.

The Oregon Encyclopedia

https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/bomber_the_restaurant_catering/