

When the United States began preparing for full scale military production prior to World War II, America's light plane producers were told that the United States Army Air Corps (USAAC) had no interest in seeing their aircraft over the battlefield. It was not until the summer of 1941 that the USAAC asked the light plane industry for some lightweight planes for utility and liaison work. On July 15, 1942, after having received a message in the field from Piper Corporation pilot Henry S. Wann, Cavalry Major General Innis P. Switt commented to Wann that, "You looked like a damn grasshopper when you landed that thing out there in those boondocks and bounced around." Following an initial round of trials, the U.S. Army and Army Air Corps ordered thousands of light aircraft and the "Grasshoppers" were born.



Operating from farms, roads or hastily built airfields, the "Grasshoppers" were used for liaison (the "L" in L-Birds) and observation missions in direct support of Allied ground forces. There were several different manufacturers represented in the ranks of the L-Birds, namely Taylorcraft (L-2), Aeronca (L-3), Piper (L-4), Stinson (L-5) and Interstate (L-6). The Aeronca L-3 began its military career in 1941 as the O-58, the military version of the civilian Model 65 Defender. The L-3 had tandem seating for two, and the rear seat was arranged to allow the observer to sit facing either forward or backwards, depending on the mission. The L-3s were usually equipped with two-way radios and could perform many duties including artillery direction, courier service, front line liaison and pilot training.

In 1942, when the military glider pilot training program was accelerated, an O-58 was modified into a three-person glider. The engine was removed and the cabin was extended forward for a third occupant. Aeronca built 250 of these gliders and designated them TG-5's. These aircraft played an integral part in the training of the A



merican glider pilots who would later make assault landings during the D-Day invasion in Normandy.

The L-3B on display was manufactured by Aeronca in Middletown, Ohio. It was accepted by the USAAC on July 13, 1943 and was assigned to the Army Air Corps Radio Training Command at Sioux Falls, South Dakota. In September 1944, it was transferred to the 3058th Army Air Corps Base Unit Technical School ATC at Traux Field, Madison, Wisconsin. In October 1944, it was dropped from the inventory as surplus and sold. The museum's L-3B is painted in a color scheme representative of World War II L-3s.

ENGINE O-170-3 65 h.p.  
CONTAINER  
ARMAMENT  
WING SPAN 35 feet  
LENGTH 21 feet 10 inches  
HEIGHT 6 feet 6 inches  
MAX TAKEOFF WEIGHT 1700 pounds  
CREW 2  
MANUFACTURED BY Aeronca Aircraft Corporation  
TOTAL BUILT 137  
TOTAL EXISTING 154  
FIRST BUILT 1941  
MUSEUM'S AIRCRAFT BUILT 1943  
MAXIMUM SPEED 85 mph  
RANGE 190 miles  
SERVICE CEILING 7500 feet