Building the FLYING FORTRESS

CONCLUSION OF OUR PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF CONSTRUCTING WORLD WAR TWO'S MOST FAMOUS BOMBER

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Workers at the Douglas factory apply finishing touches to the distinctive plexiglass nose cone of a B-17G prior to the unit being installed on a bomber. During production of the B-17F/G, several changes were made to the shape of this unit. For example, Lockheed Vega pioneered, along with the supplier, the blown plexiglass nose piece with the B-17F and then the unit was modified with a blunter nose and a sharply upturned bombardier's aiming window so damage would not be incurred when the twin .50-caliber machine guns of the chin turret were fired.

It must be remembered that every piece of every Flying Fortress was built by American men and women dedicated to defeating the Axis powers. This dedication, combined with the fact that factories in the USA were immune from significant enemy attack, led to a steady flow of high-quality bombing aircraft that the Axis could not stop. The capability of building and delivering these Flying Fortresses is represented in this view of partially completed B-17G 44-6650 surrounded by workers in front of the main production hangar at Douglas' sprawling Long Beach, California, facility. In gleaming natural aluminum finish, the bomber is fitted with a Cheyenne tail turret and USAAF 44-6650 was the last of a batch of 250 B-17G-50-DLs built by Douglas. Once completed and flight tested, 44-6650 was accepted by the USAAF on 25 August 1944 and flown to Britain where it joined the 350th Bomb Squadron, 100th Bomb Group ("The Bloody 100th"), where it was coded LN*U but apparently did not receive a name. The Fort was shot down by *flak* on 3 February 1945 during a mission attacking the German capital of Berlin. All nine crewmen were killed in action.