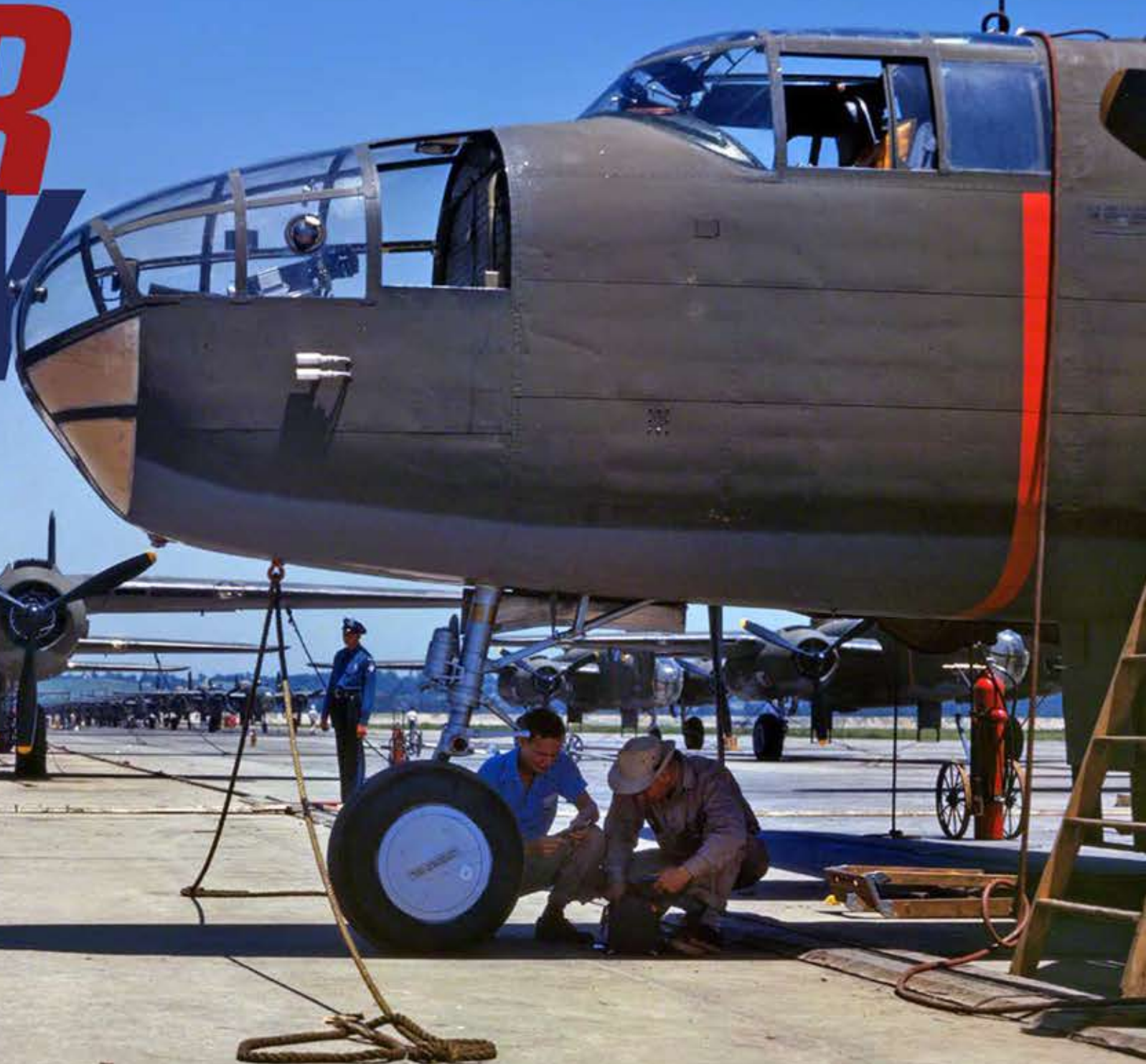


BOMBER FACTORY

RARE COLOR IMAGES PORTRAY THE CONSTRUCTION OF AMERICA'S MOST FAMOUS WWII MEDIUM BOMBER
BY MARSHALL WAINWRIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALFRED T. PALMER



15-gun salute from American flyers

There's no better way to get the best out of the 15 gun salute for the war B-25 Mitchell bomber. The Mitchell was built in large numbers, more than 5000 in all, and it's the only aircraft that's been used in every theater of the war.

North American Sets the Pace

The B-25 Mitchell was the first medium bomber to be built in large numbers in the United States.

During the Great Depression, the Roosevelt administration hired hundreds of artists to record what life was like in America — from the simplest of windblown farms in the Dust Bowl to the new skyscrapers thrusting their pointed towers into the sky over major East Coast cities. These projects for the Works Progress Administration encompassed all forms of art, including photography, and the jobs gave needed employment to a segment of the work force that was literally starving. The photographers were sent to locations across America and one of the busiest was Alfred T. Palmer (1906-1993). A main assignment for Palmer was visiting the defense factories that were building up production as the European continent headed to war. Although Palmer was well-known for his superb black and white images, he quickly gained a reputation for taking large format photos with the new Kodachrome film and these images were usually 4X5 in size, thus allowing for magnificent detail and fidelity of color. Among his many assignments, he made several visits to North American

Aviation in Inglewood, California, and to the company's new war plant in Kansas City. When war became a reality, Palmer's pace of photography rapidly picked up as he was sent to all forms of defense plants across the USA and this has left us with a stunning archive of what life was like as America flexed its national muscles in a global fight against the Axis powers. At Inglewood and Kansas City, Palmer was able to photograph the B-25 Mitchell as it was built and flight-tested. In this photograph, Palmer recorded just-completed early B-25D Mitchells at the sprawling new Kansas City facility (actually located in Fairfax, as can be seen on the left bottom). Palmer's photos offer us a unique record on how the Mitchell was built. These aircraft are freshly painted in Olive Drab/Neutral Gray camouflage with the bright red warning stripe to indicate the position of the propeller. Final bits of equipment were being added when the photo was taken and some of the protective covering for the plexiglass nose panels had yet to be removed.