

# The Other Heavy Bomber of World War Two

## The B-17 Flying Fortress

*Editors Note: Some members will wonder why a story about B-17s should be included in the Torretta Flyer. Like it or not the other bomber played a big part in the winning of the air war over Germany. The Fifth Bomb Wing of the 15th Air Force, with six B-17 groups was the largest in the 15th, and was based farther north in Italy. The Second Bomb Group was one of the oldest heavy bomb groups flying the B-17 in the 15th AF. All 15th Airforce B-17s can be identified by the letter Y painted on the upper fin above the serial number. The surround in the case of the 2nd BG was a Y in a circle, 97th Y in a triangle, 301st Y in a square, 99th Y in a diamond, 463rd Y in a 60 degree arc, and the 483rd a Y without a surround but had a star underneath the lowest arm of the Y.*



*YB-17 2nd Bomb Group May 17, 1939 Langley Field, VA*

In May of 1934 the US Army Air Corps requested bids on Project X, which would comprise a bomber capable of carrying a bomb load of 2,000lb and possess a range of 5,000 miles. Boeing Airplane Company and the Glenn L. Martin Company submitted designs. This request was that a 1,000hp engine be utilized, but the only thing available at the time was a Pratt and Whitney 850hp Twin Wasp.

The Air Corps further specified in April of 1934 for a multi-engine aircraft that would carry a 2,000lb bomb load for not less than 1,020 miles and if possible, 2,200 miles at a speed of 200 MPH and possibly higher. A flyable prototype was to be available not later than August 1935.

In August 1934, Boeing set out to build the prototype of design now called the Model 299. The aircraft was to have all-metal construction, with a semi monocoque fuselage. Monocoque meaning a braced aluminum skin that employed formers and string-

ers to maintain the shape and riveted to the aluminum skin. Together these components were to carry the entire load without external braces as seen in fabric covered structures of the biplanes of earlier days. The plane was to use a forward gun turret in the nose. The pilot and copilot were seated side by side as in conventional commercial airline style as in the Boeing 247 and Douglas DC-2. The bomb bay was to have a capacity for 4,800lb of bombs. The radio room was a separate compartment aft of the bomb bay. Aerial gunners were provided with blisters on each side of the rear fuselage and another blister in the belly aft of the radio room. Armament consisted of five machine guns. The Model 299 was powered by four Pratt & Whitney R-1690 radial engines each developing 750hp.

The name "Flying Fortress" was coined by Dick Williams, a reporter for the Seattle Times newspaper who gave this name to Model 299 when it was rolled out 299 on July 17, 1935 displaying