



CHAMPAIGN AVIATION MUSEUM

HOME OF THE B-17 "CHAMPAIGN LADY" RESTORATION



"CHAMPAIGN LADY" RESTORATION TO FLYING CONDITION

The Champaign Aviation Museum is working on restoring a World War II B-17 bomber, also known as "Champaign Lady." The restoration began in late 2005 and is supported by volunteers, private donations and gifts to the museum.

She is being rebuilt using parts from various airframes that have seen a wide range of service, including an airtanker, movie prop, search and rescue, and nuclear

testing. Volunteers fabricate missing pieces according to the specifications from the original drawings.

B-17 Details: From July, 1935 to April of 1945 Boeing, Douglas, Lockheed-Vega built 12,731 B-17s. The bomber was dubbed the Flying Fortress because of its defensive firepower — thirteen .50 caliber machine guns and a 9,600-pound bomb load.

The Boeing B-17 was a four engine heavy bomber developed in the 1930's for the U.S. Army Air Corps (USAAC). In a competition for a contract to build 200 bombers, the B-17 outperformed entries from Douglas and Martin and more than met the Air Corps' expectations.

However, Boeing lost the contract because the prototype crashed. Even so, the Air Corps, impressed with Boeing's design, ordered 13 more B-17's for further evaluation. From its introduction in 1938, the B-17 Flying Fortress evolved through numerous design advances.

The B-17 was primarily employed in the daylight precision strategic bombing campaign of World War II against German industrial and military targets.

The U.S. Army Air Corps touted the aircraft as a strategic weapon. It was a potent, high-flying, long-range bomber, able to defend itself and return home despite extensive battle damage. Widely circulated stories and photos of battered B-17s helped it achieve huge public recognition.

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