

As the aircraft grew heavier it was learned that the lift created by the fuselage could be utilized by flying the plane "on the step". The plane was flown to its cruise altitude and then the tail was lowered slightly and the engine power setting was adjusted for minimum burn out. It was for this reason that the fuel quantity gauges were so unreliable. They could only be read with the plane flying straight and level, so if the nose was dropped to read the fuel gauges, valuable altitude could be lost. Many flight engineers calculated fuel burnout by use of cruise control charts. However this wasn't too practical during combat when everyone was busy warding off enemy fighters. Another idiosyncrasy of the B-24 was that on climb out with full tanks, fuel would syphon out of the filler caps because the caps located on the top of the wing were placed at the highest point so that the tanks could be filled to the top, but this location also coincided with the area of the wing that produced the most lift or suction. The outboard fuel tanks, referred to as the Tokyo tanks did not have any means of determining fuel quantity at all. The usual practice was to transfer fuel from these tanks and when the fuel pressure started to drop the tanks were assumed to be empty. This oversight was corrected in the later L and M models. Compared to today's modern jetliners, the aircraft of WWII were as primitive as the Wright Brothers first flyer would be compared with the planes of WWII. Now it can be understood why so many crews ran out of gas returning to base.



North American Aircraft production of B-24s at Dallas, Texas. Many aircraft plants located in the southwestern states often completed production work outside when weather permitted. In this photo propellers are being installed using a small hut that is moved from engine to engine as each prop is hung. This photo shows the paddle blade design propellers that replaced the slim props used on the earlier B-24D series. Bob Waag Photo.



B-24'S ON VIEW AT MUSEUMS OF THE OVER 19,000 PRODUCED ONLY A HANDFUL ARE LEFT

B-24 Models can be seen at the Museums listed below. The bus tour at the 1986 reunion in San Antonio will visit Lackland AFB, so our members can see the static display of aircraft that includes a B-17 and a B-24.

- LB-30, Confederate Air Force, Harlingen, Texas
- B-24J, Pima County Museum, Tucson, Arizona
- B-24J, March Airforce Base, California.
- B-24D Airforce Museum, Dayton, Ohio
- B-24M Lackland Airforce Base, San Antonio, Texas



THE LIBERATOR IN THE LAKE, NEWS UPDATE

In the last issue of the Torretta Flyer there was a story of the B-24 from the 461st BG that crashed into Huntington Lake, California on a training mission when the group was based at Hammer Field, (Fresno) California. A news update on that story appeared in the fall issue 1985 of the Liberator Club's "BRIEFING": "Here in California some veterans found a B-24D wing in a salvage yard and moved it to the Stockton airport. The wing, it turns out belonged to the Liberator that went down on December 6, 1943 and was found in Huntington Lake in 1955 when part of the aircraft was salvaged. A club called the Stockton WW11 Warbird Group still hopes to find more".