

What it takes to maintain a single B-17

Thirteen 8th Army Air Force personnel were needed to provide essential ground support to keep each B-17 combat crew flying.

1 crew maintenance chief, 1 air compression technician, 1 armament specialist, 3 as a bomb supply team, 1 dispatcher, 1 electrician, 1 gas truck supply, 1 hydraulic specialist, 1 instrument specialist, 1 plane mechanic for the plane as a whole plus 8 engine mechanics (two for each engine). 1 oil truck supply, 1 parachute rigger and 1 specialist, 1 radio maintenance technician, 1 radio testing technician, 1 tug driver (used for towing a plane), 1 weather forecaster and 1 observer.

That's not all by a long shot! There must be stand-by relief and management coordination at all times. Food providers and helpers. Medical care and helpers. Fire fighters both for the airplanes and extensive base facilities. Base chaplains. Base security forces. And base entertainment and recreation.

Ken was one of many whose hobby was aircraft maintenance. He and his friends visited many of the airfields to view the returning planes. On Christmas Eve 1944, Britain was in the grip of a wintry spell with frost covering roads and hedgerows and with fog developing at night. Ken was in a hedge on the perimeter of one of the airfields, trying to see the bombers return. At 1700, they began to appear, presenting a magnificent spectacle as they flew at a low altitude.

It was then that a man on a bicycle pulled up beside Ken and bellowed, "And what do you think you're up to as a hider?" It was the voice of the local police sergeant who had received reports that a stranger was sitting in a hedge on the road from Eye to Yaxley watching aircraft movements. The sergeant was suspicious of aircraft enthusiasts. And after questions about what Ken was doing, and where he was living, and why he was watching Christmas Eve in a hedge, he was convinced that Ken was not an enemy agent.

Ken will always remember what we did for England.
From 8th AF Newsletter

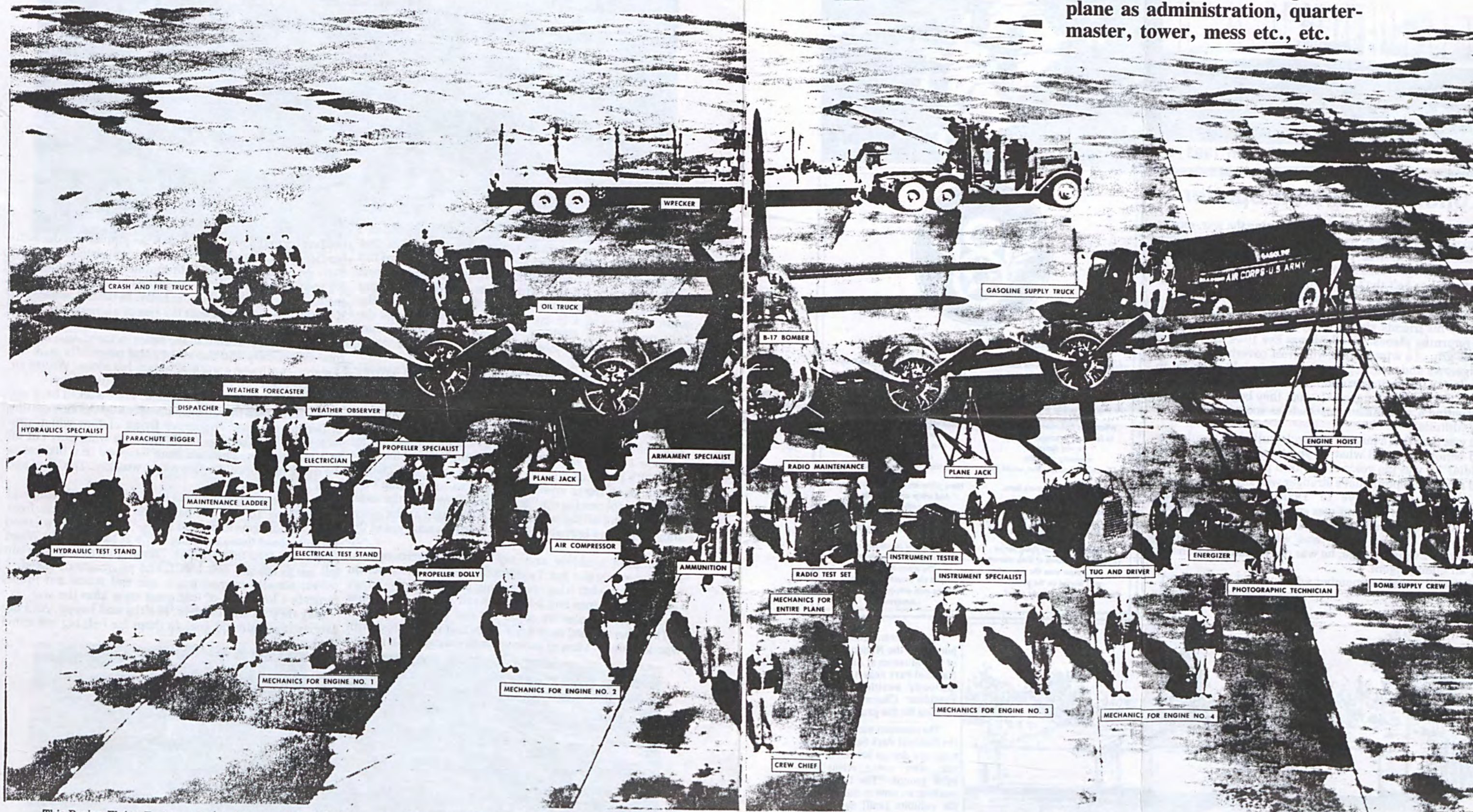
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What it takes—to sustain a single U. S. Heavy Bomber

Personnel listed does not include those not directly working on a plane as administration, quartermaster, tower, mess etc., etc.



This Boeing Flying Fortress requires ten men to fly it, but it takes these thirty-one men to keep it flying. Each one of these

mechanics and technicians must be painstaking, skillful; they must be ready at any time to down tools and defend their air

base against attack. They know their responsibilities and their importance, for a song of the Air Force maintenance men re-

minds our pilots: "You're hot on the stick when we make 'em tick." It's teamwork in everything that makes an Air Force.