



THE PYRAMIDIERS

The Newsletter of the 98th Bomb Group/Wing Veterans Association

August 2015

OFFICERS

BILL SEALS

President, Editor, & Webmaster
2526 Plumfield Lane
Katy, TX 77450
281-395-3005
colbillyseals@hotmail.com

DENNIS POSEY

Vice President
& Reunion Coordinator
1780 Chasewood Park Lane
Marietta, GA 30066
770-509-7734
dennis_posey@att.net

SUZANNE MIODUSZEWSKI

Secretary/Treasurer
Scholarship Chairperson
1137 Joyce Lane
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
734-678-3838
suzannes@me.com

LURA HAYES

Assistant Secretary/Treasurer
15275 Payne Road
Marysville, OH 43040
937-644-1158
wjhayes@imetweb.net

BONNIE HENSEL

Memorabilia Chairperson
317 Bristol Drive, Apt. C
York, PA 17403
717-848-9546
bjhnewstart@hotmail.com

HERB HARPER

Historian Emeritus
3290 NO. Pone Road N.W.
Georgetown, TN 37336-4809
423-336-2768
BOMBGRP98@aol.com

Pieces of My Mind

Greetings to All,

I recently received a couple of emails concerning our 98th Veterans of WWII, which started me thinking about the sacrifices that American Patriots have made to gain and keep our freedoms throughout our history. Then, when this message arrived on July 4th, it took my thoughts back to the very beginning: ***The Declaration of Independence!***

The first sentence of the declaration, *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...*

is perhaps the most quoted sentence of all our historical documents; however, the declaration contains much more. As a matter of fact, it contains most of the basic principals upon which America is founded, and therefore may be the most important document ever conceived by our founders. George Washington is often called the Father of our Nation, and perhaps he was, but there were others who provided much of the foundation upon which the nation was built. The fifty-six men who signed the Declaration of Independence were certainly members of that group.

Have you ever wondered what happen to the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence?

Their story . . .

Five signers were captured by the British as traitors, and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons serving in the Revolutionary Army; another had two sons captured. Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or hardships of the Revolutionary War.



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Pieces of My Mind *continued from page 1*

They signed and they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

What kind of men were they?

Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists. Eleven were merchants. Nine were farmers and plantation (farmers) owners; men of means, well educated. But they signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured.

Carter Braxton of Virginia, a planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts, and died in rags.

Thomas McKeam was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him, and poverty was his reward.

Vandals or soldiers looted the properties of Dillery, Hall, Clymer, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Rutledge, and Middleton.

At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr., noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. He quietly urged General George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt.

Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife, and she was tortured and died within a few months.

John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and his gristmill were laid to waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished.

So, take a few minutes to silently thank these great patriots. It's not too much to ask for the price they paid.

Remember: Freedom is never free!

With Warmest Regards to All,

Bill Seals

Message from the VP/Reunion Coordinator

Much to my sorrow, as you read this most likely the final 98th Bomb Group/Wing Veterans Association Annual Reunion will be in progress. This is due mostly to the age of many of our participants. Some of us are just too old to cut the "Mustard" any more. It has certainly been a great ride. Not even time will erase the friendships we have renewed and made, the laughter we have shared, and the places we have been. My cup

runneth over with amazing memories. There are not enough words to express my thanks and gratitude to each of "YOU" for allowing Peggy and me to serve and share with the greatest group of people ever, the 98th Bomb Group/Wing Veterans Association.

God Bless each of you, until we meet once again!

Dennis Posey

DECEASED

Last	First	M	Address	City	State	Zip	AC	SQD	DOD
Adams	Melvin	A.	1049 Highview Rd	Lantana	FL	33462	B-24	343	05/05/1988
Baldwin	Richard	F.	11661 E Lenher Schwerin Trl	Tucson	AZ	85749	B-29	343	04/13/2015
Bergan	Bill	J.	310 Appletree Ln	Cheyenne	WY	82009	B-24	415	08/15/2014
Helfrich	Robert	H.	3816 James Ave	Huron	OH	44839	B-24	343	03/31/2015
McGovern	John	K.	16298 Maple Ridge Rd	Audubon	MN	56511	B-24	778	04/07/2015
Scroggins	Kenneth	C.	14569 Northwest Rd	Whitehouse	TX	75791	B-24	344	06/17/2015
Smith	LTC Raymond	F.	1630 West Loula St	Olathe	KS	66061	B-29	345	01/28/2013
Wright Sr.	LTC Harold	B.	2520 International Circle, Apt 235	Colorado Springs	CO	80910	B-24	415	03/04/2015

Message from the Secretary

Time is moving quickly, and we will soon be together again at our Dayton Reunion!! I'm really excited about the turnout and am glad we'll be seeing so many old friends who plan to attend.

Every member we lose always brings sadness to the group and a pause for remembering . . . Here are a few I have gotten to know (as have many of you) who I want to especially remember and salute for their service to our country . . .

Ken Scroggins (1924-2015) was truly of the "Greatest Generation." One of our early members, he was a fixture at our reunions (along with his lovely wife, Jewel) and later became Vice President of the Association. He told the absolute best war stories in that Texas drawl of his, and with that twinkle in his eye you wondered how he and his buddy Corey ever made it back to the States!!! As a member of the US Army Air Corps, Ken flew 131 missions with the 344th Squadron, 98th Bomb Group. He was stationed in Lecce, Italy, and was shot down in Yugoslavia one mile from the German line. Ken was a hero who we will always remember and miss. There was no one like him.

We recently learned of the passing of another hero, Bill J. Bergan (1922-2014) of Cheyenne, Wyoming. Having first served in the U.S. Army Air Corps and later in the Air Force, Bill was a pilot during World War II who earned numerous decorations and citations including the Silver Star, the European African Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon with Five Bronze Stars, the Distinguished Flying Cross with 2 OLC and the Air Medal with One Silver OLC and One Bronze OLC.

On August 1, 1943, Bill was the co-pilot of "Lil Joe" and flew on the famous low-level raid to the oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania. About that Bill said; "I was one shot-up plane out of 24 in my squadron; only seven planes returned." He said it was so hot he thought the plane was going to explode before it passed over the refineries. Bill flew 300 combat hours by September 1943. He spent twenty years in the Air Force Reserve, retiring as a Major.

We lost another member, who along with his beautiful wife, Gloria, often attended our reunions. We salute Bob Helfrich (1923-2015) of Huron, Ohio. Bob enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps on Dec. 8, 1942, and was a B-24 pilot assigned to the 98th Bomb Group at Lecce, Italy. Bob received the Distinguished Flying Cross on Feb. 21, 1945, for a mission over Vienna, Austria. He returned to the United States when the war ended in Europe and was released from active duty when the war ended in the Pacific. After that he flew A-26s with the 112th Bomb Squad Ohio National Guard and was recalled to active duty in October 1950. He served in Toul-Rossiere, France; Spangdahlem, Germany (1st TacRecon Sgdn), Wiesbaden, Germany (Special Air Missions commander), Korat AB, Thailand (553rd Recon Wing); finishing his career in 1977 as Director of Operations at Rickenbacker AFB. Bob received the Distinguished Flying Cross with 2 OLC, the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal with 2 OLC and the Air Medal with 7 OLC. His total hours of military and civilian flying hours were over 28,000 (including 1,600 combat hours). It's been an honor to know men of Bob's caliber.

ADDRESS CHANGES

Last Name	First	M	Address	City	State	Zip	Membership
Seal	Kenneth	B.	399 E Los Rincones	Green Valley	AZ	85614	Member
Eddington	Maj Horace	A.	24962 Calle Aragon	Folsom	CA	95639	Member
Fleming	Dean	E.	2243 SE Shawnww Dr	Tecumseh	KS	66542	Member
Laniga	Kenneth	G.	400 Parkside Dr, Apt 104	Zeeland	MI	49464	Member
Lundquist	Raymond		128 Washington Commons Dr	Evans	GA	30809	Member
Spencer	William	J.	3623 O'Henry Dr	Montgomery	TX	77356	Member
Sternfels	Robert	W.	Las Palamas / 24962 Calle Aragon, #B305	Laguna Woods	CA	92637	Member
Swimley	Hugh	E.	7808 NE 51st ST, Apt 335	Vancouver	WA	98662	Member
Abbondondelo	Joseph	A.	70 Pinelawn Rd, #C229	Melville	NY	11747	Associate
Caristi	Peter	E.	5036 Westridge Dr	Holiday	FL	34961	Associate
Driscoll	Wynne		515 Judson Dr	Perry	FL	32348	Associate
Schinsing	Simone	M.	1561 21st St	Oceano	CA	93445	Associate

Letter to the Editor

More on 44-66392 . . . lost November 20, 1952

Dear Mr. Bill Seals,

I got *The Pyramidiers* a couple of weeks ago, and have re-read the story of B-29 No. 44-66392. As my memory starts to fade on local happenings, I do still remember a lot of my duty with the 345th Bomb Squadron. I spent approximately a year in 1952 as a crew chief on a B-29 with the last three numbers of 043. I've forgotten the rest. The nose art was a vivacious lady, and you know how it was painted by our Japanese artist. I believe a carton of smokes was all it cost us.

My roommate in a two-man room in the 345th barracks was T/SGT Jensen. When I got up to get cleaned-up to go to the mess hall, I noticed his bed was still made. I thought nothing of it as some aircraft were diverted from Yokota due to weather.

At roll call in the Flight Shack they told us Jensen's plane had been shot down and they didn't know who survived. I guess we were eventually told.

I think the crew chief of 66392 was a T/SGT with last name of Hover.

When I left Yokota, in December I think, to report to Travis AFB the rumor was the crew were P.O.W.s, but I'm not sure of that. However, I think the fellas who wrote the articles in the newsletter about "Downed Flight" fate of aircraft 44-66392 know what they are talking about and have better memories than me.

I do remember that we worked a lot of seven-day weeks with 12-14 hour days to keep those B-29s flying. At the end of my Yokota tour they wanted me to take a B-29 back to the states, but I didn't want all the problems I would have had in getting it back to the "bone yard" at Tucson. Luckily, I didn't have to.

When I arrived at Travis I was discharged, and four days later I re-enlisted at World Chamberlain Airport

in Minneapolis. I was in the Air Defense Command for a while and became an advisor in the reserves there. We started with F-51s; F-80s; T-33s and finally C-119s ("dollar ninetees"), and I became a flight engineer instructor for a couple of years.

In 1958, Strategic Air Command caught up with me and I was sent to fly KC-97s at Randolph AFB and eventually to the 43rd Air Refueling Squadron (ARS) at Tucson. Then I went to the 98th ARS at Lincoln and finally to the 9th ARS at Mountain Home. My final assignment with SAC was at Westover AFB where we flew stripped down KC-97s and I retired from active duty in 1969.

While I was stationed at Minneapolis in March of 1958, I believe, I went to visit T/SGT Jensen's mother who lived on Snelling Avenue. She operated a rooming house for students at Hamlin University. I remember she gave me lunch and chocolate cookies. We talked about her son who was my roommate.

If I had a little more time with the fellas that were over there, we could come up with some good stories about the 345th squadron.

Later in life, there was a booth at the Minneapolis State Fair that was giving out bracelets for those who were in the Korean War. I believe that was the first time I knew for sure that T/SGT Jensen was dead.

I probably could add some more, but those times are long gone. They happened sixty plus years ago. Thanks for the newsletters, I really enjoyed it this time. Aircraft 392 was only two hard stands from 043 so we did talk a lot. Mostly Bull S---t and about the war.

I do remember the round belly stoves in the huts with cardboard rings from 500 pound bombs for fuel, and

2015 98th Bomb Group Veterans Association Scholarship Awarded

This scholarship is awarded annually in honor of the late William H. Simons and the men of the 98th Bomb Group—the most highly decorated Group in the history of the US Army Air Corps (receiving two Presidential Citations), and remains so in today's US Air Force. This year we have selected two sisters to share the 98th Bomb Group Veterans Association Scholarship Award of \$2,000. They are Nadine and Erika Shaw of Clackamas, Oregon. Their dedication and hard work demonstrated at school and within their community warrants this recognition.

Nadine plans to study nursing and envisions herself working within a neonatal intensive care unit. To her, Patriotism "means respecting the men and women who served to protect this great nation, and giving your time to those who need it. It means that even when the world seems so screwed up (ISIS) and that some of our politicians are more hurtful rather than helpful to America, that we have faith that the American people will restore this nation to its founding principals."

Erika's studies will prepare her to practice acupuncture, requiring many years of schooling including a Master's Degree. To Erika: "Patriotism means standing by and standing up for one's country through the good and the bad times. It means facing adversity and injustice" even when the timing makes it difficult to do. She points to positive reactions after 9/11 as an excellent example of Patriotism: "The way our men and women responded to the incident with unwavering bravery reflects what it means to be an American to me."

The officers and members of the 98th hope this Scholarship helps preserve the memory of these brave men who put their lives in harm's way to fight for the freedom we enjoy today, so that they are never forgotten.

Best Wishes to you both!

the times we sat around them talking. There were a lot of stories with a bit of truth in them, and then there were stories based on over-active imaginations and a lot of wishful thinking. They were all entertaining!

I got out of service in 1969 with a total of 23 years of active duty. I was then placed in the reserves where I remained until I got my walking papers in 1976 which gave me 30 years of service. I worked for Dayton Hudson Co. for 20 years. I shot with the Ft. Snelling Rifle Squadron for 20 years, and accumulated approximately 5,000 hours of time with them. I worked at the Minnesota State Fair 15 years and now I've volunteered three years. So I've missed some of the reunions. The last one was Yuma, AZ.

I'm going to be buried among heroes who really gave it all.

Hope you can figure this out.

M/SGT Kermit Bischoff, USAF Ret.

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The preceding letter was one of several generated by the first B-29 story by John Baker that appeared in the November 2014 issue. If I could get more responses like these, my job as editor would require a lot less research and writing. Thanks to all the guys who sent their thoughts to me.

Bill Seals

Korean War:

The Boeing B-29 Superfortress Served Throughout the Air War

At 4 a.m. on June 25, 1950, North Korean troops poured across the 38th parallel into South Korea. The Soviet Union had supplied North Korea with large quantities of military equipment, including tanks, artillery, trucks, guns, ammunition, uniforms, rations and all the supporting elements necessary to field a modern military force. The North Korean air force was equipped with 62 Ilyushin-10 ground-attack aircraft, 70 Yakovlev Yak-3 and Yak-7B fighters, 22 Yak-16 transports and 8 Polikarpov Po-2 trainers. The force completely outclassed South Korea's air force.

On June 27, 1950, the United Nations authorized the use of military force to stop North Korea's attack. Eight hours after the authorization, the United States Far East Air Force (FEAF), the air element of the Far East Command (FEC), began flying the first combat air sorties over South Korea. President Harry S. Truman directed General Douglas MacArthur to supply South Korea's military forces from U.S. quartermaster depots in Japan and to commit available U.S. forces to attack North Korean forces crossing the 38th parallel. American ground troops would be supported by land- and sea-based airstrikes. As the ground situation worsened for the retreating South Korean forces, Truman authorized MacArthur to expand airstrikes north of the 38th parallel against North Korean supply depots, railyards and supporting strategic targets.

On June 28, 1950, four Boeing B-29 Superfortresses of the 19th Bombardment Group (BG), which had been

transferred from Andersen Air Force Base on Guam to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa, attacked Communist troops north of Seoul. On June 30, 15 B-29s of the 19th BG dropped 260-pound fragmentation bombs on suspected North Korean troops and equipment along the north bank of the Han River. After the strike, a close ground examination revealed there had been no North Korean troops or equipment within the designated bombing area. Either U.S. Intelligence had erred or the North Korean troops had shifted locations prior to the air attack. It was recommended that future direct-support bombing strikes by the B-29s be conducted only if the ground situation was absolutely hopeless. The B-29 was not designed to be a ground support or tactical aircraft.

In August, the 98th Bombardment Group arrived at Yakota Air Base on Okinawa from Fairchild Air Force Base in the United States. The 98th BG was temporarily quartered in a hastily built lean-to adjoining the base's gymnasium. The majority of American military dependents at the base were shipped back to the States shortly after North Korea attacked the South, however, and their family housing units were then modified to serve as quarters for the B-29 aircrews. Many of the 98th's initial complement of aircrews had flown combat missions during World War II and had completed five years of intense and specialized Strategic Command training between 1945 and 1950.

To reduce the flow of replacement military equipment, armament and supplies to North Korean forces south of the 38th parallel, B-29s were ordered to bomb enemy strategic and military targets in the north. The majority of those targets were concentrated around Pyongyang, Chongyin, Wonsan, Hungnam and Rashin. Militarily, it probably would have been better to use incendiary bombs on those targets, but for political reasons only general purpose (GP) bombs were used. The possible uproar over using incendiaries on North Korea so soon after the destruction of Japanese cities by Twentieth Air Force B-29s during World War II was something President Truman did not want to face at home. Consequently, it would require more B-29s per target, or repeated B-29 strikes, to knock out a target. The GP bombs were fitted with delayed-action fuses to thwart North Korean attempts to repair bomb damage or defuse unexploded munitions.

A typical B-29 load consisted of 40 500-pound GP bombs. Each bomb was fitted with a delayed-action fuse, consisting of a propeller on the bomb's nose. After the bomb was released from the B-29's bomb bay, the propeller turned and tightened a threaded rod running through the bomb's nose. The rod continued turning until it ruptured an acetone-filled vial. The nose fuse was filled with Plexiglas disks surrounding the acetone vial—the number of disks determined the detonation delay time. When the acetone vial was broken, the acetone began to dissolve the Plexiglas

disks, triggering the bomb's predetermined detonation time—from one to 144 hours.

To prevent the North Koreans from easily defusing the delayed-action bombs, a groove was milled into the main body of the fuse. As the fuse was screwed into the bomb by B-29 armaments specialists, the ball bearing was forced into the deepest section of the bomb's milled groove. Any attempt to remove the fuse after the bomb was dropped caused the ball bearing to rotate into the shallow section of the fuse, locking it into position. To further frustrate bomb disarmament efforts, a small rod was connected to the end of the fuse, and any attempt to remove the fuse triggered the bomb's explosion. A 500 GP bomb was filled with 250 pounds of RDX composition D explosive, which is more powerful than TNT. The external casing of the GP bomb was scored so that, when detonated, metal fragments (shrapnel) would shower the area around the explosion.

B-29 operations were not restricted to visual bombing conditions. When clouds obscured a target, radar located the offset aiming points (OAPs) that set up the correct bomb release run into the target. Although weather conditions in Korea were better than B-29 aircrews had expected, weather forecasting for Korea was difficult because the country's weather patterns were generated in the Mongolian steppes, outside of FEAF's weather reporting area. At first, FEAF



Photo by Warren Bodie

Pictured above: Boeing B-29 Superfortresses from the 98th Bomb Group return from a mission over North Korea in 1951. The World War II-era B-29 would soon be superseded by the up-engined B-50, and new bombers would follow every few years into the 1960s.

weathermen tuned in to Russian weather broadcasts from Vladivostok, but eventually they decided not to put too much faith in the validity of those reports.

Using visual and radar bombing releases, B-29s had destroyed North Korea's strategic targets by September 15, and the decision was made to halt further attacks on those targets. In response to the B-29 attacks, North Korea increased the number of anti-aircraft defenses against the B-29s. The Soviet Union and China shipped in large numbers of anti-aircraft artillery and ammunition, and the probable B-29 attack routes were more effectively defended. By late November 1950, increased numbers of Communist flak batteries along the bomber routes forced the B-29s to fly at 20,000 feet in an attempt to avoid the flak. In doing so, however, the B-29s faced a new threat—MiG-15 fighters.

On November 12, the 98th BG attacked Nampojin. Flak hit B-29 No. 6371 in the No. 2 engine, holing the propeller and producing a runaway (out of control) engine that could not be feathered. The bomber's crew began preparations to bail out of the aircraft while the navigator hurriedly gave the pilot a heading toward the

nearest emergency airfield. Other B-29s of the 98th BG flew near the damaged bomber in case the crew did bail out, so they could watch the crew's exit from the aircraft, provide rescue directions and coordinate air cover support. The pilot brought the damaged B-29 in for an emergency landing at the Marine Corps fighter airfield at Yanpo. The base's Marine Corps commander informed the crew members that Chinese soldiers were approaching the air base and that he did not know if the field could be defended. The commander told the crewmen they had two options: They could be issued weapons and help defend the airfield, or they could leave for Japan on a Douglas C-54 that was due to land at the base shortly. The crew chose to fly to Japan. Without the help of the crewmen, the Marines at Yanpo repulsed the Chinese assault. When no Air Force personnel returned for the damaged B-29, the Marine Corps commander wondered if the damaged engine

could be repaired. The Marines were able to locate a P2V R-3350 engine, but before it could be flown to the base, a C-54 landed with an Air Force maintenance crew and the replacement bomber engine. Once that was installed and ground tested, a ferry crew flew the damaged B-29 to Japan for a complete rework.

B-29s were used in a wide variety of missions during the Korean War. One B-29 of the 19th BG flew a decoy

This cat-and-mouse game continued for approximately five hours, during which time the decoy B-29 completed 12 orbits.

mission over the Korean Bay in the North Yellow Sea. Flying a racetrack pattern toward the mouth of the Yalu River, the B-29 would turn 180 degrees as it neared the river, coming no closer than five miles to the North Korean coastline. Meanwhile, the rest of the 19th was attacking a target near Pyongyang. The 19th BG's Intelligence officer had told the crew of the decoy B-29 that Chinese Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-15 jet fighters would probably not venture over the Yellow Sea. As the B-29 approached the coastline, however, the radar officer identified a blip on the radar coming toward the bomber at 12 o'clock and from below. The MiG did not attack and flew away at the 6 o'clock position. This

cat-and-mouse game continued for approximately five hours, during which time the decoy B-29 completed 12 orbits. The B-29 also received reports from ground-based radar that there were 20 to 30 MiGs circling inland, directly opposite the decoy B-29's orbit area.

The growing danger of being stalked by MiGs and the large number of Communist flak batteries made it necessary for the B-29s to fly at night. The bombers usually flew in a stream formation with a 500-foot altitude separation, stepped up and at three-minute intervals. North Korean anti-aircraft gunners soon began to anticipate where the bombers might fly, however, so the Americans modified their target approach tactics. B-29 intervals were altered to between one and five minutes, and the separations between aircraft in the same bomber stream were mixed.

Lieutenant General James V. Edmundson, commander of the 22nd BG, stated that fighter opposition was no problem in 1950 but that it increased as the war progressed. Initially, the flak encountered by the 22nd BG was generally meager and inaccurate. Later, though, the Communists increased their number of flak batteries.

The B-29s were still able to achieve remarkable success when bombing North Korean targets. On one nighttime mission, the third B-29 in the 19th BG's bomber stream dropped its bombs on a bridge and completed a 60-degree turn away from the target. In order to take photographs of the strike, each B-29 was carrying two photoflash bombs mixed within the bombload. The photographs from the first two B-29s showed a supply train crossing the bridge. Bombs from the first two B-29s straddled the bridge while the trailing B-29's bombs struck the bridge dead center. The trailing bomber's tail gunner had a bird's-eye view of the spectacular result: The train crossing the bridge disappeared in a series of explosions and the violent secondary detonation of its load of ammunition. The tail gunner reported that the explosions turned the black night into day for almost 30 seconds.

As North Korean targets became scarce, B-29s began attacking more hazardous areas. In September 1952, the 96th, 19th and 307th BGs were directed to attack the Siuho Dam on the Yalu River. Up until that time, B-29 targets were never located within 12 miles of the Yalu River. The bombers' approach tactics were altered for the dangerous mission. The B-29s flew low until they reached the southern tip of Korea; then they climbed to their bombing altitude. Upon reaching 16,000 feet, one B-29 of the 19th BG reported severe icing on its wings, making the plane difficult to control and keep in formation. The aircraft commander decided to abort the

The flak was intense throughout the bomb run to and from the target, with 18 of the 19 B-29s holed by flak.

mission and notified Seoul Command of his decision. Seoul Command informed him not to abort, however, but to head east toward the coastline and then north to rejoin the bomber stream. Weather officers believed they had identified a possible warm air trough near the coast that should melt the ice on the bomber's wings. The warmer air did melt the ice, permitting the bomber to turn back north. When the B-29 reached Wonsan

Harbor, it turned onto a westerly heading and slowly worked its way back into the bomber stream.

As the bombers approached the Siuho Dam, they were illuminated by radar-directed searchlights, followed a few seconds later by anti-aircraft fire. They continued toward the target while being buffeted by both flak bursts and variations in jet stream winds. The B-29s were able to drop their bombs and damage the dam, although not enough to put it out of operation. The flak was intense throughout the bomb run to and from the target, with 18 of the 19 B-29s holed by flak.

When targets were located in the western part of North Korea, B-29s turned toward the east after their bombs were dropped and then continued toward the central part of Korea, where they turned south for Okinawa. One confused 19th BG navigator directed a pilot to make a 360-degree turn. The pilot automatically followed the navigator's instructions, but on rollout the pilot and crew recognized the heading error. They quickly completed a 180-degree turn to get back onto the proper course.

Meanwhile, the B-29 that had been behind the off-course bomber reached its post-target turn point and executed the correct heading toward the central part of Korea. That B-29's flight engineer was tired, however, and did not properly monitor the bomber's engines, allowing them to torch. (When the fuel-air mixture becomes too rich, it causes the fuel at the end of the exhaust pipes to burn.) The bombardier on the B-29 that had made the incorrect turn saw the four exhaust plumes of the torching engines. Believing he had four MiGs in his gunsights, he began firing 50-caliber shells toward the flames, holing the higher B-29, with one spent shell landing within the navigatorradio operator's compartment. Even experienced B-29 crews had problems on combat missions, and there never seemed to be enough trained crews.

From the very start of the Korean War, it was apparent that B-29 strength in the FEAF had to be increased and a qualified crew replacement source established. It took three months to produce an 11-man B-29 combat crew. The three-month training program was

divided into two phases—one 30-day transition period (becoming familiar with and able to fly the B-29) and then a 60-day combat-training period. Virtually all crews were assigned to Strategic Air Command (SAC) after graduation and were shipped to the FEAF.

As the replacement crews arrived and became combat qualified, veteran crews were shipped home, although there was one exception. General MacArthur retained five atomic bombqualified B-29 bomber crews within the combat zone so that, if the war escalated, U.S. forces could respond with nuclear weapons. President Truman and his military and foreign-policy advisers, however, were firmly committed to keeping the war limited because they were more concerned with a potential Soviet armed incursion into Western Europe. It would have been unrealistic for MacArthur to initiate a widened ground offensive or launch airstrikes north of the Yalu River, but just in case, the five atomic bombqualified crews alternated on 10-day ground alert and 10-day off status. The retained crews also served as combat instructors for newly arrived replacement aircrews. Even though atomic bombs were never used in the Korean War, MacArthur's contingency plans provided grist for speculation about what might have happened if they had been used.

When U.N. troops retreated from North Korea, FEAF aircrews were called upon to provide tactical interdiction. Using conventional bombs, the aircrews greatly delayed the southward advance of the Chinese Fourth Field Army, giving the U.S. Eighth Army time to prepare defenses. The FEAF inflicted an estimated 40,000 casualties on the advancing Chinese, decimating a force equivalent to five divisions.

Although B-29 atomic-qualified crews had demonstrated their ability to attack fixed positions (permanent strategic targets), there was still some reason to believe that the U.N. command forces were not well enough prepared to use atomic weapons effectively against moving ground troops (tactical targets). In any case, U.S. Intelligence did not identify hostile concentrations at Taechon and in the Iron Triangle in November 1950 until they were breaking up. And atomic attacks against

Imjin and Wonju would have been close enough to U.N. troop elements to cause casualties.

The threat of using atomic weapons, however, did help to end the war. On May 22, 1953, U.S. Secretary of State John Dulles sent a message to the Chinese leadership via the Indian diplomatic corps. The Chinese were raising unnecessary barriers to an armistice agreement ending the Korean War, said Dulles, and if peace was not forthcoming, the United States would bring in atomic weapons. Within 11 days, the Chinese accepted the armistice plan, with minor changes.

By January 1951, it was necessary to restrict B-29 operations to steer clear of 'MiG Alley'—the area between the Chongchon and Yalu rivers where MiG-15s based in the Antung complex in Manchuria constituted a particular threat. B-29s were withdrawn after Chinese troops captured the U.S. Air Force fighter airfields at Kimpo and Suwon, compelling the Americans to withdraw their North American F-86 Sabres to air bases in Japan. Since the B-29s were highly vulnerable to MiG attack, they required supporting fighters.

Nevertheless, the B-29s continued to pound other Communist targets with effective results. During November 1952, B-29s attacked three airfields that the Chinese were trying to build at the southern end of MiG Alley, north of the Chongchon River. Repeated B-29 attacks forced the Chinese engineers to stop work on those three airfields, as well as their attempts to repair previously damaged airfields.

In order to keep up such devastating attacks, the B-29s required extensive post-mission maintenance to make their three-day turnaround times. Post-mission maintenance consisted of inspecting the bomber's engines and skin for flak damage, washing dirt and oil off the aircraft to maintain maximum aircraft speed, tightening oil connections and any loose equipment, and checking oil sump plugs for metallic shavings, the presence of which indicated the onset of engine wear and probable future engine failure. Maintenance personnel also had to clear bomber crew post-mission write-ups and then complete engine tests to monitor correct operational limits. B-29s needed 7,000 gallons

of aviation fuel, and oil reservoir tanks and lines had to be topped off prior to the next mission.

Weather was an important factor in the aircraft mechanics' work—Korea tended to be mild in the fall and spring, bitterly cold in the winter and oppressively hot in the summer. Typhoons were a severe threat to the B-29 bombers on Okinawa. One typhoon warning forced an evacuation of the B-29s and supporting aircraft to Andersen Air Force Base on Guam. The majority of the ground personnel remained behind and waited out the storm. When the B-29s returned, maintenance personnel identified critical fuel-feed problems in the engines. The higher octane fuel used on Guam was eating into the seals of engine fuel-pump gaskets and causing them to leak. The B-29 fuel tanks had to be drained and the fuel-pump gaskets changed prior to the bombers being certified for the next mission.

During another typhoon alert, the winds were determined to be within the B-29's structural tolerance, so the bombers were not evacuated to Guam. The B-29s were lined up on the runway, and the crews and maintenance climbed on board to ride out the storm. Sandbags were piled to wing level around one landing gear, while hydraulic lines were disconnected from the brakes on the other landing gear to let the bombers swing into the changing wind. The force of the winds, which reached 91 mph, caused the B-29's propellers to turn. The crews reported it was an awesome experience, and the damage to the base was approximately \$1 million. The next evening, the B-29s were ready to strike North Korean targets. Riding out the storm saved maintenance personnel three to six days of work.

Regardless of careful mission planning, fighter protection and night bombing attacks, B-29 aircrews operated in a dangerous environment. Communist anti-aircraft gunners and MiGs unloaded their vengeance on the B-29s. After the war, U.S. Intelligence studies indicated that the Communists' inexperience in aerial warfare prevented them from making the most of their fighter force. F-86 pilots believed that most of the experienced pilots they encountered were probably from the Soviet Union or Eastern bloc countries, while the newer pilots were Chinese and North Korean. With

the end of the Cold War, Air Force Intelligence was able to use Soviet records to confirm that many MiGs encountered by U.S. pilots in MiG Alley and officially reported to be Chinese and North Korean were, in

The Soviet involvement was heavily classified, but early in the war Soviet pilots were heard on radio during combat engagements.

fact, flown by Russian and Polish pilots. Those pilots were rotated through Chinese fighter squadrons for six weeks to gain practical combat experience against U.S. pilots. The Soviet involvement was heavily classified, but early in the war Soviet pilots were heard on radio during combat engagements. Some Soviet pilots were shot down, but the exact number has never been officially confirmed by either U.S. or Soviet air force records.

On January 10, 1953, one B-29 from the 307th BG was badly damaged by a MiG. The aircraft commander kept the bomber flying straight and level so that the crew could bail out. He stayed with the damaged bomber too long, however, and was unable to bail out. (The

commander was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for saving the crew.) When the B-29's left gunner reached the ground, a compassionate North Korean farm woman took care of his wounds before North Korean troops captured him. The gunner was then placed in solitary prison confinement until early May 1953. At that time, with about 10 or 12 other captured B-29 crewmen, he was transported to a larger prisoner of war (POW) camp.

The downed radar operator had also been quickly captured and spent three months in solitary confinement. Since he was an officer, the North Koreans made an exceptional effort to play mind games with him. At one point, he was dragged in front of a firing squad in the compound's center courtyard. A North Korean officer barked a command, the soldiers raised their rifles at him and then held that position for several minutes. Of course, the radar officer thought he was about to be killed—as many downed crewmen were. Unexpectedly, however, the North Korean officer barked another command that made the soldiers lower their rifles and laugh at the badly shaken American officer. The radar officer was then dragged back to his cell.

American airmen suffered greatly while in Communist captivity. The food was bad and medical care practically nonexistent. Captured B-29 crewmen were usually held in isolated or solitary confinement for approximately three months and were fed two cups of rice a day. The prisoners wore the clothing they had on when captured, regardless of the condition, and slept on a dirt floor, usually without blankets. The Korean winters are very harsh and cold, and POWs suffered from all the effects of exposure. Periodically, the captured crewmen would be removed from solitary for interrogation, usually lasting three hours, and then were returned to their cells.

When the three-month initial confinement and interrogation phase was completed, the airmen were transported to a central, Chinese-run POW camp. Life was somewhat better there, but not much. Prisoners were allowed limited exercise, which had been prohibited in the North Korean-run prison.

They were still completely isolated from any outside contact, including non-Communist radio broadcasts, newspapers, magazines and letters, and were not allowed to have writing materials. In the Chinese camps POWs were issued some clothing, and crude shelter was provided, but captured U.N. personnel certainly were not treated according to the rules and standards set by the Geneva Convention. The 19th BG personnel who had survived when their B-29 was shot down on January 10, 1953, remained in Communist captivity until August 21, 1953. On that date, they were loaded in trucks along with other POWs and taken to the U.N. Communist POW exchange point.

Responding to Communist propaganda techniques, the United States used B-29s to drop leaflets to persuade North Korean troops to surrender. In early April 1953, for example, a B-29 propaganda drop scattered thousands of leaflets that stated: 'Many thousands of North Korean soldiers have been killed! Many thousands of young North Korean women will never have husbands! Blame the Communists!' Those leaflets were designed to arouse homesickness among the North Korean soldiers and to incite them to rebel against their commanders and leaders for continuing the war in the face of relentless air and ground attacks. The leaflet drops were only an occasional diversion, however, from the main bombing campaign.

A 98th BG mission on July 20, 1953, was typical of the late war attacks against North Korean targets. On the afternoon of the 20th, more than 180 aircrews sat in the briefing room, waiting for the mission briefing to begin. The wing commander quickly walked onto the platform, took his seat in front of the crewmen and ordered them to take their seats. The operations officer waited behind the podium while another officer stood to the right of a large, drape-covered wall map. The crews drew a quick breath as the drape was pulled to one side, revealing their evening target—two airfields near Pyongyang. The operations officer began describing the mission, 'First aircraft takeoff will be to the north at 1830 hours,' and as he gave locations and routes, the second officer pointed each out on the map. The Intelligence officer then briefed the crews

on the general shape, size and location of the two targets, mentioning what the pre-strike reconnaissance photographs revealed about the target, its defenses, landmarks and the selected offset aiming points (OAPs). When the Intelligence officer was finished, the communications, weather and engineering officers added their information to the briefing.

As the crews exited the briefing room, many crewmen were asking each other: ‘What do you think? Will this be the last mission?’

At 4 p.m., the crews began reassembling to be issued personal equipment—parachutes, side arms, flight helmets, earphones and other equipment needed to perform the mission. The crews then boarded trucks for the trip to the B-29s parked on the steel and cement runways. Each B-29 was a beehive of activity as flight crews began their preflight aircraft inspection. Crews examined every inch of their bomber’s fuselage, wings, tires, guns, propellers and all the other items on their preflight checklist. Each aircraft commander then lined up his crew with their equipment piled behind. He slowly moved down the line of men, inspecting each piece of equipment to verify everything was combat ready. At his command, the crewmen donned their Mae West life jackets and parachutes and began loading all the equipment into the waiting bomber.

‘How about it, Captain, is this the last mission?’ the crewmen asked. He could only answer, ‘It’s the last one...for tonight!’ But all questions were soon put aside as the control tower cleared the crew’s B-29 for takeoff.

As the B-29 rumbled off its assigned parking hardstand and taxied to position on the runway, the crewmen’s anticipation grew. The B-29 turned onto the end of the runway, and the pilot put on the bomber’s brakes and ran the engines up to full power. The aircraft was vibrating, then it surged forward as takeoff power was applied and the brakes released. The four screaming engines pulled the heavy bomber down the runway into the air toward its assigned target near Pyongyang.

The B-29s encountered heavy clouds that obscured the target, even though they were flying under the light from the moon. That was a very dangerous time

for the bombers because they had to fly straight and level and could be tracked by prowling Communist night fighters. The bombardiers used radar to locate their target, releasing their 500-pound bombs through the clouds. Even with the thick cloud base, brilliant flashes of flame could be seen through the cloud layer. The B-29s were being tracked by radar-directed anti-aircraft artillery, and flak burst among the bombers. All B-29 crewmen scanned the night sky looking for enemy fighters, but on this mission none approached the bombers. As each B-29 dropped its bombs, it turned away from the target and headed back to base. The crews relaxed when the aircraft landed and were parked back on their hardstand, but the evening’s mission was not over until after the post-mission debriefing.

In the trucks heading for the debriefing, the crewmen returned to the question of whether they had just flown the war’s last mission. As each crew entered the debriefing room, chaplains met them, welcoming them home and giving each a cup of hot chocolate. The crewmen unzipped their flight suits, wet with sweat and stained with dirt, as they went to the assigned debriefing table, where the Intelligence specialist tried to draw out as much information about the mission as possible. Dawn streaked the eastern horizon as the crewmen finally exited the building, moving slowly toward their quarters. At the same time, other men were getting up, ready for the heavy work of preparing the bombers for the next mission.

The mission had been part of the FEAF’s airfield neutralization program, which Brig. Gen. Richard Carmichael called a ‘blaze of glory.’ Those bombing raids against North Korea’s airfields were designed to render them unserviceable for conventional and jet aircraft. The Chinese, under the cover of inclement weather, had flown in approximately 200 aircraft to Uiju airfield in early July 1953. Once the planes had landed, they had been quickly towed to scattered dispersal revetments in the hills adjoining the hard surface highway between Uiju and Sinuiju. Most of these aircraft received some shrapnel damage during the B-29s’ airfield bombing raids.

The Chinese could still ferry in replacement aircraft before the neutral nations’ inspection teams arrived at

the various North Korean airfields to record how many aircraft were at the base. Communist combat engineers were authorized to repair the dirt-surfaced runways after the bombings to permit landings of replacement aircraft, but they could not maintain full combat operations. The replacement aircraft were towed into the aircraft revetments to wait for the inspection team’s visit. Once the inspection team counted the number of aircraft on the North Korean airfields, the fields could be brought up to full operational capabilities.

Regardless of the many obstacles they faced, B-29 crews performed brilliantly, destroying industrial and military strategic targets in North Korea and supporting U.N. ground troops.

The armistice agreement between the U.N. and the Communists included a statement that guaranteed North Korea the right to retain the number of aircraft that were on the airfields and operational at the time

the armistice agreement became effective. On July 27, 1953, the last day of the war, two B-29s of the 98th BG and two of the 91st BG flew over North Korea delivering a final round of psychological leaflets.

B-29s flew 1,076 days during the 1,106-day air war in Korea, dropping 160,000 tons of bombs on Communist targets—a greater bomb tonnage than had been dropped on Japan during World War II. Regardless of the many obstacles they faced, B-29 crews performed brilliantly, destroying industrial and military strategic targets in North Korea and supporting U.N. ground troops. The FEAF lost a grand total of 1,406 aircraft and suffered 1,144 men killed and 306 wounded during the war. Thirty FEAF men who had been declared missing were eventually returned to military control, 214 POWs were repatriated under the terms of the armistice agreement, while 35 men were still being held in Communist captivity as of June 1954. The men who flew and supported the B-29s in the Far East Command were an important part of the air war over Korea, but their contribution has seldom been recognized.

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An aerial view of the National Museum of the United States Air Force, located at Wright Patterson Airforce Base, Dayton, OH

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