

20TH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER
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20TH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION'S TARGET FOR TODAY Lt. Gen. James V. Edmundson, U.S.A.F, Ret.

Those of us who were members of 20th Air Force during World War II and who form the backbone of 20th Air Force Association are an elite group. We operated and flew B-29's, the finest bombardment airplane to see combat in that war, and P-51's, its finest fighter with the range and performance to accompany B-29's. We were part of the first, truly strategic air organization-anywhere-that was centrally controlled and directed without its efforts being diluted by those who didn't understand the exercise of Air Power. And we played a major role in the unconditional surrender of the Japanese Empire without the need for a bloody amphibious invasion of the home islands. We were each a part of a military effort that was bigger than any of us could actually envision.

It was from the bones of the 20th Air Force that Strategic Air Command (SAC) was formed. The early SAC was equipped with B-29s of the 20th Air Force that survived the boneyard. The vast majority of SAC's senior commanders, combat crews, ground crews, and administrators—the building blocks from which General LeMay built his Strategic Air Command—came from World War II's 20th Air Force. The general had to begin from scratch, but he had some combat-tested material with which to work.

As it turned out, World War II was immediately followed by an international confrontation that became known as the Cold War, a period during which the Soviet Union put forth a major effort to expand Communism into every corner of the civilized world. The Free World, under the leadership of the United States, strove to block this expansion. U. S. policy promulgated by President Eisenhower established the means by which Communist expansion was to be challenged. It was known as "Massive Retaliation." Under this policy, the United States committed itself to maintaining such an overwhelming atomic strike capability, the Soviets would be deterred from their plan of world conquest. The Strategic Air Command General LeMay built was the spearhead of the force on which this national policy depended; a policy that eventually brought about the collapse of the Soviet Union. Demolition of the Berlin Wall, one of the events which signaled this collapse, would never have taken place without the years of dedicated service of the people who made up SAC, many of whom had won their spurs in B-29s of the 20th Air Force.

Where do we stand today?

To begin with, there is no Strategic Air Command. What was left of it was absorbed into Tactical Air Command, an organization now known as Air Combat Command, with headquarters at Langley Air Force Base and commanded by fighter pilots since its inception. The nucleus of strategic bombardment capability once provided by SAC no longer exists. The latest and best bomber of today, the B-2, with its stealth capability and world-wide range, exists only in token numbers. The entire B-2 program consists of 21 airplanes. There are no further bombardment aircraft on the drawing board nor under development. Bombers are at the end of the line. The current budget calls for procurement of more than 400 F-22s with which to achieve command of the air, but we are not providing for the means to use the air for our own advantage, once we own it.

The last seven Air Force Chiefs of Staff have been fighter pilots, without any bombardment experience. All Air Force major commands are now commanded by fighter pilots. Every Air Force overseas command is commanded by a fighter pilot. I don't have anything against fighter pilots...always wanted to be one, myself. But somewhere in the Air Force there should be a repository of strategic bombardment knowledge. Those of us in the 20th Air Force Association who brought strategic bombardment to its zenith in time of war, who participated in bringing about the defeat of the Japanese Empire from the skies, and who provided the know-how to bring victory in the Cold War, still have a job to do. Our mission for today is to make our voices heard in a plea to keep alive in the Air Force the skills, the knowledge, and the ability to win wars that has served our nation so well in the past. Nobody can do this job with more authority than those who have 'been there and done that,' the members of 20th Air Force Association.

DISGRUNTLED PILOTS

Recent news stories about unhappy Air Force pilots, who are turning down sizable cash bonuses and leaving the Air Force to become flying bus-drivers, strike a sad note. Being a military aviator is one of the most demanding, as well as most satisfying, careers a person can have. It is disappointing to find the Air Force has so mis-managed its pilot program that the pure satisfaction of flying Uncle Sam's airplanes has lost its attraction for the guys that fly.

During the 1930's, as a kid just out of school during the depression, I worked at a lot of jobs. Everywhere I worked, I saw a lot of unhappy people. People who despised their jobs, who could hardly wait for the 5 o'clock whistle, who hated Monday mornings with a blue passion. As a teenager, I decided that I would never settle for a lifetime job until I found something I enjoyed so much I wouldn't care whether weekends ever came. I never found such a job, until they strapped me into an airplane, in 1937. I still felt the same about it 37 years later when I retired. Most of my flying school classmates felt the same.

In 1958, I was a Major General and found myself president of a Flying Status Review Board, in Washington. The Air Force had just adopted a policy ("the 25 Year Policy") of no longer requiring pilots to fly after 25 years of rated service, but to continue paying them Flying Pay. The Board's chore was to examine the records of thousands of pilots with less than 25 years in the cockpit, and determine which had lost their value as pilots, and should be removed from Flight Status and lose their Flying Pay—a monumental task.

In examining a pilot's flight record, we considered a number of factors. How many hours he had flown...had he barely met his Flight Pay minima, or was he a frequent flier? What kind of airplanes was he flying...was he current in operational airplanes or just circling the flagpole in Gooney Birds? How much combat time did he have? Was he jet-qualified?

We found a lot who seemed to be maintaining minimum Flight Status just for the pay, yet some major air commanders fought like tigers to protect the Flight Pay of some who did little flying but were specialists in non-flying skills. On the other hand, we interviewed a host of 25 year pilots who told us, "Take my Flying Pay if you must, but let me keep flying." The Board felt strongly that Flying Pay should not be used as an enticement to keep administrative specialists on the job, and that the Air Force should do away with its arbitrary "25 Year Policy," because it didn't really separate pilots who had flown-out their usefulness from those who still loved flying and were reaching their peak as air commanders.

The Board recommended to the Chief of Staff that the Air Force do away with Flying Pay, told him it was our considered opinion that those who really didn't love flying had established careers in non-flying specialties and would miss the money, but few would leave the service, and most would be relieved not to have to fly the minimum number of hours, take Instrument Checks, etc. Those who loved flying—the productive pilots—would grumble a bit, but keep on flying. We told the Chief we believed the situation would sort itself out in a short time, and in a couple of years, we could reinstate Flying Pay; meanwhile, the Air Force should do away with its "25-Year Policy." Though the Chief was intrigued by our ideas, a couple of major commanders talked him out of it. As we look at the situation today, it crosses my mind that our proposal of 40 years ago may have prevented today's problem, for it would have made clear—long ago—that Air Force pilots should fly because they love it and are proud of what they do.

Those flying-for-the-money should be identified as early in their careers as possible and re-channeled into non-flying careers or released to the airlines where the flying is not so demanding, the hours are more regular, and the bucks come in larger numbers. (Soyou liked to fly! James V. Edmundson graduated from Flying School in February 1938, was at Pearl Harbor, flew South Pacific B-17 tour in '42, formed a B-29 squadron in Sep. '43, took it to India, became Group Commander 6 months later and, because of his exceptional leadership, his Group led entire 20th Air Force across Tokyo Bay on Sep. 2, 1945. He flew B-29 combat tour in Korea, then B-36s, B-47s, B-52s and 42 missions in Viet Nam; in 1960's, while Commanding General, 17th Air Force, flew every fighter type under his command and jumped with every paratroop outfit in Europe—181 combat missions. And you liked to fly?)

HARRY S. TRUMAN APPRECIATION COMMITTEE

Co-chairmen: John Wildenthal (713) 247-5461 & Walter R. Ross (913) 268-7625 Secretary: Ben Nicks, 11512 W. 49th St., Shawnee, KS 66203-1002 (913) 631-6382; Fax (913) 631-9628

Announces BRIG. GEN. PAUL TIBBETTS to be principal speaker at next year's annual wreath-laving at President Truman's grave. ALL veterans—particularly POW's & 20th AF vets—families & friends are invited. Grave inside H.S. Truman Library at U.S. Hwy 24 & Delaware, Independence, MO 64050. Ceremony starts around 1100 am, Sat. 8/1/98. Contact Rita Klepac (816) 833-1400 for details. Yokio Shoichi

September 21, 1997, Mr. Yokio died of a heart attack at age 82. He's the soldier who, after Marines took Guam in 1944, hid in the jungle 27 years, until captured and returned to Japan, ashamed for returning alive, and apologizing (to the Emperor) for not—as, expected—fighting to the death. His return highlighted the psychological & material transformation of Japan and moved its people with

his "earnestness and devotion to traditional values," yet the Hiroshima Cult still insists that, "In 1945, it was 'immoral' to A-bomb a city—even if it contained the Army Hq. planning the homeland's defense/a major industrial center—because invading would have cost only 20,000 lives." They forget that over a half-million more Yokios awaited us on Kyushu, and a couple of million more on Honshu...

Life Memberships

To keep their dues current, some become Life Members, by sending us \$50 c/o Treasurer (W.E. Cooper, 901 Stemmons Tower East, 2700 Stemmons Freeway, Dallas, TX 75207). A 462nd Gp. Tail Gunner, George Allen, is #1; a 500th pilot, Jay Reichbach is #2; a 501st co-pilot, Bill Cooper is #3; our first POW-Life Member, a 499th Navigator shotdown over Tokyo-Hap Halloran-is #4; a Navigator from the 39th, Hollis Logan, is #5; a 7th Fighter Command P-51 Crew Chief, Merle Galyon, is #6; a Combat Crew Photo Technician from 40th, W. Burr Bennett, Jr. is #7; 9th Group's Ben Nicks, a pilot, is #8; 19th's Vern Chandler, deceased, was #9; 497th's Dave Braden, a Navigator 'with ditching experience' is #10; Elbert Smith, pilot in 509th, is #13; Lt. Gen. Edmundson is #73; D.P. Wood-444th's China Detachment C.O.-is #146. 9th Gp has always 'led the pack,' though 39th is 'closing.' 10/31/97 totals were:

9th Gp.....19 each

39th Gp... 17 each

19th & 499th... 11 each

500th Gp... 10 each

6th Bomb Gp Assn 7th Ftr Cmd Assn 9th Bomb Gp Assn 19th Bomb Gp Assn 20th AF Guam Gp Assn 29th Bomb Gp Assn 39th Bomb Gp Assn

6th, 330th, 468th, & 498th Gps...9 each

497th Gp.....8 each

504th & 505th Gps...6 each

20th AF Guam Gp, 462nd, & 509th Gps...5 each

UPCOMING REUNIONS

29th, 331st, 501st, & 502nd Gps...4 each 444th Gp...3 each 7th Ftr Cmd & 75 ASG...2 each 40th, 58 Wg Hq, 65 ASG, 303 ASG, 315th WgHq & 383rd ASG...1 each

San Antonio, November 12-15, 1998 Orlando, October 14-18, 1998 San Diego, September 1998. Tucson, May 6-9, 1998 Myrtle Beach, Sep. 10-12, 1998 Atlanta, October 1999 Boston, August 13-16, 1998

55th Wx Recon Sq Assn Milwaukee, October 1998

40th Bomb Gp Assn Charlotte, Sep/Oct 1998

58th Bomb Wg Assn 73rd Bomb Wg Assn 315th Bomb Wg Assn 330th Bomb Gp Assn 504th Bomb Gp Assn 505th Bomb Gp Assn 509th Comp Gp Assn

Lexington, August 10-17, 1998 Asheville, May 7-10, 1998 Nashville, Sep. 15-20, 1998 Albuquerque, Sep. 17-20, 1998 San Diego, 3-7 May, 1998 Baton Rouge, Sep. 1998 Washington, D. C., 1999

A few ask for 20th Air Force-wide reunions, but we held a few and were asked to stop because some other associations asked us to.

We held one at Seattle during Boeing's 50th anniversary celebration of XB-29's first flight, but none since. Besides, you find more old friends at Wing/Group reunions.

Short Bursts (10 rounds or less)

a. August 31, 1997, 19th Bomb Group Association lost a fine chairman, and we an outstanding director: Vern Chandler was respected by all, and is sorely missed.

b. Contributions to this Association are deductible under IRS Code Sections 170 (c) (3) (Income Tax), 2522 (a) (4) (Gift Tax), and 2055 (a) (4) (Estate Tax), so consult your own CPA and/or Attorney. Our Tax I.D. Number is 33-0013350. (Note last 4 digits!)

c. At the April 1997 meeting, Earl Perry of the 29th was made a Director (succeeding Harry Mitchell) as was W. J. (Hoot) Gibson of 505th (to replace Bill Mathay). Their help is genuinely appreciated! (Same officers elected for another year.)

d. No wonder we had such grief. The B-29 nacelle opening for the 3350 was 20% smaller than the B-1 7's for the 1820, the 3350 powered the B-19, then development stopped; only 11 had been delivered when mass-production was suddenly ordered. For more, see Dr. Gene Gillum's monograph, "The Beast," about the 3350-B-29 marriage, by sending 20th AF Association's Treasurer \$5.00.

e. Those 'having withdrawals' from not being dunned for war-memorial-donations should contact American Battle Monuments Commission which is accepting private funds with which to build a World War II Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

f. Our Speakers Bureau provides speakers for unit reunions & civic organizations. Contact Hap Halloran, 73rd Wg navigator & POW, or Dave Braden, a 73rd Wg navigator "with ditching experience." Both great speakers. Phone numbers & addresses below.

g. Marines forget how close Iwo's Marines felt to those who, at the time, carried the fight to the Enemy Homeland, and now say proposed site for an AF Memorial in Washington is 'too close' to the Marine War Memorial (Iwo Jima). We believe Marines dying at Iwo, like the Airmen who passed overhead and died in the Air Offensive Japan, would want the two memorials close together, forever. If you agree, 'tell your congressman!'

h. For totally different reactions to unspeakable experiences, read Hap Halloran & Fiske Hanley books about being Jap POWs.