

20TH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER

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"KEEP YOUR CRUMMY AIR FORCE MEMORIAL AWAY FROM OUR SACRED MARINE MEMORIAL"

They are more circumspect in their choice of words, but mean the same: Marines are trying to keep the Air Force Memorial from being built in Arlington Ridge Park. Working with a local neighborhood association, Marines are asking local governmental agencies (National Capital Planning Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts, and the National Park Service)—that have approved the Arlington Ridge Park site proposed for the Air Force Memorial—(;) withdraw their approval. It matters not 1) that 52,173 AAF crewmen died in action during WWII while 19,733 Marines were killed, 2) that Arlington Ridge Park contains 25 acres, the Marines applied for two (acres) in the 1950s, then doubled it to four, then re-doubled it to eight and now say that (though most is still vacant) "nothing else should be built in Arlington Ridge Park," even if, 3) in 1954, the Marine Corps War Memorial Foundation stipulated in writing that the authorization (to build a Marine War Memorial) "is (being) granted with the understanding that the Marine Corps Memorial is an element of ultimate development of the..." (entire tract)...", 4) the Netherlands Carillon occupies three acres and the proposed Air Force site requires two, and 5) that the 'superb alternate site' Marines suggest for the Air Force is under the Navy Annex which DOD plans to use for the next 21 years! And some members of this Association are allowing the Marines to publicize their names as sponsors of a Marine celebration to be held in Washington next February! Gentlemen, where is your common sense? Beware the Greeks...! As Gen. LeMay said, "we should support U.S. Airpower!" He said nothing about Scapower! How can you SUPPORT U.S. AIRPOWER? By writing the National Capital Planning Commission (801 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 301, Wash., DC 20576), the Commission of Fine Arts (The Pension Building, 441 F Street, N.W., Suite 314, Wash., DC 20001) and U. S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, National Capital Region, 1100 Ohio Dr, S.W., Wash., DC 20242). Urge them all to see that the Air Force Memorial is built in Arlington Ridge Park. We have sample letters, for those needing them. Address and phone number above!

"How Close is Too Close?"

Charlie Phillips 73rd Bomb Wing Association's July 1999 "Saipan Superior!"

One of the GREAT TREATS during our 73rd Bomb Wing Association reunions is hearing a well-told war story involving a B-29 on the high road to Japan! Here is one I heard back in 1986 during the New Orleans Reunion, thirteen years ago.

The story-teller that evening was JOE KRAMP, WGA, "World's Greatest Aviator," he called himself. Joe was in prime story-telling form. He did not give us the date, or the target city that day. Joe was flying with a new combat crew, one of his assignments as Squadron Operations Officer.

"Handshake" crews we called them, since we had never flown with them before. For the first time, the crew would be flying a heavyweight (70 ton) B-29 takeoff. His Stateside combat crew training course did not include takeoffs in a 140,000 pound B-29!

"Let's get on board," Joe confidently told them, "let's go fly."

The new crew had been well briefed for their first mission. They followed the time schedule closely: Stations-time, engine-start time, taxi-time, and finally takeoff-time. It would be pitch dark for their night takeoff, according to the weather forecaster. The time of takeoff was set so as to arrive over their target at about three in the morning, a night-time incendiary bombing attack against a major Japanese city. At takeoff it would be really dark off the end of the runway at Saipan, over Magicienne Bay.

"Watch your altitude!"

Joe had briefed the young aircraft commander very, very carefully about how much altitude he could lose after liftoff, considering the height of our runway in relation to the sea, which was about 300 feet. He had assigned the Aircraft Commander to the left seat and the Co-pilot to the right seat. Joe, as Operations Officer, sat right next to the A/C on the autopilot cover, a plywood box (with no sign of a safety belt). There, he could communicate best with the A/C, by shouting right into his ear!

Just before takeoff Joe again reminded the A/C that after they had lifted off the runway, he could lose only 250 feet, no more! This was vital. Sure enough, shortly after the B-29 broke the ground, the A/C allowed the heavy machine to ease down 100 feet, while flying "on instruments."

Joe, keeping an eagle eye on the altimeter, immediately shouted in the A/C's right ear, "Watch your altitude!" Another hundred feet slowly unwound, and once again Joe shouted, "Watch your altitude!" The altimeter was the only instrument he could rely on. It was really dark that night, and no one on the crew could see the ocean at all.

Hit the Water

When Joe Kramp noticed that the altimeter needle was still unwinding even just slightly, he reached over and grabbed the yoke, applying gentle back pressure to get the 13-29 to level off and actually commence to climb. But before anything happened, the airplane went, "Whap!" and shuddered slightly. The B-29 had hit the water! Amazingly, they were still flying. Joe quickly shouted at the Navigator to grab the Aldis Lamp, take it to the Astrodome, sweep the top of the fuselage and report whatever he saw. (The Aldis lamp was a plug-in unit used for visual Morse Code communication, usually when radio silence was important, but served as an excellent spotlight). Meanwhile, the B-29 was in a slight climb, and it was still very much in-flight!

Props Bent

The Navigator quickly reported back that (he two inboard 16-foot steel propellers were badly bent back, it seemed like about 90 degrees or so, at about a foot or so from the end of the prop tips! The dihedral (slight upsweep) of the wings had prevented the outboard props from hitting the water—only the #2 and #3 props were badly bent at the tips! The outboards looked OK. Well, Joe did not Declare an Emergency. They continued their climb. Joe's comment to the crew was, "Let's see how this thing performs." He noticed that their speeds were looking fairly normal, so they continued their climb to the assigned cruising altitude. There did not even seem to be much vibration, he told us. He had been prepared to break away and abort back to Isley Field at the first sign of abnormal flight. But, he told us, the situation appeared to be quite normal.

On to the Target

So, guess what, Joe and his new crew flew their machine all the way to Japan, dropped their incendiary load on their target city as briefed, and then took up their course for home. Joe insisted their airspeeds seemed pretty close to normal all the way out and all the way back! It just didn't seem all that necessary to abort when their speeds looked so normal! And, anyway, "Abort" was a dirty word during the General LeMay regime! When they got their B-29 back safely on the ground at Saipan and parked on their hardstand, the flight crew headed for the debriefing, while the proud crew began their task of changing the two Inboard engines, along with the replacement of the two bent propellers. Their B-29 was out of commission for a couple of days! Joe and his fresh replacement crew were mere inches away from catastrophe! In 1991, we lost Joe—he died at his home in Baltimore. Our reunions have just not been quite the same without him. As he progressed through his combat tour, flying out of Saipan, Joe kept reinforcing the validity of those initials, WGA—World's Greatest Aviator.

Single-Engine Landing

Colonel Jackson S. Wallace

Monterey Bay Chapter, Military Order of the World Wars Officer Review, July 1999

In January 1945, unflyable weather had forced us out of our training base at Hays Kansas. We had evacuated the entire 330th Bomb Group to Batista Field just outside Havana, Cuba, to continue B-29 training. At Batista, our crew had been given orders for a navigational training mission to a small island east of the Panama Canal Zone and, by gosh, we found it, attesting to the professionalism of our Navigator. He had explained to me that he was using a "Landfall" procedure whereby he offset us 10 miles from our destination, and when the ETA expired, we would make a 90 degree turn to the island. Well, it worked like a charm and we hit the island on the nose. We then made a standard needle-width turn to head back to Batista Field at about 20,000 feet. Sometime later, the Isle of Pines came into view and about the same time, Number 2 gave up the ghost with its oil pressure dropping to zero. Before it reached bottom, however, our wonderful Flight Engineer, John Stanko, recommended feathering it immediately, and we followed the procedure for prop feathering, and shut the engine down. The airplane was light, having no armament on board and not a great deal of fuel, so it handled just fine on three engines. Proceeding on course and maintaining altitude, another 10 minutes went by when a fire started in Number 3, so we quickly executed the Engine Fire Procedure and the extinguisher doused the fire. Stanko again expertly prepared the engine to be feathered. While I wouldn't propose a trans-Atlantic trip on two engines, still the big bird handled just fine, although to maintain airspeed, I dropped the nose slightly and began a gentle descent to the landing pattern at Batista. I re-trimmed the airplane now that we were back in a symmetrical condition.

We were at about 3,000 feet when we spotted the airfield and commenced a long final approach. I called the Tower and Declared an Emergency, telling the tower to notify Maintenance that numbers 2 and 3 were feathered. I was holding a bit more altitude than really needed, planning to drain it off when we had the landing made, as I didn't want to have to go around on two engines.

Holy Smokes! Number 1 started backfiring when we were at about 2,000 feet. Engines were in short supply at Batista, although most of us carried spares to Cuba in our bombays. Nevertheless we wanted to save the engine and not take a chance of ruining it by keeping it running in that condition. All of us on the Flight Deck decided to feather that engine, too. Stanko quickly ran through the procedure, and we descended into Batista with only #4 running. I briefed Roger Vannelli, the co-pilot, on what my plans were, should anything go wrong, and told him to help me on the right rudder if it became necessary to add power to #4 engine. It told the Bombardier, Chester J. Kalinowski, to strap-in tightly. He said, "Not to worry, Boss, you've got this thing made."

If I do say so, the touchdown was smooth as molasses on the barn floor, and as I let the airplane run out the landing-roll, both Vannelli and Kalinowski yelled at me, "Great landing!" Then a terrible thought occurred to me. We had to exit a taxiway on our right, and I could not make a turn to the right. It is simply impossible to turn a B-29 into the only running outboard engine. Add power to that engine and you will turn to the left. Apply right brake to turn, and you're fighting the engine with a brake application, which is nullified by the thrust of #4. Embarrassed, I called the Tower and advised that I could have to shut down the airplane on the runway and to get a Tow Truck out to me without delay. The guy in the Tower was shocked and said he had other airplanes in the pattern and directed me to clear the runway. I told him it was impossible for me to get off the runway and to expedite the Tow Truck.

Later, I expected to at least be questioned about shutting-down the 3rd engine, but never heard a word about it. So, maybe I got away with one. I still wasn't sure whether we feathered #1 to save the engine or just so I could make a single-engine landing. Was it the first time a B-29 had been landed on a single engine? I didn't know, but if it was a record, it was a record that I hoped I would never have to break.

B-29 Glider

Lt Gen. James V. Edmundson, USAI-". Ret.

Bradenton/Sarasota Chapter, Military Order of the World Wars

(From "Officer Review" September 1999)

In the July 1999 issue of Officer Review, Colonel Jackson S. Wallace had an exciting tale to tell about bringing his B-29 into Batista Field, Cuba, for a smooth landing with three of his R-3350 engines feathered and only number 4 churning. He finished his story by wondering if any other B-29 had ever made a single-engine landing. I'm not sure how many B-29s have landed with only one fan turning, but his story reminded me of watching a B-29 returning from a combat mission and landing safely with four engines feathered. It's a story worth telling.

In 1944, I commanded the 468th Bomb Group, flying B-29s and stationed at Kharagpur, India. Our target one particular mission was the floating dry dock at Singapore, a long way away. Colonel John East, my deputy, and I rotated flying missions, and it was his turn on this one. I stayed home and took care of things on the ground. Since it was a long flight (about 18 hours), fuel was a problem. There was an emergency field at Cox's Bazaar in Burma, a couple of hours short of home base, that could be used in a pinch. The mission went pretty well as scheduled. The floating dry dock was sunk, and fighter opposition was intense, but not for an extended period.

Flak was heavy, but only over the target. As the group turned off their bomb run and headed north for Kharagpur, they checked each other over.

There was some battle damage and a few feathered props, and the fuel situation was tight. The planes separated and came home individually, so each crew could milk its fuel and pick the optimum airspeed and altitude. A couple of crews dropped off at Cox's Bazaar. I was in the Control Tower at Kharagpur as the group came straggling in, with a lot of feathered props and low on fuel. One of the crews was commanded by Major Charlie Joyce, He was a competent pilot with a happy-go-lucky attitude, lots of confidence, and a world of guts. Charlie had picked up a few bullet holes over the target and had to shut down #3 a few minutes later, but He leaned out the other three skipped Cox's Bazaar, and headed for home.

About an hour out of Kharagpur, he had to feather #2, and now he was in real trouble. When he was about 15 minutes out, I talked to him from the Tower. He still had lots of altitude and was pretty sure he could make it if he set-up for a slow descent, and a long, straight-in approach to the runway. Everything seemed to be going fine. I could still see him from the Tower, still with lots of altitude and coming straight-in, with his flaps and gear down. And then, when passing through 3,000 feet, he ran out of gas! Charlie and his crew were in a jam. He told his Flight Engineer to feather the last two engines, and told the Crew over the interphone to bail out. It was quite a sight to see this B-29 with chutes streaming out of it and all 4 props standing at attention. When they were at about 1,000 feet. everybody was out except Charlie and his Flight Engineer. The Engineer looked down through the nose wheel well, and the ground looked too close to jump, so he climbed into the empty righthand seat (the Co-pilot's), and strapped-himself-in, beside Charlie. From the Tower, it looked to me like they were going to be just a tad short. There was a dirt road that went around the field, just outside the perimeter fence.

Charlie bounced his main gear on the perimeter road, over the fence, and rolled to a stop about half-way down the runway, with his Flight Engineer still strapped-into the Co-pilot's seat, all props feathered, and his B-29 in one piece.

Afterward, Charlie said there was no question in his mind that he would make it, because before takeoff, he and his Flight Engineer had "stuffed the tanks." This was the practice of topping-off the tanks from a fuel truck a couple of hours after normal refueling, just to make sure the tanks had every pound of fuel they could hold. Charlie didn't relax until all of his crew crawled with their parachutes over the fence from the boondocks.

Charlie Joyce was the kind of a guy you wanted to have in your outfit. He was later killed in a B-47 accident in which General Michael McCoy was flying the airplane. The base outside Orlando, Florida was named after Mike. They should have named a base after Charlie Joyce, too.

SHORT BURSTS (Not more than 10 rounds)

1. AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION made it a point of honor that a Presidential Citation be awarded the 509th Comp. Gp. for its service all those years ago. A half-century of oversight and political correctness denied the 509th just recognition. AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION stayed alter (he Pentagon, which recently announced the award. Congratulations to the 509th and AFA for three successful missions!

2. Jan. 1, 1944, 92 each B-29s had been delivered to the Army Air Corps, of which 16 were combat-ready. One year later, 750 were in-combat, and less than two years later, 3,500 had been produced! Final assembly was at 4 factories: Marietta, Omaha, Rcnton and Wichita. Regardless of what else you may hear, it proved to be America's greatest single weapon system program ever!

3. Forgotten what WW II was like? Read, "No Strategic Targets Left," by F. J. Bradley (Turner Pub. Co.), with scads of factual data; "Backward Into Battle, a Tail Gunner's Journey into WW II," by Andy Doty, with a lot of human-interest about a youngster's life in the AAF (Tall Tree Press, Palo Alto, CA).

4. Maj. Gen. Thomas Ncary, Commanding General, 20th Air Force, F.E. Warren AFB, WY has permitted us to name him as an Honorary Director of this Association. Like Gen. LeMay, he has critical responsibilities for the defense of this country, and honors us by accepting this appointment.

5. You are reading this newsletter because someone paid his dues. Arc yours current? They're only \$10 a year, or \$50 for a Life Membership, and it takes quite a few \$10 and \$50 bills to print and distribute each year, and we don't send out Dues Statements (too expensive), so we would very much appreciate your help.

6. For years, this association has exchanged newsletters with 20th AF Wing & Group associations and this year we started exchanging with B-36 Association, B-47 Stratojct Association, B-52 Stratofort Association, and B-58 Hustler Association, because those people look-over where we left-off. We salute them!