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George Marquardt, 84; Pilot of Plane Flying With Enola Gay on Mission to Bomb Hiroshima

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August 23, 2003 | Dennis McLellan | Times Staff Writer

George Marquardt's memory of the atomic blast over Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, never dimmed.

"It was like the sun had come out of the ground and just exploded," he often recalled.

Marquardt, the former Army Air Forces pilot whose B-29 was designated to photograph the historic bomb blast over the Japanese port city, died in a nursing home in Murray, Utah, on Aug. 15, a day after the 58th anniversary of the Japanese surrender that ended World War II. He was 84 and had Parkinson's disease.

For The Record

Los Angeles Times Saturday August 30, 2003 Home Edition Main News Part A Page 2 National Desk 2 inches; 95 words Type of Material: Correction
A-bomb filming -- An obituary of George Marquardt, the B-29 pilot whose plane carried photographic equipment to record the atomic blast over Hiroshima, which appeared in the California section Aug. 23, stated that Manhattan Project scientist Bernard Waldman forgot to open the shutter on the high-speed camera and that none of the film of the blast was exposed. That is incorrect, according to Harold M. Agnew, a scientist on another plane that measured the bomb's yield. He said that Waldman operated the camera properly, but that the data on the film was lost in processing.

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As he flew toward Hiroshima from the island of Tinian, north of Guam, in the early morning of that Aug. 6, Marquardt's B-29 -- Necessary Evil -- was to the left and rear of Col. Paul Tibbets' Enola Gay, the B-29 carrying the atomic bomb dubbed "Little Boy."

On the right and to the rear of the Enola Gay was Maj. Charles Sweeney's bomber, which carried blast-gauge instruments that would be dropped by parachute.

"You boys are making history today," a Manhattan Project scientist on Marquardt's plane had said that morning -- a morning that, as they neared Hiroshima, Marquardt would remember as being "the most beautiful day I've ever seen."

That changed soon after 8:15 a.m., when the Enola Gay's bombardier released "Little Boy."

Although Marquardt's B-29 remained at least 15 miles from Hiroshima, Marquardt later said the blast "felt as if a monster hand had slapped the side of the plane."

The light from the 9,700-pound uranium bomb with the destructive force of 20,000 tons of TNT was so intense that Marquardt could not even see his co-pilot, Jim Anderson.

Bernard Waldman, the Manhattan Project scientist on Marquardt's plane, was equipped with a special high-speed movie camera loaded with six seconds of film to record the blast. But in his excitement, Waldman forgot to open the camera shutter, and none of the film was exposed.

In defiance of orders, however, a crew member had sneaked a camera on board and took a picture of the explosion.

The bomb, which destroyed about five square miles of Hiroshima, killed 70,000 to 100,000 people.

"I have never for one moment regretted my participating in the dropping of the A-bomb," Marquardt told the Salt Lake Tribune in 1995. "It ended a terrible war."

Three days after the attack on Hiroshima, a B-29 piloted by Sweeney dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki, which prompted the Japanese surrender.

Tibbets, a retired brigadier general, told The Times this week that if a third bomb had been necessary, he would probably have chosen Marquardt to drop it.

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"The Atomic bomb is too dangerous to be loose in a lawless world... we pray that (God) may guide us to use it in His ways and for His Purposes."

–President Harry Truman, August, 1945

Major Charles W. Sweeney
Commander - Pilot
"The Great Artiste" **NO. 89**
No. 2 Plane Scientific Measurement Equipment

Colonel
Paul W. Tibbets
509th Composite
Group Commander
-Pilot
"Enola Gay"
NO. 82
1st Atomic
Bombing Mission
Hiroshima, Japan
August 6, 1945

Captain George W. Marquardt
Commander - Pilot
"Necessary Evil" **NO. 91**
No. 3 Plane Scientific and Photographic Equipment

Atom Bombers

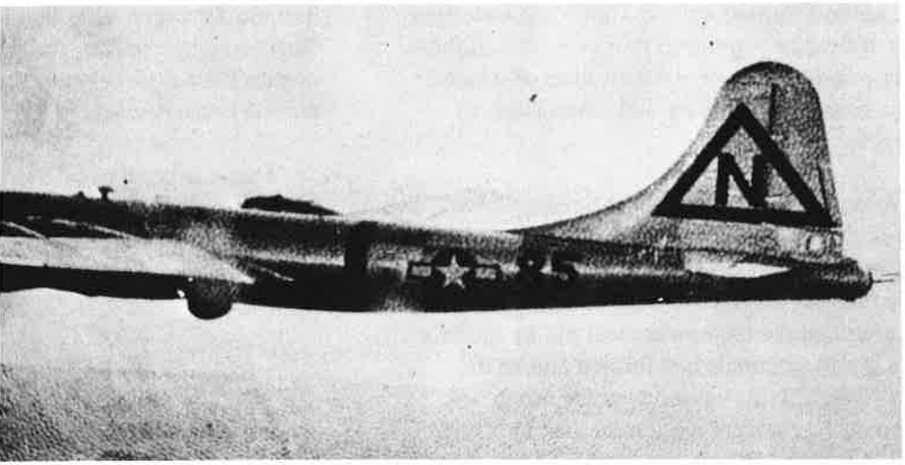
9th Composite Group had a brief but momentous ially modified Martin-built B-29s, with fuel injec- versible pitch propellers, and stripped of all but the ed the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. vere in the 393rd Squadron, and when they arrived unit's distinctive marking, a black arrowhead in a ced by spurious markings - 497th Group insignia, a aircraft 71, 72, 73 and 84. Airplanes 77, 85, 86 and 88 carried 444th Group markings, including the colored belly band; numbers 82, 89, 90 and 91 carried 6th Group tail insignia; and the final three aircraft, 83, 94 and 95 bore the 39th Group's tail marking.

The aircraft were still easily identifiable - the phony 497th and 444th markings were applied in a rather less exact way than in the actual groups, and the stripped B-29s carried individual airplane numbers in a far higher range than normal bomber units.

The 393rd Squadron B-29s were:

	Nominal Aircraft Commander				
t III	Capt. John Wilson	85	44-27301	**Straight Flush**	Capt. Claude Eatherly
ecret	Lt. Charles McKnight	86	44-27299	**Next Objective**	Lt. Ralph DeVore
e Cargo	Lt. Joseph Westover	88	44-27304*	**Up an' Atom**	Capt. George Marquardt
car	Capt. Frederick Bock	89	44-27353	**The Great Artiste**	Lt. Charles Albury/Maj. Charles Sweeney
Gay	Capt. Robert Lewis/Col. Paul Tibbets	90	44-27354*	**Big Stink**	Herman Zahn
ouse	Capt. Ralph Taylor	91	44-27291	**Necessary Evil**	Lt. Norman Ray
Punkins	Capt. James Price	94	44-27346*	**Spook**	Lt. Col. Tom Classen
		95	44-86347	**Laggin' Dragon**	Capt. Edward Costello

*ft nicknames in the 93rd Squadron were not applied until after the atomic bombing missions.**



s Straight Flush, 44-27301, tail armament and bearing kings. (via John Dulin)

cial B-29s were fitted with n propellers, with cuffs to e ground crew is pulling the to drain out oil that col- inders, thereby preventing s when they were started.

509th COMPOSITE GROUP
FIRST ATOMIC BOMBARDMENT

FIELD ORDER #13

George Marquardt

$3.00

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N
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PLAN
r 1, 509th Composite Group,

r 1, 509th Composite Group,

8. FLIGHT ENGINEERS PLAN
(See Report Number 1, 509th Composite Group, page 7, paragraph 4.)

9. R.C.N.
None

10. FIGHTER ESCORT
None

11. AIR SEA RESCUE
Normally this function is arranged by Wing Headquarters, but due to the importance of this operation, 20th Air Force Headquarters made arrangements for this mission. Every precaution was taken to provide complete air sea rescue facilities so that any untoward incident would not jeopardize the safe return of all witnesses.

12. STRIKING FORCE
3 A/C - one bombing, 2 observing

13. SPECIAL PLANNING OPERATIONS

A. In order to prevent interference with the attack all friendly aircraft were instructed to stay at least 50 miles away from target areas for four hours prior to strike time. And in order to protect friendly aircraft from the almost infinite amount of radio activity in the immediate area above the explosion, they were restricted from entering the 50-mile area for six hours after the attack. The post-strike photo aircraft were permitted in the area four hours after the attack, because they had had special briefing.

B. In order to have the attack go off on the day planned in spite of possible abort of the bombing airplane, a spare ship was stationed at Iwo Jima, where there was also a pit for unloading and reloading the Atomic Bomb.

C. Weather: Three aircraft which will be dispatched one to each target at such a time as to be able to

assigned to Midland, TX, in charge of 30 airplanes at a bombardiering school for AT-11 (a twin engine aircraft with a bomb bay). We had to keep as many planes in the air as we could. Harold Shull was also in charge of 30 planes. We got so sick of the job that we would purposely make mistakes on our report. General Davies called us into his office and asked us what was wrong. Later, when we got to know him better, we told him that we made mistakes on purpose — "so we could get out of this damned place. We want to go to war!"

Finally I was re-assigned to Del Rio, TX, where I was an instructor for one year for pilots scheduled to fly B-26 for missions in England. We had an obstacle course where a bunch of officers crawled under the steel angles and beams of a bridge 100 feet over the Rio Grande River. The incentive was "free drinks" once we got to Mexico on the other side. Jim Roberts, our commanding officer, wanted to join us on the obstacle course. He missed the beam with one of his hands and fell 100 feet into the shallow water of the Rio Grande, breaking his back. That ended the obstacle course.

Next I was stationed in the Caribbean for eight months for submarine patrol, flying B-25's. I was stationed in Puerto Rico, St. Thomas and St. Lucia Islands and then returned to the States. The B-25 was a pile of junk compared to the B-26, which I enjoyed flying. I checked out in B-24's, B-17's and B-29's. In November 1943, we were assigned to the 393rd squadron of the 504th Group in Fairmont, NE, flying B-29's. We completed Air Corps requirements for a 2nd Air Force assignment to go overseas. The 393rd Squadron was pulled out of the 504th Bomb Group and went to Wendover, Utah, in September 1944.

In Wendover, I found out I was assigned to the 509th Composite Group under the command of Col. Paul W. Tibbets. At a meeting, Col. Tibbets told us that what we were doing could shorten the war. We were all given a ten-day leave and told to be ready to go to work when we returned.

It was at this time I met my future wife, Bernece. She was private secretary to the owner of the Newhouse Hotel in Salt Lake City. Some of us stayed there on weekends and I had noticed her in her office which was located in the lobby. Buck and I asked her to type some orders for us to go on leave. She referred us to the public stenographer in the lobby. After finding her busy, we persuaded Bernece to type them for us. After my leave and my return to Wendover, we began to date.

While stationed in Wendover, we were sent to Cuba for additional training in January and February of 1945. We made dry runs over New York and Boston. One night John Wilson, Buck Eatherly and I went into Havana to gamble. Buck was losing heavily. The casino would not accept his check, so he told them to call his banker in Texas. Unbeknownst to them, he had a friend in Texas pose as his banker and OK the check. We had returned to the States when the check bounced. The base commander in Cuba notified Col. Tibbets, and he took care of it to avoid any adverse publicity about the squadron. We didn't find out about this until our Philadelphia reunion in 1986. While in Wendover, we did some night bombing. Charles McKnight did a dry run over San Francisco. When he got to 30,000 feet, he began his bombing run. We had replaced the gun turrets with blisters, and the blister blew out. Luckily, the crew had their seat belts on. Everything loose came out of the hold. He immediately went to a lower altitude.

"After the 393rd Bombing Squadron returned to Wendover from the Caribbean, its training continued. The fliers gained much valuable experience in ballistic testing of dummy bombs called "pumpkins" similar in dimensions and weight to the atomic

from Japan who had come to America to study. Dr. Waldman wrote a note to his friend telling him of the bomb and asking him to urge the Japanese to surrender. This note was put in a blast gauge and dropped from Sweeney's plane. We proceeded to the I.P. (Initial Point), where I initiated a 360 degree turn to the left and Sweeney remained in formation with Tibbets. There was a tone control coming from Tibbets' plane that stopped when the bomb was released from the Enola Gay. It detonated by proximity fuse (electronic fuse) 1800 feet above the target. Hopkins and I had calculated that it would take approximately 40 seconds for the bomb to drop from the Enola Gay to the point where it would detonate above the target. It actually took 42 seconds. Waldman had only six seconds of film in the camera, and we lost two seconds of film there. At the 1990 reunion of the 509th, Adolph Gasser told me that Waldman had forgotten to open the shutter on the camera, so we never got any photographs of the blast with that camera.

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I had one minute to make my turn toward the target. The crew of No. 91 had a front row seat. Capt. Strudwick and Dr. Waldman were in the bombardier's seat, I was in the pilot's seat with Gackenbach standing behind me and Jim Corliss was behind Jim Anderson, my co-pilot. Mel Bierman, assistant flight engineer; Joe DiJulio, radar operator; and Tony Capua, tail gunner were in the rear of the plane.

When the bomb detonated, there was a brilliant flash which was partially obscured by the special goggles we had been issued for the mission. When I saw the flash, I had to take the goggles off because I couldn't see my co-pilot, Jim Anderson. It seemed as if the sun had come out of the earth and exploded. Smoke boiled around the flash as it rose. The thin layer of clouds, about 4,000 feet below us, rippled like water when a stone is thrown into it. You could see this for miles. This is the thing I remember most vividly. The shock wave from the blast reached my plane and it felt and sounded as if a monster hand had slapped the side of the plane. This occurred about 15 miles away from ground zero as I was flying towards the mushroom cloud which had already reached our altitude and continued to climb above us. I flew around the perimeter of the mushroom cloud three times. We had been instructed not to fly into the cloud as it might make us "sterile". I made my last turn and began my journey back to Tinian.

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crew chief's name was Gulick
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When he did the repairs, I wou
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were OK. He would protest, "
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me anyway.

I had the utmost respect fo
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commanders cared about each
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In May of 1945, we receiv
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Wendover for Tinian on June 6

The code name for the 509
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Jim Roberts, who had beer
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Tinian. He was now a Brigadi
invited me to dinner and sent a
His headquarters were about th
the south on Tinian. He had a

neatly kept. A brigadier general has a right-hand man with him all the time. I knew him and his wife very well, having been in Dallas with him for two months to check out B-25-26's. He was also my flight instructor at Randolph field four years earlier. He said, "George, I want to talk to you. I want you to be the Operations Officer of my wing." I said, "Jim, there's no way you'll get me." When he asked why, I replied, "I can't tell you why." That was pretty much the conversation. I could not tell him why I was on Tinian because it was top secret. The dinner was excellent! His driver returned me to my quonset hut. After the war, Jim used to stop by and see us once a year, but I haven't seen him for ten years now.

"In July, General Farrell arrived to take charge. On his way to Tinian, he stopped off at Guam, where he conferred on the details of the operation with General Curtis E. LeMay, then in command of the 20th Air Force and about to become the Chief of Staff of the Strategic Forces. He then called on Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, whose headquarters were also at Guam, and arranged with him for assistance from the Navy. This included placing submarines in Japanese waters along the route the atomic bomb fliers were to take, to rescue us in case we were forced to bail out or ditch. The Navy would also have a number of Navy flying boats in readiness at nearby bases.

At the end of the conference, Admiral Nimitz called General Farrell over to the window and pointed at an island a short distance from Guam. "That island over there," Admiral Nimitz said, "is Rota. There are about three thousand Japanese on it. They bother us a great deal. They have radios. They know what we are doing. They are sending out information." (We were aware of this. Tokyo Rose welcomed the 509th to Tinian. Little did she know this was the beginning of the end.)

"Haven't you got a small bomb you can drop on Rota?" Nimitz asked Farrell. "I don't feel it warrants an amphibious invasion at this time, but they do bother us."

"Unfortunately, Admiral," General Farrell replied, "all our bombs are big ones."

Early on the morning of Sunday, August 5, 1945, Marianas time (Saturday, August 4, in the United States), word came that the weather would be favorable for a takeoff early the next morning. Preparations were at once speeded up to get the bomb ready for immediate loading. But Captain (now Rear Admiral) William S. Parsons, Navy Ordnance expert, who was completely responsible for the technical control of the bomb and for decisions as to its use, was worried. The night before he had seen four B-29's in a row crash and burn at the end of the runway.

"You know," he said to General Farrell, "if we crack up at the end of the runway tomorrow morning and the plane gets on fire, there is the danger of an atomic explosion, and we may lose this end of the island, if not the whole of Tinian, with every blessed thing and person on it."

"We will just have to pray that it doesn't happen," General Farrell replied.

"Well," said Captain Parsons, "if I made the final assembly of that bomb after we left the island, that couldn't happen."[2]

General Farrell, deputy to General Groves, called a meeting of all airplane commanders in our squadron. He, along with Col. Tibbets, called each of us to a room individually. He asked each of us, "What do you know about the bomb?" After the

[2] *"Dawn Over Zero: Story of the Atom Bomb" p. 204*

meeting we were shown the blast at Trinity in New Mexico on July 19. He went on to say, "You will not be court marshaled for anything you say. We just want to know what you know about the bomb." Ralph Taylor, John Wilson, Norm Ray, Claude Eatherly, Ralph DeVore and I talked together afterwards. We had discussed our secret only on a one-to-one basis, but never in a group. Norm had gone to college in South Dakota, where they had an atom smasher which had been kept secret. I told this to Gen. Farrell when he questioned me.

We had to drop four or five "pumpkins" filled with TNT on the Japanese Empire before we could go on a special raid. We found out later this special raid was the dropping of the atom bomb. On the third block buster raid, my bombardier, Strudwick, took over the airplane to make the run, but the bomb didn't release from the shackle. On the second release, it still didn't release. I got upset with him and chewed him out. I told him if he didn't get it off this time, he would have to get in the bomb bay and release it manually. He got my message, and the third run was successful!

On one of the raids, I was OD (Officer of the Day) running around in a Jeep, getting everybody off for the bombing. I was headed toward Hopkins' plane and was about 200 feet away when the bomb dropped out. I heard a noise and thought it was going to explode — all 10,000 lbs. of TNT! I slowed the Jeep down and thought to myself, "If it doesn't explode now, it never will." We got the bomb reloaded, Hopkins flew off and dropped it on the Japanese Empire.

We had a briefing the night before the bomb drop at approximately 11 P.M. We took off at about 2:30 A.M. from the north runway at Tinian. I formed up with Tibbets and Sweeney about 45 minutes after takeoff. Col. Paul Tibbets, flying the "Enola Gay", carried the atomic bomb, "Little Boy". Maj. Charles Sweeney, the pilot of the "Great Artiste", flew the

No. 2 position on Tibbets' rig
blast gauge instruments. The
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Admiral Parsons was in t
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Japanese were alerted to take
shelters. When we came over
Japanese were not alerted and
shelters. This is why so many

Dr. Bernard Waldman, Ph
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photographs of the blast with
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I, in turn, was respected by my
commanders cared about each
the war, the men of the 393rd h
together for two years with no
this to good pilots, good crews
excellent maintenance, and dou

In May of 1945, we receiv
the island of Tinian. Tinian is
Marianas Island chain north of
island of Saipan. Knowing tha
soon, Bernece and I were marr
the Presidential Suite of the Ne
spent a couple of days in Salt L
Wendover to await my departu
anything about our mission exc
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that I could return home quickl
Wendover for Tinian on June 6

The code name for the 509
was "Silverplate". Col. Tibbet
get anything he needed for the
about this in his book "The En
had five C-54's, four engine tr
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Jim Roberts, who had beer
TX two years before, called m
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Field Order #13

Special Bombing Mission #13
Hiroshima August 6, 1945

"There are those who considered that the atomic bomb should never have been used at all .... that rather than throw this bomb we should have sacrificed a million Americans and a quarter of a million British in the desperate battles and massacres of an invasion of Japan.

The bomb brought peace, but man alone can keep that peace."

— Winston Churchill, August 16, 1945

In the early morning hours of August 6, 1945, members of the 509th Composite Group culminated a year of top secret training as the Enola Gay took off from Tinian under the command of Col. Paul W. Tibbets Jr. At 8:16 a.m., the crew carried out their top-secret mission by dropping an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the seventh largest city in Japan. Sixty percent of the city was destroyed, with an estimated 80,000 casualties. The Japanese government had already ignored the inevitable by refusing to heed the Potsdam Ultimatum, and conflict within the government continued to delay surrender. With American casualties in the Pacific Theater numbering 900 per day and faced with an estimated 500,000 casualties in a proposed invasion of Japan, U.S. leaders decided the Japanese surrender must be hastened. Members of the 509th were called upon to fly a second mission, this one on August 9, 1945, under the command of Major Charles Sweeney. With the primary target, Kokura Arsenal, obscured by smoke, the crew of Bockscar dropped a second atomic bomb on the secondary target, the industrial city of Nagasaki. More than 40,000 people were killed. The Japanese surrendered on August 11.

As a member of the 509th, I was a participant in this history-changing mission. In fact, I had a front row seat for the first mission as commander of the Necessary Evil, an observation plane. It was a long way from a peaceful college classroom in Illinois to this extraordinary vantage point as a participant in the most important mission in the Pacific Theater during World War II.

I spent my boyhood days in Golconda, IL. When I graduated from Golconda High, I had several scholarships. I chose Illinois Wesleyan University, where I had baseball and basketball scholarships. My sister Vera had a teaching job there. I attended college 3 1/2 years, but in 1940 during the last semester of my senior year, I decided to join the Air Corps. I had my pilot's license, and I signed a contract with the Air Corps that would earn me $500 for every year I stayed in.

As a cadet in the Air Corps, I attended Brooks Air College in Tulsa, OK, for six months. I received basic training at Randolph Field and advanced training at Kelly Field in San Antonio, TX. During my training at Kelly Field, I had an instructor named Lt. John "Jack" Ryan. He later became a four-star general commanding the Air Force in 1968-69.

One night at Kelly Field, Harold Shull and I had just returned from flying about 1:00 A.M. when we received a call on the radio: "Marquardt and Shull report to Jack Ryan." He "wracked us back" (made us stand at attention) because we hadn't parked our plane correctly. He gave each of us a gunnysack and ordered us to fill them with unbroken clay pigeons from the Kelly Field skeet range. When we returned at 4:00 A.M., Jack was still waiting for us. "So next time I tell you to do something, you'd better do it right," he said.

I received my wings at Kelly Field after four months. As a 2nd Lieutenant, I was assigned to an engineering school at Rice University in Houston, TX. I took aerodynamics classes, worked on airplanes and graduated in six months. I was

relay, from their assigned target, the target weather forecast for strike time, broadcasting the message between 060845K and 060915K. This will enable strike force to select either the secondary or tertiary target in the event the primary is found to be covered by clouds. Each weather aircraft will have aboard a weather observer furnished by the 313th Wing.

D. Post Strike Photography: C.O., 509th Group, will be responsible for briefing and dispatching two F-13 A/C. These aircraft will not enter target area until four hours after bombs away. To insure this schedule is maintained regardless of whether the strike force has to make use of the spare aircraft at Iwo Jima or not, the photo aircraft will be required to check in with the ground stations at both Tinian and Iwo Jima to obtain clearance to proceed past Iwo Jima. If these photo aircraft do not receive notification of which target has been bombed, they will photograph all three targets.

On August 9, 1945, the second bomb, "Fat Boy", was dropped over Nagasaki. I was assigned to check the principal target, Kokura, for weather. Sweeney piloted "Bock's Car" for this mission. I had reported that the target was clear but by the time Sweeney got there clouds had formed and he diverted to Nagasaki. At the moment the bomb was dropped over Nagasaki, I was landing on Iwo Jima. After the bombing of Nagasaki, we heard that the war would end soon. For a show of force, there would be one more raid on Japan, "Maximum Effort." All planes that could fly were ordered into the air. I felt I could not go on that raid. I knew if I did I would not return. I had seen this in a dream where I was told to be careful. I did not go on that mission.

Most of the airplane commanders lived together in one quonset. We'd been together in the same squadron for two years, and no one had been injured or killed. This was unheard of. While I was an instructor in B-26's, we lost a crew every other month.

After the war ended, we c
New Mexico. Col. Blanchard
509th group, replacing Col. P
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by the Hiroshima Castle, num

neatly kept. A brigadier general has a right-hand man with him all the time. I knew him and his wife very well, having been in Dallas with him for two months to check out B-25-26's. He was also my flight instructor at Randolph field four years earlier. He said, "George, I want to talk to you. I want you to be the Operations Officer of my wing." I said, "Jim, there's no way you'll get me." When he asked why, I replied, "I can't tell you why." That was pretty much the conversation. I could not tell him why I was on Tinian because it was top secret. The dinner was excellent! His driver returned me to my quonset hut. After the war, Jim used to stop by and see us once a year, but I haven't seen him for ten years now.

"In July, General Farrell arrived to take charge. On his way to Tinian, he stopped off at Guam, where he conferred on the details of the operation with General Curtis E. LeMay, then in command of the 20th Air Force and about to become the Chief of Staff of the Strategic Forces. He then called on Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, whose headquarters were also at Guam, and arranged with him for assistance from the Navy. This included placing submarines in Japanese waters along the route the atomic bomb fliers were to take, to rescue us in case we were forced to bail out or ditch. The Navy would also have a number of Navy flying boats in readiness at nearby bases.

At the end of the conference, Admiral Nimitz called General Farrell over to the window and pointed at an island a short distance from Guam. "That island over there," Admiral Nimitz said, "is Rota. There are about three thousand Japanese on it. They bother us a great deal. They have radios. They know what we are doing. They are sending out information." (We were aware of this. Tokyo Rose welcomed the 509th to Tinian. Little did she know this was the beginning of the end.)

"Haven't you got a small bomb you can drop on Rota?" Nimitz asked Farrell. "I don't feel it warrants an amphibious invasion at this time, but they do bother us."

"Unfortunately, Admiral," General Farrell replied, "all our bombs are big ones."

Early on the morning of Sunday, August 5, 1945, Marianas time (Saturday, August 4, in the United States), word came that the weather would be favorable for a takeoff early the next morning. Preparations were at once speeded up to get the bomb ready for immediate loading. But Captain (now Rear Admiral) William S. Parsons, Navy Ordnance expert, who was completely responsible for the technical control of the bomb and for decisions as to its use, was worried. The night before he had seen four B-29's in a row crash and burn at the end of the runway.

"You know," he said to General Farrell, "if we crack up at the end of the runway tomorrow morning and the plane gets on fire, there is the danger of an atomic explosion, and we may lose this end of the island, if not the whole of Tinian, with every blessed thing and person on it."

"We will just have to pray that it doesn't happen," General Farrell replied.

"Well," said Captain Parsons, "if I made the final assembly of that bomb after we left the island, that couldn't happen."[2]

General Farrell, deputy to General Groves, called a meeting of all airplane commanders in our squadron. He, along with Col. Tibbets, called each of us to a room individually. He asked each of us, "What do you know about the bomb?" After the

[2] *"Dawn Over Zero: Story of the Atom Bomb" p. 204*

meeting we were shown the blast at Trinity in New Mexico on July 19. He went on to say, "You will not be court marshaled for anything you say. We just want to know what you know about the bomb." Ralph Taylor, John Wilson, Norm Ray, Claude Eatherly, Ralph DeVore and I talked together afterwards. We had discussed our secret only on a one-to-one basis, but never in a group. Norm had gone to college in South Dakota, where they had an atom smasher which had been kept secret. I told this to Gen. Farrell when he questioned me.

We had to drop four or five "pumpkins" filled with TNT on the Japanese Empire before we could go on a special raid. We found out later this special raid was the dropping of the atom bomb. On the third block buster raid, my bombardier, Strudwick, took over the airplane to make the run, but the bomb didn't release from the shackle. On the second release, it still didn't release. I got upset with him and chewed him out. I told him if he didn't get it off this time, he would have to get in the bomb bay and release it manually. He got my message, and the third run was successful!

On one of the raids, I was OD (Officer of the Day) running around in a Jeep, getting everybody off for the bombing. I was headed toward Hopkins' plane and was about 200 feet away when the bomb dropped out. I heard a noise and thought it was going to explode — all 10,000 lbs. of TNT! I slowed the Jeep down and thought to myself, "If it doesn't explode now, it never will." We got the bomb reloaded, Hopkins flew off and dropped it on the Japanese Empire.

We had a briefing the night before the bomb drop at approximately 11 P.M. We took off at about 2:30 A.M. from the north runway at Tinian. I formed up with Tibbets and Sweeney about 45 minutes after takeoff. Col. Paul Tibbets, flying the "Enola Gay", carried the atomic bomb, "Little Boy". Maj. Charles Sweeney, the pilot of the "Great Artiste", flew the

No. 2 position on Tibbets' rig
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