

to a new heading. I felt real good that the radio equipment worked so well. There is a lot of ocean out there!

After having flown sixteen or seventeen missions, the high command decided we should have a little R&R,⁹⁰ so they sent our crew to Hawaii for a week. It sure worked. I rested and relaxed as fast as I could every day. The thing I remember above every thing else happened one day when two of us were walking across a nice, grassy field, when we came upon a 2nd Lieutenant. We noticed how neat and polished he looked as we approached each other. After we saluted him and had gone a couple of yards, we heard him say: "Soldiers!" We turned around, he snapped us to attention and started asking questions, such as: "What outfit are you from?" "Why are you both not in uniform?" "What is your rank?" "What are you doing here?" We answered each question and explained why we were there. We explained that the uniforms we were wearing were all that we had. After all of that he saluted us, wished us good luck and we were on our way. Our stay in Hawaii actually lasted nearly three weeks. It turned out that the Twentieth Air Force was running out of incendiary bombs and every plane and ship heading toward Saipan, Tinian and Guam was directed that these bombs had top priority for space.⁹¹ What a break, for once in our favor!

On the way back to Saipan we made a stop on Kwajalein. While waiting in a very crowded operations room I caught a glimpse of some one getting up in rather a hurry but paid no more attention until he came around and stood directly in front

⁹⁰ Rest and Relaxation. (ED).

⁹¹ The incendiary bombs were in great demand by the Spring of 1945, as the B-29s were then involved in the systematic destruction, primarily by fire, of every major Japanese city. (ED).

of me. He held out his hand and said, "D.A.!".⁹² I looked at him and could hardly believe my eyes. It was James Latta, a very close friend that I had gone through training with at Scott Field, Illinois. He was on his way home after having completed twenty five missions on B-24's. Can you believe that? He was going home after twenty five missions and I was on my way back to Saipan to complete my required thirty five missions.⁹³ We had a good talk, hugged each other and then it was time to go. James Latta was a fine person. I am glad that he made it.

Once we were back on Saipan, it was back to more high altitude day light missions and more low level night missions. On our day light missions we were now accompanied by P-51 Mustangs⁹⁴ flying as our fighter escorts. They took care of the Japanese Pilots and left us mostly with just the flak to contend with. From my view point, I saw the vicious air war that is usually just seen in the movies. On one mission I saw a B-29 shot down and its crew members bail out. I saw a P-51 knock a Japanese fighter out of action and its Pilot bailed out I saw Japanese fighters machine gun our air men in their parachutes and, yes, I saw the Japanese fighter Pilot that had bailed out of his aircraft machine gunned in his parachute by our guys.⁹⁵ All in all it was too much action for one day. All things considered, it was a real challenge to complete thirty five combat missions.

⁹² "District Attorney." A nick-name given to Mr. Maples by one of his friends before he went into the service. (ED).

⁹³ The required number of missions necessary in order to complete a combat tour varied throughout the Army Air Forces. (ED).

⁹⁴ The P-51 Mustang was arguably America's finest fighter aircraft in World War II. Equipped with drop tanks carrying extra fuel, it was the only fighter aircraft that could accompany the B-29s on their long missions to and/or from Japan. (ED).

⁹⁵ When the Japanese fighter Pilot who had machine gunned our airmen in their parachutes likewise had to bail out of his aircraft, a good number of enraged B-29

Our aircraft was hit on seven or eight missions by fighters and/or flak. Our CFC Gunner was sprayed with plexiglass when the dome at his gun position was shattered by gun fire from an enemy fighter. On another day light mission we lost our number two engine to flak. I will never know why, considering the number of times we were hit, that a vital part of the aircraft was not damaged severely enough in order to bring us down.

When we came under attack by Japanese fighters there was always a great deal of noise from the gun turrets as our Gunners tracked and fired at them. First one turret would begin firing, then another and some times three turrets would be firing at once. The stage would thus be set for what would often become a duel to the death as the Japanese Pilots were not famous for breaking off their attacks.

Our anxiety was always heightened when we heard the distinctive thumping noise made when the 20 mm cannon in the tail of the aircraft opened fire.⁹⁶ This always meant that a Japanese fighter was on our tail and we had been singled out as his main target! On one occasion we heard the cannon fire a few short bursts and then it fell silent. After a brief period of time had passed we heard the cannon fire another few rounds and then it fell silent again. This pattern of firing was repeated several times until all of us were finally filled in as to what was taking place when our Tail Gunner, Alexander Wortovitch,⁹⁷ shouted over the intercom, "I got the son

Gunners shot the Japanese Pilot to pieces according to Mr. Maples. (ED).

⁹⁶ The 20 mm cannon was removed fairly early on in most of the B-29s after it demonstrated a regular habit of jamming when fired. The remaining twin 50 caliber guns in the tail were quite adequate for defense. (ED).

⁹⁷ I attempted to locate Mr. Wortovitch some years ago with the help of the Military Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Mo., without success. (ED).

of a bitch!" He was so excited that he repeated the same statement three times. He later explained to us that the Japanese fighter had been using our vapor trail⁹⁸ to hide in as he tracked our aircraft. He would dart out of the vapor trail, take a few quick shots at us and then zip quickly back into it before Wortovitch could get a good shot at him. Well, the Japanese Pilot's strategy worked twice but when he came out of our vapor trail for his third shot at us, his luck ran out. It seemed that Wortovitch had left his gun sight right on the spot where the fighter had disappeared into the vapor trail after the second attack, and the instant that he saw the fighter begin to emerge he opened fire without even aiming and watched as it blew up. We had experienced another brush with death.

Once our bombs were away over a target it was every man for himself, or rather it was every aircraft for itself, and to get back to Saipan the best way we could. The P-51's would be waiting to tag along as far as Iwo Jima. The P-51's had no long range navigational equipment and they depended on the B-29's to guide them safely back to Iwo. On one occasion, a P-51 tagging along with us ran out of fuel about twenty miles from Iwo. Over the radio its Pilot said, "please don't leave me, my God, please don't leave me." Then, he opened his canopy, turned his aircraft upside down and bailed out. We saw him go into the water and we circled him once or twice. We did not have enough fuel to stay with him long but we did see a high speed motor launch leave Iwo and head in the direction of the downed Pilot. The chances of him surviving, we thought, were very good.

⁹⁸ An aerial phenomenon created as an aircraft passes through cold, thin air at high altitudes. The smoky haze created by Mr. Maples B-29 offered a perfect hiding place for the Japanese Pilot as he lined up his attack. (ED).

By the Spring of 1945, the night missions were in full swing. As the months slipped by, nearly every major city in Japan was fire bombed. In fact, it got to the point later in the war when intelligence reports indicated that the Twentieth Air Force was running out of targets. We were aware of the moral aspects associated with the fire bombing of non military targets, along with the indiscriminate killing of civilians. Therefore, some of our aircraft were designated to carry and drop propaganda leaflets" which warned the Japanese people of specific cities that were scheduled to be bombed by our B-29's. The leaflets also strongly encouraged the Japanese people to move out of the cities that were on the target list. I dropped bundle after bundle of these leaflets through the hatch located in my area. On our later missions it was evident to us that the Japanese people were unable to cope with the B-29 threat. On the later day light missions the response by fighters and flak was decidedly diminished. On the later night missions the search lights and anti-aircraft fire were also greatly reduced.

This is not to say that we had a free ride on these later missions. For example, the night mission to Tokyo on May 25,1945 resulted in the loss of twenty six B-29's and somewhere in the neighborhood of two hundred and ninety airmen. I flew on that mission. One other item of interest was a mission we flew to Ie-Shima. Near Iwo Jima we picked up a squadron of fighters, P-47's or P-51's, I can not remember which, and navigated them to Ie-Shima.¹⁰⁰ When we reached our destination we found ourselves very close to a lot of action. It appeared to us that the US Armed

⁹⁹ See Appendix C for two examples of propaganda leaflets. (ED).

¹⁰⁰ A small island lying a short distance from Okinawa's Motobu Peninsula, in the Ryuku Islands chain. The famous war correspondent, Ernie Pyle, was killed here by a Japanese sniper in April, 1945. (ED).

Forces had pushed the Japanese to the tip of Okinawa¹⁰¹ where they were making a final stand. We could see aircraft making dive bombing runs, there was a great deal of smoke and fire and rocket launchers located on ships just off shore were pouring hundreds of rockets into the area. We flew on past all of this and then, surprisingly, I thought, Captain Calhoun made a U-turn and buzzed the fighter landing strip on Ie-Shima! It is a wonder that some of our guys did not shoot us down. After all, most of our troops in that area had probably never seen a B-29. Here was yet another surprise move from Captain Calhoun.¹⁰² Oh well, we had learned by now to expect the unexpected from him. This mission was about fifteen hours in duration but we did not get credit for it as a combat mission.

At the end of the first week in July, 1945, some of our crew, including me, finished our required thirty five combat missions¹⁰³ and were taken off of flight status. I can never adequately convey to you the feeling of relaxation, contentment and pride that I felt knowing I had completed the job I was trained for and sent to Saipan to do. I was a free man!

¹⁰¹ A member of the Ryuku Islands chain, Okinawa is 70 square miles long. It lies approximately 350 miles from Japan. US forces began landing on the island in April, 1945, & finally secured it in June, 1945. (ED).

¹⁰² Sadly, Captain Patrick Calhoun was killed in an automobile accident shortly after he returned to the United States upon completion of his combat tour. I interviewed a former airman who witnessed the accident and was, coincidentally, the Tail Gunner on "Draggin Lady" when she crashed. (ED).

¹⁰³ See Record of Combat Duty for Mr. Maples in Appendix C. Also, not all of the crew members on Mr. Maples' B-29 finished their required 35 missions at the same time. Remember, the Gunners did not always fly on each mission. (ED).

I could come and go as I pleased. Mostly, I just relaxed and wrote letters.¹⁰⁴ They finally arranged transportation for me and on July 24, 1945, about eight months after arriving on Saipan, I was leaving it, heading back to the USA. We were en route to Hawaii by ship when on August 6, 1945, word was received that an atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima.¹⁰⁵ There was a big cheer from the troops on our ship and the Captain said over the loudspeaker system that there was enough beer on board for every man to have one. I gave my beer to Wortovitch, our Tail Gunner.

After a few days we arrived in Hawaii. I was real glad to get off of that Navy ship. It was small and stuffy and not designed to carry troops. Also, it was slow, and we had to go slower still since we were following a zigzag course¹⁰⁶ because of the threat of Japanese submarines. We were in Hawaii for a few days, but we could not do much because they were preparing us for the next leg of our journey home to the USA.

The ship that we left Hawaii on was large, fast and designed to carry many troops. The food was good also. By the time we had reached the USA, the word was that the Japanese officials were seeking surrender terms. Once we were back in the

¹⁰⁴ Some years ago, one of my Aunts telephoned me and asked if I would like to have several bundles of my father's neatly tied war-time letters home that she had discovered in her attic. You can imagine what my answer was! (ED).

¹⁰⁵ It has been estimated that 70 to 80 thousand Japanese citizens were killed and an equal number were wounded in the atomic blast on August 6, 1945. Hiroshima is on Honshu Island at the West end of the Inland Sea. (ED).

¹⁰⁶ xhis maneuver, which consisted of the ship constantly changing its direction, was designed to help prevent an enemy submarine from lining up a successful torpedo attack. Some times it worked, & some times it did not. (ED).

USA we felt real good. We saw cars, buses, restaurants, women, children and all kinds of sights for sore eyes. We were received with pretty good enthusiasm as we were probably the first group of soldiers to dock since the announcement was received that the war was over.

I knew that we had arrived in San Francisco¹⁰⁷ because we had sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge. That was a real sight to see. It did not matter where we were, we were *home*, and no body was shooting at us. We were in San Francisco for a few days during which time we attended what they called orientation classes. What I remember most of this was a talk by an Army officer to us as we gathered in a huge auditorium. This is basically what he said: "We are proud of you. You should be proud of yourselves. The country owes you a great debt of gratitude. Welcome home and the best of every thing to you. I must warn you that not every one will be happy that the war is over. Many people have had good jobs, earning good money and working a lot of over time. Some of this will change now and a lot of people will be bitter. Do not expect every one to welcome you with open arms." Truer words were never spoken!

While we were enjoying relaxing, a troop train was being readied to take us across the United States. The cars making up this train had to have been in use since the turn of the century. They were basically cattle cars¹⁰⁸ with wooden seats and benches and were obviously not intended for comfort. The three thousand mile trip

¹⁰⁷ San Francisco is located on the Western side of San Francisco Bay. (ED).

¹⁰⁸ Adequately named, no doubt, because troops were crammed into them like cattle for transportation from place to place. In my own Army days, we made reference to the long trucks that hauled us from place to place at Fort Jackson, South Carolina as being "cattle cars." (ED).

across the country would require about three days. The same round trip distance from Saipan to Tokyo on a B-29 took about sixteen hours.

We were routed along the hot southern route which took us through parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee and into North Carolina. As we proceeded from state to state we made a number of stops in order to drop off soldiers at bases or discharge centers near their home towns. We could always guess about where we were by looking at automobile license plates, the names of towns on water towers and other signs along the way.

We knew the calendar said we were in the Fall season, but inside those train cars it definitely felt like summer! We had been instructed that no attempts should be made to cool the cars by opening doors or windows. We were told that it would not help. However, as the hours dragged on and the heat increased, it became unbearable for us. Eventually the windows were opened, slowly at first, and then it was only a short time before all of the windows and doors on the entire train were open. We should have followed instructions and left the windows and doors closed as it was hotter outside than it was inside. Before long our situation became worse as smoke and ashes from the engine began blowing back and into the cars. There was a lot of coughing and some very choice words were used before many of the windows were closed.

As the train moved slowly onward, we came into the rail yard just outside of a fairly large city which I believe was Chattanooga,¹⁰⁹ Tennessee. We could see large buildings in the distance and an impressive skyline. As we inched along we became aware of many small children, who appeared to be from six to ten years of age,

¹⁰⁹ Chattanooga is located in Southeastern Tennessee. (ED).

running along side our train. All of them were clothed only in shorts and none were wearing shoes. They appeared to be very poor and yet they were laughing and waving to us. Some of them began to ask for money, souvenirs or any kind of hand-outs. Some of the soldiers gave them money and asked if the children would go and find some cold drinks, candy or other goodies and return with said items. The kids grabbed the money and took off running across the railroad tracks as if they had been living alongside of them all of their lives. Watching all of this made many of us skeptical and we thought, "we will never see those kids again."

As time dragged on, the train crew completed their job of loading coal and water and we began to move slowly. We thought we had been taken in by a bunch of con artists; kids at that! We did not mind though as it was obvious from their appearance that they needed the money more than we did. Suddenly, much to our surprise, way over in a field we saw the kids running back to us as fast as they could. They quickly crossed ten or fifteen sets of railroad tracks and soon were once again running along side of our train. Some of them had bottled drinks, others carried bags containing who knows what and all of them were trying to hand the goods to the soldiers whom had given them money. Some of them even had folding money in their hands. They made a real effort to effect the transfer of the items mentioned above, but as the train picked tip speed they began to drop back and finally had to give up. As the train continued on its way, I think every one on board had kind thoughts for those children and admired their honesty in spite of the poverty in which they lived. I think some things will never change.

The troop train was not fast, nor was it comfortable, but it was steadily taking me closer to the city where it would be my turn to get off. This three thousand mile journey has had an everlasting effect on me as far as train travel is concerned. I

have never since had any desire for another train ride! Finally, we arrived at my destination which was Greensboro,¹¹⁰ North Carolina. It was at this time and place that the birth of more happy memories for me occurred.

For example, my mother had driven from South Norfolk, Virginia in order to meet me in Greensboro, a trip of approximately two hundred and fifty miles, so that she could be there for me when I was discharged. At a time when gasoline was being rationed, I have often thought back and marveled as to how my mother could have saved enough gasoline ration coupons to make the round trip from Virginia to Greensboro possible. My mother was a strong willed person and she loved her children. That makes all of the difference in the world, does it not?

My joy of being reunited with my mother was made even richer by the fact that she brought with her the love of my life, Anna Alexander, who would become my wife one year later. I am pleased to say that more than fifty years later I am still enjoying her company. Finally, I received my discharge and we began our journey home to Virginia. Upon my return to civilian life I was given my old job back with the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company, in whose employ I would remain until I retired in 1982. The forty two years of net credited service I received included the time I was in the service as well as a three year special assignment with the Bell Telephone Laboratories in New Jersey. My last assignment with the Telephone Company and Bell System was "Network Equipment Engineering Manager."

Duane, I know we have discussed the United States* use of atomic weapons on Japan. Just so you will know my true opinion and feelings on this subject, I will

¹¹⁰ Greensboro is located in North Central North Carolina. (ED).

leave you a written record. The Japanese Empire *was not* defeated by the "Enola Gay"¹¹¹ and "Bock's Car."¹¹² The atomic bombs did not end the war immediately but certainly brought the end closer. Our B-29 crews, flying missions day and night, had already seen a marked difference in the Japanese defenses during the final months of the war. Toward the end their fighter attacks were almost non-existent, and the heavy flak that we had encountered on our early missions did not appear. Some of our losses were caused by our aircraft running into each other and others were downed as a result of the thermal effects caused by the huge fires set on the ground by our incendiary bombs. Immediately prior to the dropping of the atomic bombs, our aircraft were still making the three thousand mile round trip to strike the enemy's heartland. Some of them did not make it back.

The Twentieth Air Force was still very much involved in the last days of the war. In fact, immediately after the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki,¹¹³ hundreds of B-29's were still striking targets in Japan until August 15, 1945. Ultimately, the Japanese Empire was defeated by the consistent and relentless attacks by the Twentieth Air Force over a period of approximately nine months operating from bases in the Mariana Islands.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ The name of the B-29 that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. The Aircraft Commander was Colonel Paul Tibbets. He named the aircraft for his mother. (ED).

¹¹² The name of the B-29 that dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. The Aircraft Commander was Major Charles Sweeney. (ED).

¹¹³ An estimated 40 thousand Japanese citizens were killed and about 60 thousand were wounded in Nagasaki. The city lies on the island of Kyushu, Japan. (ED).

¹¹⁴ See the document entitled: "Destruction Inflicted on 67 Japanese Cities, 1944-45," in E. Bartlett Kerr's, "Flames Over Tokyo," 337-339, in which the author compares each Japanese city to an American city of the same size and indicates the percentage of destruction of the Japanese cities. (ED).

I am not sure that it is more ethical or humane to fire bomb a target with five hundred bombers or to blast it with one aircraft dropping one bomb. The results are the same. I do not know how to compare the cost to the United States because I do not know how many millions of World War II dollars one atomic bomb would have cost. I have concluded that the atomic bombs were not necessary and should not have been used. The dropping of the atomic bombs was a purely political decision done to impress our allies; particularly Russia.¹¹⁵

Duane, this written record of my involvement in World War II was prepared for you to use in any way you choose. I have always enjoyed your interest in my World War II experiences. We both know that I could not have done this without your help. Your consistent prodding and gentle persuasion were instrumental in the completion of this brief outline of my World War II involvement. For this, thank you very much. A very grateful thank you is also in order for your permission to let me include your "Tokyo Requiem"¹¹⁶ as an appropriate epilogue to my memoirs. It is an excellent, thought provoking and fitting statement that says again, "war is hell, and everyone loses."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ **A number of individuals writing essays in the excellent book, "Hiroshima's Shadow," fully agree with Mr. Maples' feelings with regard to the dropping of the atomic bombs as having been unnecessary. Also, see Appendix H at the rear of this book for excerpts from Mark Weber's article in the Journal of Historical Review, entitled: "Why the Atomic Bombings Could Have Been Avoided - Was Hiroshima Necessary"? (ED).**

¹¹⁶ **See Appendix J. (ED).**

¹¹⁷ **The famous "War is Hell" remark was originally made by Union Civil War General William T. Sherman. (ED).**

**Yours,
Bad**

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Appendix A

Contains information pertaining to Mr. Maples¹ first B-29, "Draggin Lady;" such as photographs of the aircraft and its crew, historical data relating to the loss of the aircraft, crew rosters, etc.

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1. Close-up color photograph of "Draggin Lady," with emphasis on the aircraft's "nose art."
2. Color drawing of the lady that was painted on the side of Mr. Maples' B-29, "Draggin Lady."
3. Black and white photograph of "Draggin Lady;" again, with emphasis on the aircraft's "nose art." / 4. Black and white photograph of "Draggin Lady," with "nose art" ^ 5. Aircraft Towing Accident Report for B-29 #42-24694-BW ("Draggin Lady"). ,,- 6. Black and white photograph of "Draggin Lady" in the water off the Island of Saipan after the ill-fated test flight
7. Color photograph of "Draggin Lady" in the water after the crash.
8. NASM Archives Division summary of the crash of "Draggin Lady."
9. Letter from Dixie Dysart, Archivist, Inquiries Branch, HQ, AFHRA/RSA, to Duane Blair Maples. Attachments include: A. List of the microfilm records of the 500th Bombardment Group from November, 1943 to January, 1946, with ordering information. B. Individual Aircraft Record Card for "Draggin Lady."
10. Reply from the Air Force Historical Office regarding the crash of "Draggin Lady."
11. Reply from the Air Force Historical Research Agency regarding the crash of "Draggin Lady."
12. "Draggin Lady" crash information, Part L
13. "Draggin Lady" crash information, Part H.

^ 14. "Draggin Lady" crash information, Part III. . 15.

"Draggin Lady crash information, Part IV. /Q(y Requiem for the B-29 Superfortress, "Draggin Lady."

,X17. Photographs of "Draggin Lady" crew members around the aircraft after a mission.

18. Photograph of Captain Richard A. Field bomb crew.

19. Photograph of Captain Richard A. Field bomb crew.

20. Photograph of Pilot, Lt Richard O. Dodds, standing next to "Draggin Lady."

21. Photograph of a B-29 crew, possibly Engle's crew, posing by "Draggin Lady."

22. Photograph of "nose art" on the Pilot's side of "Draggin Lady."

23. Photograph of Captain Richard A. Field bomb crew practicing survival training with life raft.

.^STCrew Roster: Captain Richard A. Field bomb crew.

„IS. Crew Roster: Captain Patrick Calhoun bomb crew.

26. Photograph of Captain Patrick Calhoun bomb crew.

^11. Photographs of Charles R. Maples.

28. Crew Roster: 1/Lt. Robert £. Engle bomb crew. ^29w'Draggin

Lady" - The Story of the Naming of a B-29 Superfortress.

30. Early/Original Aircraft of the 500th Bombardment Group.

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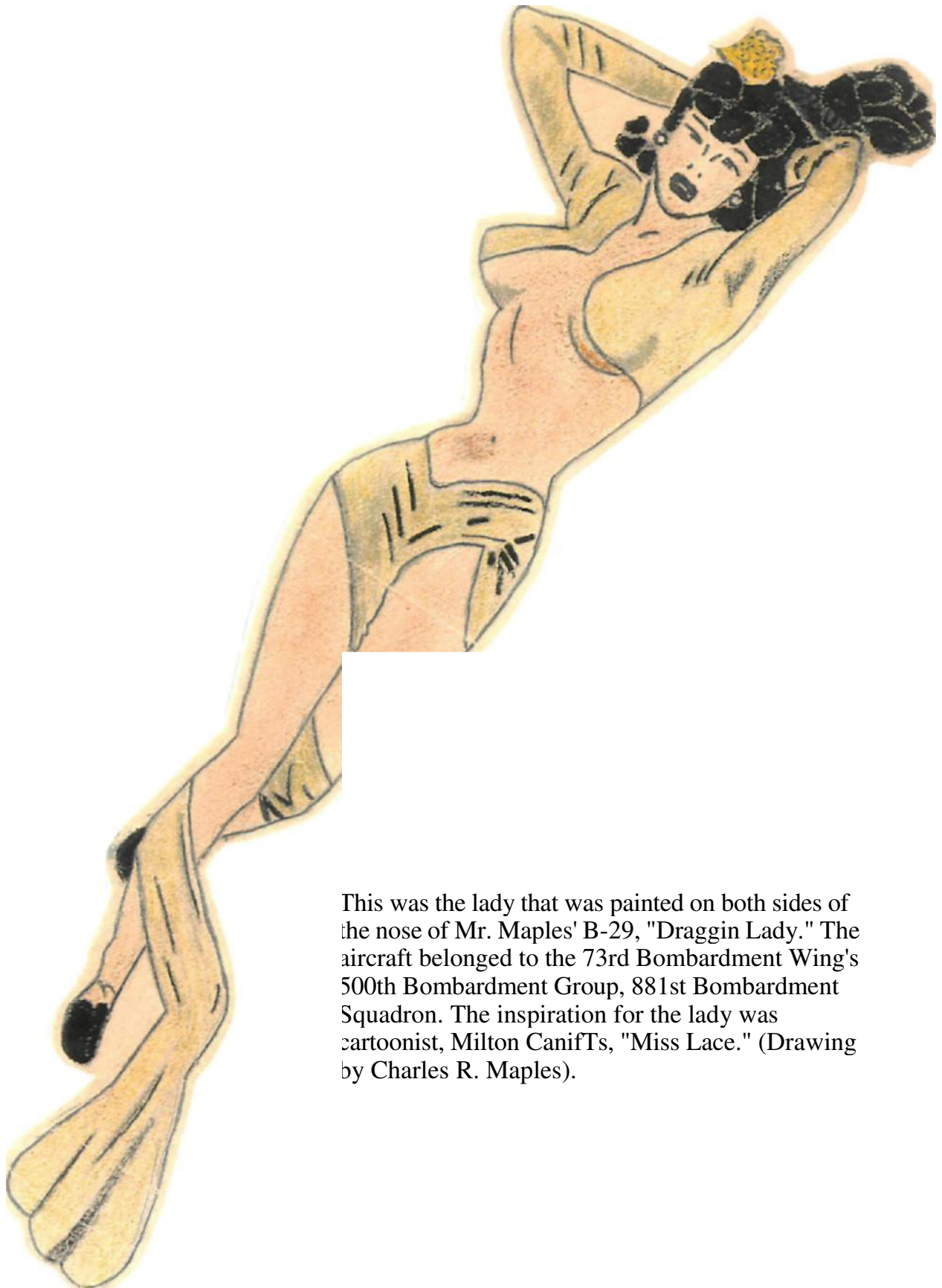
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In this photograph, one can get a good view of the art work that was on Mr. Maples' first B-29, "Draggin Lady." Note the names of crew member's wives or girlfriends neatly printed near their respective positions on the aircraft. (Charles R. and Duane Blair Maples' collections).



This was the lady that was painted on both sides of the nose of Mr. Maples' B-29, "Draggin Lady." The aircraft belonged to the 73rd Bombardment Wing's 500th Bombardment Group, 881st Bombardment Squadron. The inspiration for the lady was cartoonist, Milton Caniff's, "Miss Lace." (Drawing by Charles R. Maples).



Another view of the nose art on "Draggin Lady" from a slightly different angle. Note the seven mission markings on the nose. Also, the dome covering the upper four gun turret has been removed, probably for maintenance on the guns. (Photograph from the Duane Blair Maples collection).



In this photograph, one can see that there are ten mission markings on "Draggin Lady's" nose. Some type of maintenance activity is in progress. The identity of the man in the photograph is unknown. Note that the forward bomb bay doors are open and that the letter "e" appears to be missing from the name, "Anne," near the Aircraft Commander's window. (Photograph from the Duane Blair Maples collection).

Aircraft Towing Accident Report for B-29 Serial Number 42-24694.

(Editor's Note: Some of the original documents in this report were re-typed for the purpose of clarity; keeping in mind that the originals are almost fifty five years old. With this in mind, original signatures will, of course, be missing from the documents that have been re-typed).

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Description of Accident

(Brief narrative of accident. Include statement of responsibility and recommendations for action to prevent repetition).

NARRATIVE:

At approximately 1815 CWT, a crew from the Pre-Flight Section were instructed to go to the Depot Maintenance Hanger to tow out a B-29 aircraft #42-24694. Upon arrival there, the crew attached the tow bar to subject aircraft and stationed themselves in position for pulling the plane out of the hanger. The men under each wing were watching to see that the wings cleared the edges of the door and several engine stands close by.

The sub-depot hanger is constructed with a hatch at the end of the hanger to provide clearance for the high vertical stabilizer of B-29 aircraft.

As the aircraft was being towed out, it was turned too soon and the vertical stabilizer missed the hatch provided for its clearance and struck the top of the hanger.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Ground personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That disciplinary action be taken against responsible persons.
2. That more thorough instructions be given to ground personnel regarding towing very heavy bombardment aircraft.

Signature _____
(Investigating Officer) H.M.
Locker, Captain, Air Corps

Date 4 November 1944

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AIRCRAFT DAMAGE

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Accident and Analysis

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**Headquarters, Kearney Army Air Field
Office of the Commanding Officer
Kearney, Nebraska**

4 November 1944

OP

SUBJECT: Letter of Transmittal.

TO: Chief-Flying Safety, Army Air Forces, Winston-Salem 1, North Carolina.

Transmitted herewith WD AAF Form No. 14, Aircraft Accident Report, for B-29 #42-24694, the vertical stabilizer of which, struck the hatch-way of the Depot-Maintenance Hanger at Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.

For the Commanding Officer:

**Alvin H. Kirshner
1st Lt. Air Corps
Assistant Adjutant**

**1 Inch Incl 1 - WD AAF Form No.
14 with 16 incls.**

I N C O M I N G M E S S A G E

HEADQUARTERS ARMY AIR FORCES FOR ACTION _____ A A

OFFICE OF FLYING SAFETY FOR. IMFQ INTELL
WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA FOR FILE
DATE 28 OCT 1944

T.W.X. | TELEGRAM | ADM NET

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FROM COUSLAND CO 271 SB KEARNEY NEBR 281600Z
TO CHIEF FLYING SAFETY AAF WINSTON-SALEM 1 NORTH CAROLINA
GR NC

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C TOWING ACCIDENT VERTICAL STABILIZER DAMAGED
WHILE PLANE WAS BEING

TOWED OUT OF HANGAR

NO FLYING PERSONNEL INVOLVED

GROUND ACCIDENT TOWING AIRCRAFT OUT OF DEPOT MAIN HANGAR SKY CLEAR
VISIBILITY UNRESTRICTED PRESSURE 1027.8 MB TEMPERATURE 68 DEGREES F DEW
POINT 43 DEGREE'S F WIND DIRECTION SOUTH WIND VELOCITY 9 MPH ALTIMETER
SETTING 30.35 G B-29 NO 42-24694 REPEAT 42-24694

H KAAF KEARNEY NEBRASKA

I VERTICAL STABILIZER

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K LOCAL REPAIR

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TO CHIEF AFAFS WINSTONSALEPTfa C

THE FOLOWING MESSAGE IS RELAYED FOR YOUR INFORMATION QUOTE FROM
COUSLAND CO 271 SB KEARNEY NEDR 2616002 TO CG AAF WASHINGTON DC

CHIEF FLYING SAFETY AAF WINSTONSALEM 1 NORTH CAROLINA GR NC

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j B VERTICAL STABILIZER

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K LOCAL REPAIR

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A TRUE COPY:

RESTRICTED

**Headquarters Kearney Army Airfield
Office Of The Depot Maintenance Officer
Kearney, Nebraska**

28 October 1944

SUBJECT: Statement of Damages to Airplane B-29, Ser. No. 42-24694.

**TO: Director of Supply and Maintenance, Kearney Army Air Field,
Kearney,
Nebraska.**

1. The following damages occurred to airplane B-29, Ser. No. 42-24694 on 27 October 1944:

A. Vertical fin damaged from leading edge at rib station 176.55 to rear fin spar, and from fin rib station 176.55 to tip. Damage necessitates skin replacement, deicer channel replacement from station 168.45 to rear spar, and replacement of 5 each false ribs at fin tip.

**H.M. Locker Captain,
Air Corps Base
Operations Officer**

**/s/ Thomas B. McEvoy
1st Lt., Air Corps
Asst Depot Maint Officer**

Incl #1 to WD A/F Form No 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

RESTRICTED

**Headquarters 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hanger,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF CREW CHIEF

At approximately 1815 on 27 October 1944, M/Sgt. Davis, Line Chief of Hanger #2, gave me a work slip and instructed me to report to the hanger and tow a B-29 out

I assembled my crew of five men and proceeded down to the hanger. I have been in charge of the same crew for the past twelve months.

The B-29 was made ready to be towed from the hanger. We checked the ship and apparently everything was all right. Several of the Sub-Depot hanger personnel were standing at the rear of the ship as well as on both sides. The crew attached the tow bar to the ship and each crew member automatically assumed his proper position. As is proper, being the highest ranking non-com, I assumed the driver's position in the Cletrac.

Fellow crew members gave me a signal to start the ship rolling forward. The ship started moving forward slowly and fellow crew members signaled poor clearance due to engine stands on the West side of the hanger to the right of the ship. Most of the attention was directed to the right wing where difficulty to clear seemed most apparent but my crew motioned that [the] ship was clearing O.K.

A crashed B-25 was parked outside on the Southwest side of the hanger, as well as other engine stands and heavy equipment which would have torn up the wing if it should have hit it. My attention was directed to the right due to the danger of hitting the hazards. To the best of my knowledge, with the ship rolling slowly, everything was under control and going fine.

Incl #1 to WD AAF Form No 14 For B-29 #42-24694.

RESTRICTED

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hanger,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF CREW CHTEF - continued

I heard no warning. The first I knew of any danger was when the tail fin struck the top of the hanger. The man in the cockpit jammed the brakes on. None of the Sub-Depot hanger personnel who were watching made any effort whatsoever to notify me that the tail fin of the ship was not clearing the hanger.

There are no markings for guidance going either in or out of the Sub-Depot hangers while towing as there are in hangers #3 and #4 operated by Army personnel. This discrepancy has been reported by fellow crew chiefs many times. There are no markers or guides whatsoever to enable the Cletrac driver to safely tow an airplane either in or out of the Sub-Depot hangers.

Clearance for tail section of B-29 to pass through opening in center top section of hanger on either end is dangerously small. All crew chiefs in our hanger have complained of passageway being too small and their superiors have also agreed that danger exists at any time B-29 aircraft are being towed either in or out of any hanger on this base.

**Charles R. Milam
S/Sgt, ASN 18050292
Crew Chief
Pre-Flight Section**

Incl #4 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

AIRPLANE FLIGHT REPORT .- .ENGINEERING

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AIRPLANE FLIGHT "REPORT - ENGINEERING

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Captain, Air Corps

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42-24694

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Incl # J to YTD AAF Form Ho 14 for 3-29 #42-24694

RESTRICTED

**Headquarters 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hanger,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF ASSISTANT CREW MEMBER

At approximately 1830 on 27 October 1944, B-29 #42-24694 was in the hanger ready to be towed out by the Cletrac.

I was in the cockpit on the pilot's seat. The Cletrac started towing the ship and all I could see from the cockpit was the left wing tip. The ship was rolling and before we cleared the hangar, one of the men shouted "STOP." I immediately applied the brakes when I heard the warning. It was too late then to avoid any damage. I did not hear any crash or feel a jar.

The vertical stabilizer hit into the top of the hanger, just off the side of the hangar hatch.

**Alex (NMI) Weiss
Sgt, ASN 32296488
Assistant Crew Chief
Pre-Flight Section**

Incl #5 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

RESTRICTED

**Headquarters 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hanger,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF MECHANIC

My crew chief, myself and another crew member drove down to the hanger in the Cletrac at approximately 1815 on 27 October 1944.

When we arrived at the hanger, the first thing we did was to sign our names on the sheet to show we had our passes. We backed the Cletrac to the plane and hooked up the tow bar. I went to the left wing to watch that and the other fellows took their positions. The signal was given to go ahead and we started towing it out.

My job was to watch that the left wing tip cleared the hangar well and the doors. I stood forward of the wing tip because it was easier from that position to see if the wing was clearing, also to signal the man in the Cletrac to stop. From that position, it is not easy to watch the position of the tail as it comes through, therefore, I was watching both the left wing tip and the tail. My attention was more on the wing tip till it cleared the hangar.

At that point, just as the wing tip cleared the hangar, the man driving the Cletrac began turning to the left so I still continued to watch the wing tip to see if we cleared the corner of the doorway as we went around. My attention was then divided between watching that wing tip and watching the tail.

I looked at the tail again and it was getting close to the cut-out at the top of the hangar. It looked to me as though it would clear.

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATFTVIFVT OF MECHANIC continued

Then I looked again to see if the left wing tip was in the clear and also looked at the tail. The tail was almost up to the cut-out, then it did not look as if it would clear. I ran toward the Cletrac and yeUed "Hold it up!" The man in the Cletrac did not hear me over the noise of the Cletrac and men at work. The man in the cockpit did hear me and applied the brakes immediately. Just as he applied the brakes, the tail crashed into the hanger.

**Thomas J. Heeler
Pfc, ASN 32275998
Mechanic
Pre-Flight Section**

Incl #6 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

RESTRICTED
Headquarters 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hanger,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF MECHANIC

On 27 October 1944 at approximately 1815, we drove down to the hanger in order to tow a B-29 out of the hanger. Three of the crew had arrived previously and the ship was ready to be pulled out.

I assumed a position approximately twenty feet in front of #1 engine. I motioned to the crew member in the cockpit "Brakes Off" and shouted "Go ahead and pull the plane." The ship started moving slowly at normal towing speed.

I was watching the wing tip, the Cletrac and the tail. Suddenly someone shouted "Brakes" but it was too late because, at the same time, the tail hit the top of the hanger.

I noticed the tail before it hit and it looked clear to me. I was standing at an angle and it might have been an optical illusion.

**Harold F. Schmidt
Cpl., ASN 32624657
Mechanic
Pre-Flight Section**

Incl #7 to WD AAF Form NO. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

**Headquarters, 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hanger,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF MECHANIC

On 27 October 1944 at approximately 1815, our crew chief instructed me to go down to the hanger to tow a B-29 out of the hanger. When we arrived, the ship was ready to be towed out, the tow bar was on and the Cletrac was hooked to the tow bar.

I was standing under the right wing and I motioned to our crew chief in the Cletrac to go ahead. There were several engine stands on the right hand side. I climbed up on one engine stand outside the hanger to see if the right wing would clear.

Another crew member also climbed on an engine stand inside of the hanger. When the ship started rolling, we did watch the tail but when we noticed all of the engine stands on the right, our attention was immediately directed to the obstructions which were the most important at the time. From then on, we just watched the right wing tip in order that it would clear the engine stand. There were several engine stands inside of the hanger and one crew chief stand on the outside on which I had climbed.

I turned to climb down from the engine stand and heard the crash and immediately yelled "Brakes!" I did not know what was the matter but knew something had happened.

**Gerald U. Jacoby
Pfc, ASN 36221451
Mechanic
Pre-Flight Section**

Incl #8 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

**Headquarters, 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF MECHANIC

We were instructed to go down to the hangar to tow out a B-29. Three of the crew were down there and the plane was ready to be towed out of the hangar.

I took the drip pan out from underneath the plane and went over to the right side. The crew chief instructed me to watch the right wing and that is what I was doing. I also was watching the tail but after a bit, I could not see the tail very well.

There were some stands and we had to be careful about them, therefore, the plane was taking it easy in order not to damage the wing. There were about a half dozen engine stands stored in the hangar but one particular stand was out quite a ways toward the center of the hangar and we were watching that. I climbed on this particular stand to make sure the plane cleared it

I motioned to the Cletrac driver to go ahead that it was O.K. All of my attention was drawn to watching the wing as the stands were close by and I did not glance back at the tail. The crash happened so quickly I did not know what had occurred at the time but I knew it had hit something.

**Raymond H. Holzfuss
Cpl., ASN 39307304
Mechanic
Pre-Flight Section**

Incl #9 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694

**Headquarters, 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF GUARD

I was the guard on plane number 42-24694 from 1300 to 1900. At about 1800, a crew of men came to remove the plane from the hanger. I sat in the seat next to the driver of the Cletrac. When the plane was almost out of the hangar, some one said "Stop!" and immediately afterwards, I heard the tail hit the hangar. At the word "Stop! the driver applied the brakes to the Cletrac.**

**/s/ David E. Willis
Cpl., Air Corps
ASN 35232082
500th Bomb Group
Guard**

A TRUE COPY:

**H.M. Locker Captain, Air
Corps Base Operations
Officer**

Incl #10 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

**Headquarters, 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

28 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF DISCREPANCY CREW

At the time of the accident, I was in the bombardier's section of the airplane checking to see if there was any possibility of hydraulic leaks in the hydraulic system. During the time we were in the plane, we felt a bump and heard a slight noise and upon leaving the plane found that the accident had happened.

**Joe A. Atkinson
Sgt.,ASN 38111863
Air Corps**

Incl #11 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

**Headquarters, 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

28 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF msrREPANCV CREW

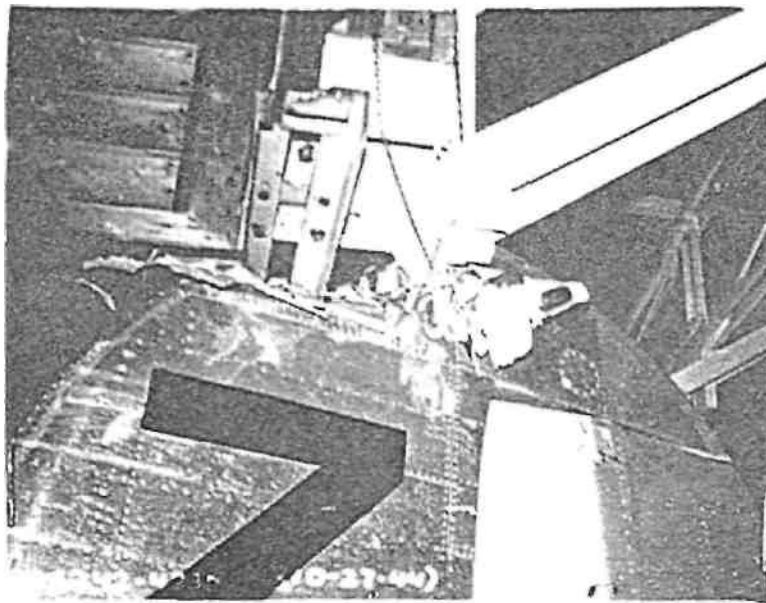
I was in the nose section with Sgt. Atkinson and we were watching the metering values for any apparent leakage when we felt the bump. Not knowing what was going on, we didn't pay much attention to it. Then, after getting out of the plane, we noticed the stabilizer had been pulled in to the hangar.

**Theodore M. Perry
Sgt., Air Corps ASN
19178918**

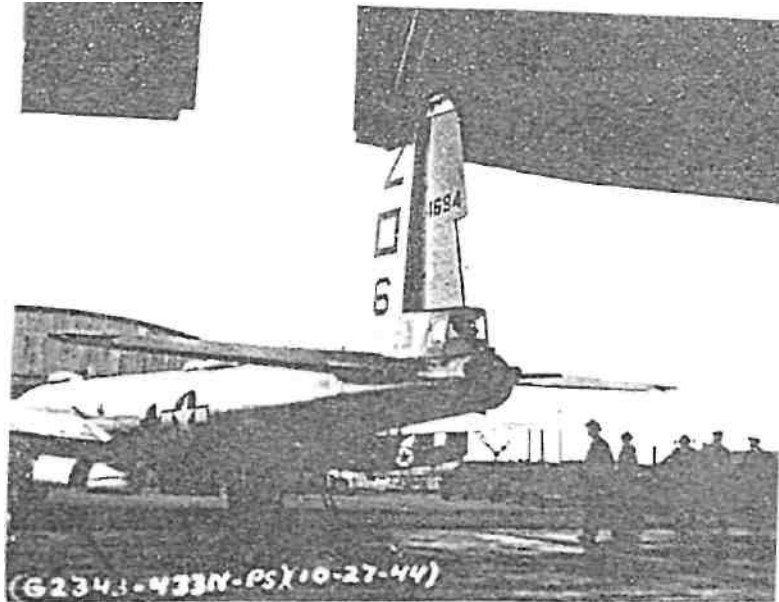
Incl #12 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.



Close up view looking West, showing vertical stabilizer in contact with hanger.



Close up view showing damage to vertical stabilizer.



View looking North, showing opening in hangar to allow clearance for vertical stabilizer and point of contact of stabilizer with hangar.

Incl #13 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694. (2)

**Base Weather Station
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

28 October 1944

SUBJECT: Accident Report

TO: Base Operations, Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska

**The following is a report of weather conditions at 1830 CWT 27 October 1944 at
Kearney Army Air Field:**

Sky Condition	Clear
Barometric Pressure	1027.8 Mb
Temperature	68 degrees F
Dew Point	43 degrees F
Wind Direction	South
Wind Velocity	9 mph
Altimeter Setting	30.35

**William M. Hamilton
1st Lt., Air Corps
Base Weather Officer**

Incl #14 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #43-24694.

SPECIAL ORDERS)
:
MO: "278)

HEADQUARTERS 271ST STAGING BASE
KEARNEY ARMY AIR FIELD, KEARNEY, NEBRASKA
4 October 1944

E X T R A C T

4. The Acft Accident Committee aptd by Par 6/ SO 252, this Kq, C3, as amended, is hereby terminated. The following named Offs are aptd as Acft Accident Committee, to investigate mil acft accidents coming under the jurisdiction of this Base:

MAJ (2162) GEORGE B MUNROE, JR, 0412187, AC
CAPT (2161) E M LOCKER, 0437974, AC, Acft Accident Off
CAPT (2166) DAVID A STEELE, JR, 0725547, AC,
MAJ (2151) JOHN W LIVINGSTON, 0417171, AC, (499th Bomb Gp)

Special Members

LT COL (3100) STUA~T F VAMDIVISRE, 0311369, MC (Fit Surgeon)
CAPT (9307) JAKES R GARRETT, 0909513, AC Base S-2)
CAPT (7536) NO-9IS R BU-BRIDGE, 0571147, AC Ease Tech Insp)
1ST LT (8219) WILLIAM M HAMILTON, 0880560, ^C (Base V«oa Off)

* * *

By order of Colonel CCUSLAND:

■SDV.IN F DOTY
Ceprln, Air Corps
Adjutant

OFFICIAL:

/a/ A.J. Picucci
A.J. FICUCCI • '»
1st Lt, Air Corps Aaat
Adjutant

SPECIAL ORDERS) HEADQUARTERS 271ST STAG.KG EASE
:
KEARNEY ARMY MR FIE^D, Su^A t IEY, NEBRASKA
v0 _.....290) 16 October 1944

E X T R A C T

« tt <*

17. MAJ; (1092) CARLOS O FUCKETT, 0299912, AC, la aptd to Board of Offs (Acft Accident Committee) aptd by par 4, SO 273, this Hq, cs, vice MA J (2162) GEORGE B MUM'OE, Jr, 0412187, reld.

By order of Colonel COUSLAUD:

EDWIN ? DOTY
Captain, Air Corps
Adj at ant

//•

OFFICIAL:

/a/ Alvin H. Kirsner
ALVIN K. KIRSNER
1st Lt, Air Corp3
A3St Adjutant

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A TRUE COPY: .
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H.M. LOCKER
Captain, Air Corps
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Appendix No. 14

**Headquarters, 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

4 November 1944

SPECIAL ACCIDENT REPORT

1. THE ACCIDENT. A B-29 aircraft, while being towed from the Depot Maintenance Hangar, was involved in an accident, due to vertical stabilizer striking roof of hangar door. No crew members were involved and there was no injury to tow crew.

2. THE LESSON. Towing crews are lax in watching all parts of the airplane which might strike sides and top of hangar.

3. ACTION.

A. Pre-Flight Section. Towing crews will be given further instructions in regards to towing very heavy bombardment aircraft in and out of hangars.

By order of Colonel Cousland:

**Edwin P. Doty
Captain, Air Corps
Adjutant**

Incl #16 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

Appendix No. 14

**Headquarters, 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

4 November 1944

SPECIAL ACCIDENT REPORT

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A. Pre-Flight Section. Towing crews will be given further instructions in regards to towing very heavy bombardment aircraft in and out of hangars.

By order of Colonel Cousland:

**Edwin P. Doty
Captain, Air Corps
Adjutant**

Incl #16 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

RESTRICTED

**Headquarters 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hanger,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF ASSISTANT CREW CHIEF

At approximately 1830 on 27 October 1944, B-29 #42-24694 was in the hanger ready to be towed out by the Cletrac.

I was in the cockpit on the pilot's seat. The Cletrac started towing the ship and all I could see from the cockpit was the left wing tip. The ship was rolling and before we cleared the hangar, one of the men shouted "STOP." I immediately applied the brakes when I heard the warning. It was too late then to avoid any damage. I did not hear any crash or feel a jar.

The vertical stabilizer hit into the top of the hanger, just off the side of the hangar hatch.

**Alex (NMI) Weiss
Sgt,ASN 32296488
Assistant Crew Chief
Pre-Flight Section**

Incl #5 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

**Headquarters, 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

28 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF DISCREPANCY CREW

I was in the nose section with Sgt. Atkinson and we were watching the metering values for any apparent leakage when we felt the bump. Not knowing what was going on, we didn't pay much attention to it. Then, after getting out of the plane, we noticed the stabilizer had been pulled in to the hangar.

**Theodore M. Perry
Sgt., Air Corps ASN
19178918**

Incl #12 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

**Headquarters, 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

28 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF DISCREPANCY CREW

At the time of the accident, I was in the bombardier's section of the airplane checking to see if there was any possibility of hydraulic leaks in the hydraulic system. During the time we were in the plane, we felt a bump and heard a slight noise and upon leaving the plane found that the accident had happened.

**Joe A. Atkinson
Sgt.,ASN 38111863
Air Corps**

Incl #11 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

**Headquarters, 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF GUARD

I was the guard on plane number 42-24694 from 1300 to 1900. At about 1800, a crew of men came to remove the plane from the hanger. I sat in the seat next to the driver of the Cletrac. When the plane was almost out of the hangar, some one said "Stop!" and immediately afterwards, I heard the tail hit the hangar. At the word "Stop!" the driver applied the brakes to the Cletrac.

**/s/ David E. Willis
Cpl., Air Corps ASN
35232082
500th Bomb Group
Guard**

A TRUE COPY:

**H.M. Locker Captain, Air
Corps Base Operations
Officer**

Ind #10 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

**Headquarters, 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF MECHANIC

We were instructed to go down to the hangar to tow out a B-29. Three of the crew were down there and the plane was ready to be towed out of the hangar.

I took the drip pan out from underneath the plane and went over to the right side. The crew chief instructed me to watch the right wing and that is what I was doing. I also was watching the tail but after a bit, I could not see the tail very well.

There were some stands and we had to be careful about them, therefore, the plane was taking it easy in order not to damage the wing. There were about a half dozen engine stands stored in the hangar but one particular stand was out quite a ways toward the center of the hangar and we were watching that I climbed on this particular stand to make sure the plane cleared it.

I motioned to the Cletrac driver to go ahead that it was O.K. All of my attention was drawn to watching the wing as the stands were close by and I did not glance back at the tail. The crash happened so quickly I did not know what had occurred at the time but I knew it had hit something.

**Raymond H. Holzfuss
Cpl., ASN 39307304
Mechanic
Pre-Flight Section**

Incl #9 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694

RESTRICTED
Headquarters 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hanger,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF MECHANIC

On 27 October 1944 at approximately 1815, we drove down to the hanger in order to tow a B-29 out of the hanger. Three of the crew had arrived previously and the ship was ready to be pulled out.

I assumed a position approximately twenty feet in front of #1 engine. I motioned to the crew member in the cockpit "Brakes Off" and shouted "Go ahead and pull the plane." The ship started moving slowly at normal towing speed.

I was watching the wing tip, the Cletrac and the tail. Suddenly someone shouted "Brakes" but it was too late because, at the same time, the tail hit the top of the hanger.

I noticed the tail before it hit and it looked clear to me. I was standing at an angle and it might have been an optical illusion.

Harold F. Schmidt
Cpl.,ASN 32624657
Mechanic
Pre-Flight Section

Incl #7 to WD AAF Form NO. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

**Headquarters, 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hanger,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF MECHANIC

On 27 October 1944 at approximately 1815, our crew chief instructed me to go down to the hanger to tow a B-29 out of the hanger. When we arrived, the ship was ready to be towed out, the tow bar was on and the Cletrac was hooked to the tow bar.

I was standing under the right wing and I motioned to our crew chief in the Cletrac to go ahead. There were several engine stands on the right hand side. I climbed up on one engine stand outside the hanger to see if the right wing would clear.

Another crew member also climbed on an engine stand inside of the hanger. When the ship started rolling, we did watch the tail but when we noticed all of the engine stands on the right, our attention was immediately directed to the obstructions which were the most important at the time. From then on, we just watched the right wing tip in order that it would clear the engine stand. There were several engine stands inside of the hanger and one crew chief stand on the outside on which I had climbed.

I turned to climb down from the engine stand and heard the crash and immediately yelled "Brakes!" I did not know what was the matter but knew something had happened.

**Gerald U. Jacoby
Pfc, ASN 36221451
Mechanic
Pre-Flight Section**

Ind #8 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

RESTRICTED

**Headquarters 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hanger,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF MECHANIC

My crew chief, myself and another crew member drove down to the hanger in the Cletrac at approximately 1815 on 27 October 1944.

When we arrived at the hanger, the first thing we did was to sign our names on the sheet to show we had our passes. We backed the Cletrac to the plane and hooked up the tow bar. I went to the left wing to watch that and the other fellows took their positions. The signal was given to go ahead and we started towing it out

My job was to watch that the left wing tip cleared the hangar well and the doors. I stood forward of the wing tip because it was easier from that position to see if the wing was clearing, also to signal the man in the Cletrac to stop. From that position, it is not easy to watch the position of the tail as it comes through, therefore, I was watching both the left wing tip and the tail. My attention was more on the wing tip till it cleared the hangar.

At that point, just as the wing tip cleared the hangar, the man driving the Cletrac began turning to the left so I still continued to watch the wing tip to see if we cleared the corner of the doorway as we went around. My attention was then divided between watching that wing tip and watching the tail.

I looked at the tail again and it was getting close to the cut-out at the top of the hangar. It looked to me as though it would clear.

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF MECHANIC continued

Then I looked again to see if the left wing tip was in the clear and also looked at the tail. The tail was almost up to the cut-out, then it did not look as if it would clear. I ran toward the Cletrac and yelled "Hold it up!" The man in the Cletrac did not hear me over the noise of the Cletrac and men at work. The man in the cockpit did hear me and applied the brakes immediately. Just as he applied the brakes, the tail crashed into the hanger.

**Thomas J. Heeler
Pfc, ASN 32275998
Mechanic
Pre-Flight Section**

Incl #6 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

**Base Weather Station
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

28 October 1944

SUBJECT: Accident Report

TO: Base Operations, Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska

**The following is a report of weather conditions at 1830 CWT 27 October 1944 at
Kearney Army Air Field:**

Sky Condition	Clear
Barometric Pressure	1027.8 Mb
Temperature	68 degrees F
Dew Point	43 degrees F
Wind Direction	South
Wind Velocity	9 mph
Altimeter Setting	30.35

**William M. Hamilton
1st Lt., Air Corps
Base Weather Officer**

Incl #14 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #43-24694.

**Headquarters, Kearney Army Air Field
Office of the Commanding Officer
Kearney, Nebraska**

4 November 1944

OP

SUBJECT: Letter of Transmittal.

TO: Chief-Flying Safety, Army Air Forces, Winston-Salem 1, North Carolina.

Transmitted herewith WD AAF Form No. 14, Aircraft Accident Report, for B-29 #42-24694, the vertical stabilizer of which, struck the hatch-way of the Depot-Maintenance Hanger at Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.

For the Commanding Officer:

**Alvin H. Kirshner
1st Lt. Air Corps
Assistant Adjutant**

**1 Inch Ind 1 - WD AAF Form No.
14 with 16 incls.**

RESTRICTED

**Headquarters 271st Staging Base
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska**

27 October 1944

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hanger,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF CREW CHIEF

At approximately 1815 on 27 October 1944, M/Sgt. Davis, Line Chief of Hanger #2, gave me a work slip and instructed me to report to the hanger and tow a B-29 out.

I assembled my crew of five men and proceeded down to the hanger. I have been in charge of the same crew for the past twelve months.

The B-29 was made ready to be towed from the hanger. We checked the ship and apparently everything was all right. Several of the Sub-Depot hanger personnel were standing at the rear of the ship as well as on both sides. The crew attached the tow bar to the ship and each crew member automatically assumed his proper position. As is proper, being the highest ranking non-com, I assumed the driver's position in the Cletrac.

Fellow crew members gave me a signal to start the ship rolling forward. The ship started moving forward slowly and fellow crew members signaled poor clearance due to engine stands on the West side of the hanger to the right of the ship. Most of the attention was directed to the right wing where difficulty to clear seemed most apparent but my crew motioned that [the] ship was clearing O.K.

A crashed B-25 was parked outside on the Southwest side of the hanger, as well as other engine stands and heavy equipment which would have torn up the wing if it should have hit it. My attention was directed to the right due to the danger of hitting the hazards. To the best of my knowledge, with the ship rolling slowly, everything was under control and going fine.

Incl #1 to WD AAF Form No 14 For B-29 #42-24694.

RESTRICTED

**Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hanger,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.**

STATEMENT OF CREW CHIEF - continued

I heard no warning. The first I knew of any danger was when the tail fin struck the top of the hanger. The man in the cockpit jammed the brakes on. None of the Sub-Depot hanger personnel who were watching made any effort whatsoever to notify me that the tail fin of the ship was not clearing the hanger.

There are no markings for guidance going either in or out of the Sub-Depot hangers while towing as there are in hangers #3 and #4 operated by Army personnel. This discrepancy has been reported by fellow crew chiefs many times. There are no markers or guides whatsoever to enable the Cletrac driver to safely tow an airplane either in or out of the Sub-Depot hangers.

Clearance for tail section of B-29 to pass through opening in center top section of hanger on either end is dangerously small. All crew chiefs in our hanger have complained of passageway being too small and their superiors have also agreed that danger exists at any time B-29 aircraft are being towed either in or out of any hanger on this base.

**Charles R. Milam
S/Sgt, ASN 18050292
Crew Chief
Pre-Flight Section**

Incl #4 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

RESTRICTED

**Headquarters Kearney Army Airfield
Office Of The Depot Maintenance Officer
Kearney, Nebraska**

SUBJECT: Statement of Damages to Airplane B-29, Ser. No. 42-24694.

TO:

**Kearney, Director of Supply and Maintenance, Kearney Army Air Field,
Nebraska.**

1. The following damages occurred to airplane B-29, Ser. No. 42-24694 on 27 October 1944:

A. Vertical fin damaged from leading edge at rib station 176.55 to rear fin spar, and from fin rib station 176.55 to tip. Damage necessitates skin replacement, deicer channel replacement from station 168.45 to rear spar, and replacement of 5 each false ribs at fin tip.

**/s/ Thomas B. McEvoy
1st Lt., Air Corps
Asst Depot Maint Officer**

A TRUE COPY:

**H.M. Locker Captain, Air
Corps Base Operations
Officer**

Ind #1 to WD A/F Form No 14 for B-29 #42-24694.

Description of Accident

(Brief narrative of accident Include statement of responsibility and recommendations for action to prevent repetition).

NARRATIVE:

At approximately 1815 CWT, a crew from the Pre-Flight Section were instructed to go to the Depot Maintenance Hanger to tow out a B-29 aircraft #42-24694. Upon arrival there, the crew attached the tow bar to subject aircraft and stationed themselves in position for pulling the plane out of the hanger. The men under each wing were watching to see that the wings cleared the edges of the door and several engine stands close by.

The sub-depot hanger is constructed with a hatch at the end of the hanger to provide clearance for the high vertical stabilizer of B-29 aircraft.

As the aircraft was being towed out, it was turned too soon and the vertical stabilizer missed the hatch provided for its clearance and struck the top of the hanger.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Ground personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That disciplinary action be taken against responsible persons.
2. That more thorough instructions be given to ground personnel regarding towing very heavy bombardment aircraft.

Signature _____
(Investigating Officer) H.M.
Locker, Captain, Air Corps

Date 4 November 1944

Aircraft Towing Accident Report for B-29 Serial Number 42-24694.

(Editor's Note: Some of the original documents in this report were re-typed for the purpose of clarity; keeping in mind that the originals are almost fifty five years old. With this in mind, original signatures will, of course, be missing from the documents that have been re-typed).

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Htatement of responsibility and recommendation* for action to prevent repetition)

NARRATIVE:

At approximately 1815 CY/T, a crew from the Pro-Flight Section Z^e™ instructea to go to the Depot Maintainence Hangar to tow out a B-29 aircraft #42-24694. Upon arrival there, the crew attached the tow bar to subject aircraft and stationed themselves in oosition for pulling the plane out of the hangar. The men under each'wing were watching to see that the wings cleared the edges of the door and several engine stand clcse by.

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RESPONSIBILITY:

Ground personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS:


1. That disciplinary action be taken against responsible persons*
- 2, That more through instructions be given to ground personnel regarding towing very heavy bombardment aircraft.

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H.M. LOCZ?., (japtain. Air Corps

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ACTION SHEET

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O.P_cS_f Accident ::o. 45-10⁷-15

* \wedge maintenance

Typo of Aircraft B-29 _____ RKlodr 7, 'eiss, Alex, ffidr.ial Ho. $L.\sim\wedge o^e)l_i$

Date of Accident $\wedge 7 p_{ct} iQAV,$ Place Perot Maintenr^{^fi?5fiEe} Classification Major
Hangar, KAAF, Kearney, Nebr.

iyte Accident Miscellaneous Fatalities _____ No, Injuries 3 IJ_{ono} _____

Contributing Factors 20 MaJntgnanoej 82 Airport & Facilities _____

List of Recommendations by A.I.C, 1. That disciplinary action bg taken arainst
responsible persons. 2. That more thorough instructions bg given to ground_____
persona"! regarding towinrr very heavy bombardment aircraft, _____

List of Recomnnndations by/R,G>0,/ None received.

Comments by Deputy Chief:

Action Taken:

Training and Operations

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.raining and Operations (Cont'd)^.. . i1

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Accident and Analysis

Chief, OFS

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HEADQUARTERS KEARNEY ARMY AIR
FIELD
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER
KEARNEY, NEBRASKA

EML/mh

4: November 1944

OP

SUBJECT: Letter of Transmittal.


TO: Chief-Flying Safety, Army Air Forces,
Winston-Salem 1, North Carolina.

Transmitted herewith WD AAF Form No 14, Aircraft
Accident Report, for B-29 //42-24694, the vertical stabilizer of
which, struck the hatch-way of the Depot-Maintenance Hangar at
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27
October 1944.

9 »

For the Commanding Officer:

1 Incl:
Incl 1 - WD AAF Form No 14
with 16 incls.


ALVIN H. KIRSNER
1ST LT. AIR CORPS
ASSISTANT ADJUTANT

SS* tf

-?/-

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I N C 0 .VI I N G \1 E S S A G E

HEADQUARTERS ARMY AIR FORGES FOR ACTION AA . .

OFFICE OF FLYING SAFETY FOR. INFO INTELL

WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA FOR FILE _____

DATE 28 OCT 1944

T.VY.X.

TELEGRAM

ADM WET

WSAL 361 V KER 195 NR 18 AR OP

FROM COUSLAND CO 271 SB KEARNEY NEBR 281600Z

TO CHIEF FLYING SAFETY AAF WINSTON-SALEM 1 NORTH CAROLINA

GR NC

KER EM990 PERIOD

&

A 27 OCT 44 2330Z DEPOT MAINTENANCE HANGAR KAAF KEARNEY NEBR -^ tr

B NO PILOT INVOLVED C

v -

TOWING ACCIDENT VERTICAL STABILIZER DAMAGED WHILE

PLANE WAS BEING

TOWED OUT OF HANGAR

M//

hi-J i-»*Gr

NO FLYING PERSONNEL INVOLVED

GROUND ACCIDENT TOWING AIRCRAFT OUT OF DEPOT MAINT HANGAR SKY CLEAR

VISIBILITY UNRESTRICTED PRESSURE 1027.8 MB TEMPERATURE 68 DEGREES F

DEW POINT 43 DEGREE'S F WIND DIRECTION SOUTH WIND VELOCITY 9 MPH

ALTIMETER SETTING 30.35

t>->r

G B-29 NO 42-24694 REPEAT 42-24694

i

H KAAF KEARNEY NEBRASKA

w

/

I VERTICAL STABILIZER

i/

J NONE

K LOCAL REPAIR

- 2* -

L NONE

-J?

y AFACG NOTIFIED

N GROUP II #5931/1640Z/HD

j7&4S-kttrs

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FROM SwTfli^- AFAFS

WASHINGTON DC

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HC.A.A.F.
FLT.C.;7R0LC0MD.

TO CHIEF AFAFS KlsSTOIISALrSrK C

'ME FOLOOWING MESSAGE IS RELAYED FOR YOUR INFORMATION

CUOTE?ROH COUSLAND CO 271 SB KEARNEY IIEDR 26160CZ TO CG

AAF WASHINGTON DC

CHIEF FLYING SAFETY AAF UINSTONSALEM 1 NORTH CAROLINA

GR UC

KEK EM S>50 PD

A 27 OCT 44 2330Z DEPOT NAINTENENCE HANGAR KAAF KEARNEY IIE3R B

NO PILOT INVOLVED

C TOWING ACCIDENT VERTICAL STABILIZER DAMACED WHILE PLANE WAS

BEING TOWED OUT OF HAMAGAR

ZXXXX HANGARD

HO FLYING PERSONNEL INVOLVED

E GROUND ACCIDENT TOWING AIRCRAFT OUT OF DEPOT HAIMT HANGAR F SKY

CLEAR VISIBILITY UNRESTRICTED PRESSURE 1027.8 MB TEMPERATURE

X568 DEGREES F DEW POINT 43 DEGREES F SIND DIRECTION SOUTH WHIG

VELOCITY S> MPH ALTIMETER SETTING 30.35 G B-29 NO 42-24694 REPEAT

42-24694 K KAAF KEAR'NEY ME3

5 VERTICAL STABILIZER

- 'P~ -

J NONE

/

K LOCAL REPAIR

L NONE

6 AFACC NOTIFIED

fcL_CROUP IX__ ..

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16142

**K
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VOL**

UK MR 5 TO US WE HAVE NO RECORD

OF YOUR HR⁵

OK UP M>> THEY WANEXX WANTED TO ADD

NO I WILL SSHD 2 NEXT I HAD IT BO

SOMETHING

OK

RT_CD NR<< FRJ A^T 202<SZ
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#>

R-15XXIC1f3'
 HE/>D'UARTEFS KE/«RNEY'Ar?MY AXfi»FTELD
 OFFICE OF THE DEPOT MAINTENANCE OFFICER
 KEARNEY, NEBRASKA

TBM/l'p

SM

2f October 1944

SUBJECT: S'-r.totnent of Drnrnpes to Alrn lone H-29, Ser. No. 4
 L:-24694.

TO: Director of Supply and Maintenance, Kearney Air-my Air
 Field, Kearney, Uebrpi-ko.

1. The following dr:nr»:o:j occurred to airplrne ^-29, 5er.
 ;,*o. •;2-24("94 on 27 October 1944:

n. Vertical f.n damaged from lercjnj edge at rib
 atotion 176.55 to roar fir, 3por, end Vro:v, fin rib st'tion 176.55 to
 UD. Do.T.cgo necessitates skin replacement, doicur channel ropltconent from
 station 163.45 to reir spar, Mid l'opli cement of b och false riba rt fin
 tip.

/s/ Thorn re ii. McEvoy THOMAS
 }. McEVOY 1st Lt, Air
 Corps A3 at Do pot Mr.int
 ^VVICKJV

A TRUE COPY:

•/ / rft/ ■'r ^.,
 H.M. LOCKER
 Crpt r in, Air Corps
 Brso ^porrtionc 0

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Incl n I to WD A/F For-. Ho 14 for B-29 #42-24694

HEADQUARTERS 271ST STAGING BASE
Kearney Army Air Field Kearney,
Nebraska

27 October 1944

Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CY.T on 27 October 1944.

STATEMENT OF ORE. CHIEF

At approximately 1015 on 27 October 1944, t.t/\$gt, Davis, Lino Chief of Tinngar ,y2,
gave me a work slip and instructed me to report to the hangar and tow a B-29
out.

I assembled my crew of five men and proceeded down to the hangar, I have been in
charge of the snmo crew for the past twelve months.

The B-29 was made ready to be towed from the hangar. The chocked the ship
and apparently everything was all right. Several of the Sub-Dopot hangar personnel were
standing at the rear of the ship as well as on both sides. The crew attached
the tow bar to the ship and each crew member automatically assumed his proper position,
As is proper, being the highest ranking non-com, I assumed the driver's position
in the Clotrac,

Follow crew members gave me a signal to start the ship rolling forward. The
ship started moving forward slowly and follow crew members signalled poor
clearance due to engine stands on the West side of the hangar to the right
of the ship. Most of the attention was directed to the right wing where
difficulty to clear seemed most apparent but my crew motioned that, ship was clearing O.K.

A crashed B-25 was parked outside on the Southwest side of the hangar, as
well as other engine stands and heavy equipment which would have torn up the
wing if it should have hit it. My attention was directed to the right due to
the danger of hitting the hazards. To the best of my knowledge, with the ship
rolling slowly, everything was under control and going fine,

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Ind #jto T?D AAF Form No 14 For B-29 #42-24694

Aircraft Towing Accident, Damage to Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CDT on 27 October 1944.

STATEMENT 01? CREW CHIEF - continued

I heard no warning. The first I knew of any danger was when the tail fin struck the top of the hangar. The man in the cockpit jammed the brakes on. Some of the Sub-Depot hangar personnel who were watching made any effort whatsoever to notify me that the tail fin of the ship was not clearing the hangar.

There are no markings for guidance going either in or out of the Sub-Depot hangars while towing as there are in hangars #3 and #4 operated by Army personnel. This discrepancy has been reported by fellow crew chiefs many times. There are no markers or aids whatsoever to enable the Clotrac driver to safely tow an airplane either in or out of the Sub-Depot hangars.

Clearance for tail section of B-29 to pass through opening in center top section of hangar on either end is dangerously small. All crew chiefs in our hangar have complained of passageway being **too small** and their superiors have also agreed that danger exists at any time B-29 aircraft are being towed either in or out of any hangar on this base,

S/Sgt, ASN 13050292
Crew Chief
Pro-Flight Section

-2-

9 y Incl # A/ to "D AAF Form No. 14 for B-29
7:42-24694.

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■3j,

WAR OPERATIONS
A. A. J. FORM NO. 1
A

PF

AIRPLANE FLIGHT REPORT - ENGINEERING

INSPECTION STATUS				SERVICING AT STATION OF TAKE-OFF (CHECK IMMEDIATELY BEFORE TAKE-OFF)													
	DATE OF OR HOURS DUE	INSPECTED TODAY		FUEL (GALLONS)	OIL (QUARTS)								RADIATOR CHECKED				
		BY	STATION		SERV- ICED	IN TANKS	NO. 1	SERV- ICED	IN TANKS	NO. 2	SERV- ICED	IN TANKS		NO. 3	SERV- ICED	IN TANKS	NO. 4
PREFLIGHT	10-27	Crew	KAAF														
DAILY	10-27	F	KAAF														
25 HOURS	69:10																
50 HOURS	94:10																
100 HOURS	144:10																
INSPECTION OF AUXILIARY EQUIPMENT				STATUS TODAY		EXPLANATION: Oil Leak on All Eng. #1 Fuel Pump Removed											
EQUIPMENT	SYMBOL	INSPECTED BY		STATION													
BOMBARDMENT		A TRUE COPY															
GUNNERY																	
CHEMICAL																	
COMMUNICATIONS		H.M. LOCKER															
PHOTOGRAPHIC		Captain, Air Corps															
NAVIGATION		Base Operations															
				RELEASED FOR FLIGHT													

RIV. (1 JAN gj

REMARKS: PILOTS AND MECHANICS - « iM«tncT»oM« INMM rnout covtu.

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(Through drain -

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2 Fuses missing from Eng Fwd Fuse Panel -

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^2"Rear oil Press. 5 P.S.I, below lower limit -

(*! Fuel Press 15J~PSI -

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Nose oil Press fluctuates -

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Eng'r
Emergency Hyd system leeka interphon

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ENGINE DATA

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AIRCRAFT 6nc. DATA
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AIRCRAFT DATA
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ENGINE "OOLL

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COMO. »CRV. COMO. O« DOT

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42-24694

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TOTAL FLIGHT TIME*

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4.-W! 4.Q4^l?*

Xnd * 2- to WD AAF Pons Ho 14 for 3-29 #42-24694

WAR DEPARTMENT
A. A. f. FORM NO. 1 A MV. CI
JAN. 44

'AIRPLANE FLIGHT REPORT - ENGINEERING

PP.EFLIOHT DAILY	DATE or on Mouna out	INSPECTION STATUS INSI-rttrco TODAY	• FUEL (OAU-QN1) »Ct»V-I CU)	SERVICING AT STATION OF TAKE-OFF (CHUCK IMMEDIATELY »KPOK TAKI-OFr)	g ~u
				OIL (QUART*) ncnv-lcr.D IC«0 TAHICI »KRV» IN IC»0 T»N«1 ocnv IC'D T»NK«	

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INSPECTION OF AUXILIARY EQUIPMENT	
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STATUS
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EXPLANATION r A** A TRlig_COPYt" *y <>

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JUKJHCKBR
Captain, Air Corps
8tw Operations -O^

EXCEPTIONAL RELEASE

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"EXCEPTIONAL RELEASE" HAS NOT BEEN ORANTCO »Y AN AUTOMTEO
MAINTENANCE OFFICE*. THE PILOT OF THE AIRCRAFT WILL »ION TNIS
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TO 11-1-12 NCW

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XTala Installed in VHF, Do Not uae In

Continental USA (T/S~B.C,Singleton 10727/44)

API Computer Repl«oe&«_T/Sgi-RQ&ftra.

Pilots, extension light OK (3Rt Cunningham),

Fuses Replaoed In Eng fuse ..Panel by O'Reilly)

Spare Turbo AmpUf lar-BftBJAotj,- Q'R«JLUJL1

Aux Life Raft"Installed at Sta I in pomp TO (04-15-1H04-15-1A)

10/27/44

None Wheel Door Adjuatad-LIQAT^ flart Perry)

Secret Cryatalls Removed From VHF. (T/s E.C. Singleton).

No XTala In VHF

Vertical Stabilizer damaged and R^oved (D Hindmarah

J, Beck

AIRCRAFT bno. DATA
AIR renca

AIRCRAFT DATA
COMPONENT

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42-24694

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Incl # J to YfD AAF Form No 14 for 3-29 #42-24694

Warn: ..

HEADQUARTERS 271ST STAGING BASE
Kearney Army Air Field Kearney,
Nebraska

27 October 1944

Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 C.T on 27 October 1944.

STATEU5NT__OF_Ac L I S T A N T _ C h E \ _ C x I I E F

At approximately 1830 on 27 October 1944, B-29 -42-24694 was in the
hangar ready to be towed out by the Clotrac.

I was in the cockpit in the pilot's seat. The Clotrac started
towing the ship and all I could see from the cockpit was the left wing
tip. The ship was rolling and before we cleared the hangar, one of the men
shouted "Stop". I immediately applied the brakes when I heard the
warning. It was too late then to avoid any damage. I did not hear
any crash or feel a jar.

The vertical stabilizer hit into the top of the hangar, just off the
side of the hangar hatch.

(XL 4 Ofi***
ALEX (NMI) WEISS
Cgt., ASK 32296488
Assistant Crew Chief Fr
e - right Section
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Incl - to -D AAF Form Wo, 14 for 3-29 .42-24694.

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HEADQUARTERS 271ST STAGING BASE
Kearney Army Air Field Kearney,
Nebraska

27 October 1944

Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail
i^Tangar, Koarnoy Army Air Fi Section, Depot Faintonanco
on 27 October 1944. Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 C^VT

STATEMENT OF MECHANIC

My crew chief, myself and another crew member drove down to the hangar in the Clotrac at approximately 1815 on 27 October 1944.

"When we arrived at the hangar, the first thing we did was to sign our names on the sheet to show we had our passes, then we backed the Clotrac to the piano and hooked up the tow bar. I went to the left wing to watch that and the other fellows took their positions. The signal was given to go ahead and we started towing it out.

My job was to watch that the left wing tip cleared the hangar wall and the doors. I stood forward of the wing tip because it was easier from that position to see if the wing was clearing, also to signal the man in the cockpit to apply the brakes or signal the man in the Clotrac to stop. From that position, it is not easy to watch the position of the tail as it comes through, therefore, I was watching both the left wing tip and the tail. My attention was more on the wing tip till it cleared the hangar.

At that point, just as the wing tip cleared the hangar, the man driving the Clotrac began turning to the left so I still continued to watch the wing tip to see if we cleared the corner of the doorway as we went around, my attention then was divided between watching that wing tip and watching the tail.

I looked at the tail again and it was getting close to the cut-out at the top of the hangar. It looked to me as though it would clear.

Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 C""T on 27 October 1944.

STATEMENT OF MECHANIC - continued

Then I looked arrain to 300 if, the loft v?i\$g tip v-nc in tho clear
and also looked at the tail. The tail v/aa almost up to tho cut-out,
thon it did not look as if it would clear. I ran toward the Clotrac
and yollod "►lold it up!" Tho nan in the Clotrnc did not hear mo over the
noise of the Clotrnc and mon at work. Tho man in tho cockpit, did hoar me
and appliod the brakes immodiatoly. Just a he applied tho brakes, tho
tail crashed into the hangar<

T!LO:J.^J. HELLER
Pfc, A^i: 32270998
Mechanic Prc-Flirht
Section

Incl § £ to ""D AAF Form Ho. 14 for B-29 -"42-24694.

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EAIX-QUARTERS 271ST STAGING BASE
Kearney Army Air Field Kearney,
Nebraska

27 October 1944

Aircraft Tow/Inp Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Hangar, Kearney
Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CDT on
27 October 1944.

• STATEMENT OF MECHANIC

On 27 October 1944 at approximately 1815, I drove down to the hangar in
order to tow a P-29 out of the hangar. Thru the door I arrived
previously and the ship was ready to be pulled out.

I assumed a position approximately twenty feet in front of the ship. I
motioned to the crew member in the cockpit "Brakes Off" and shouted "Go ahead
and pull the plow". The ship started moving slowly at normal towing speed,

I was watching the wing tip, the Cletrac and the tail. Suddenly someone shouted "Irrakos" but
it was too late because, at the same time, the tail hit the top of the hangar.

I noticed the tail before it hit and it looked clear to me, I was standing
at an angle and it may have been an optical illusion.

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..AbOLJ• i'. ^CHMIDT
Cpl., ALj; 52624657
Mechanic Pro-Plinth Location

Incl jf ~7 to V D AAF Form Mo. 14 for B-29 ;/42-24694

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HEADQUARTERS 271ST STAGIKG BASS
Kearney Army Air Field K Q a rn oy,
I l e b r a s k a

'37 October 1944

Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot : aintonanco Hangar,
Koarnoy Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 C""T on 27 Octobc- 1944.

STATEI-3KT 0? IIZCHAFIC

On 27 October 1944 at eporoxirately 1815, our crow chief instructed ua bo ro down
to the hangar to tow n £-29 cut of tho hanrar. '■' lion wo orrivod, tho ship was
ready to bo bowod out, th" bo\" bar vos on a n d the Clot roc was hooked
to tho tow bar,

T":ili standing under the ri^ht winr and I motioned to our crow chic f in the
Clotrnc to ro ahead, ".hero wore sovorol onffine stands on tho rijrht hand aide.
I climbed up on one engine stand out aide the hanj'Qr to ace if the right Wing
would cloar,

Another crew mombor also climbod or; an ongine stand inc.ido of the hangar,
""hon tho ship startod rolling, wo did vntch the toll but when wo noticed all of tho
ongino a bands on the ripht, our attention was immediately directed to tho
obstructions which worothe moat important at tho timo. From bhon on, wo jur.t
watched the rirht wing tip in ordor that it would clear tho engine stand, Thoro
voro sovorol onPino 3tonda inoido of the hangar and one crow chiof stand on
the cutsido on which I had climbed.

I turned to climb down from tho .no s /T:d a no heard tho crash did
matter but knew somothirty had happened

ko 3

one
and immediately yelled "1

J

GERALD U. JACOfc ?fc,
A Si: 36221451 Mechanic
Prc-Flirht Section

Incl £ to »"D AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 "42-24694.

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ILIAIXUARTIERS" 271ST STAGING BASE
Kearney Army Air Field Kearney,
Nebraska

27 October 1944

Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Liaison Company, Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 c*.T on 27 October 1944.

STATEMENT OF MECHANIC

"I was instructed to go down to the hangar to tow out a B-29. Three of the crew were down there and the plane was ready to be towed out of the hangar.

I took the drip pan out from underneath the plane and went over to the right side. The crew chief instructed me to watch the right wing and that is what I was doing. I also was watching the tail but after a bit, I could not see the tail very well.

»» There were some stands and we had to be careful about them, therefore, the plane was being towed easy in order not to damage the wing. There were about half a dozen cranes stored in the hangar but one particular crane was out quite a ways toward the center of the hangar and we were watching that. I climbed on this particular stand to make sure the plane cleared it.

I motioned to the tractor driver to go ahead that it was O.K. All of my attention was drawn to watching the wing as the stands were close by and I did not glance back at the tail. The crash happened so quickly I did not know what had occurred at the time but I know it had hit something.

04. ✓

4(AY::OI;D H. HOLZFJSS
Cpl., ASK 59307304
Mechanic Pro-Flight
Section

ir.cl i- 9 to VD AAF Form Ko. 14 for B-29 "42-24694.

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HEADOWRTE^S 271ST STAGING BASE
Kearney Army Air * 'a eld
Kearney, Nebraska

27 October 1944

Aircraft ft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot
Hangar Maintenance
27 October 1944. , Kearney Army Air Field, Kerrney, Nebraska at 1830
C' "T on

STATEMENT OF GUARD

I was the guard on plane Number 42-24694 from 1300 to 1900. At about 1800, c crew of men came to remove the plane from the hangar. I sat in the seat next to the driver of the cle-trac. whan the plane was almost out of the hangar, some one said stop and immediately afterwards, I heard the tail hit the hongor. At the word stop, the driver applied the brakes to the cle-trac.

/a/ David E. Willis
DAVID Es WILLIS
Cpl, Air Corps
35232082
500th Bomb Group
Guard

A TRUE COpv:

H.M. LOCKER Captain,
Air Corps Base
Operations 0

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Inel #/0 to 7&D AAP Form Ho 14 for E-29 #42-24594

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HEADQUARTERS 271ST STAGING BASE
Kearney Army Air Field Kearney,
Nebraska

28 October 1944

Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar,
Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 CWT on 27 October 1944.

STATEMENT OF DISCREPANCY CREW

At the time of the accident, I was in the bombardier's section of the airplane checking to see if there was any possibility of hydraulic leaks in the hydraulic system. During the time we were in the plane, we felt a bump and heard a slight noise and upon leaving the plane found that the accident had happened.

ft£>/o&&%U~&iJ

JOE A. ATKIKSON
Sgt, Air Corps
3S111865

J3 O. ■>

Incl #)) to WD AAF Form No 14 for B-29 #42-24694 |

HEAD^UAHTE »S 271ST STAGING S
Kearney Army Air Field
Kearney, Nebraska

28 October 1944

Aircraft Towing Accident, Damaged Tail Section, Depot Maintenance Hangar, Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska at 1830 O'T on 27 October 1944.

STATEMENT OF DISCREPANCY CRE'nf

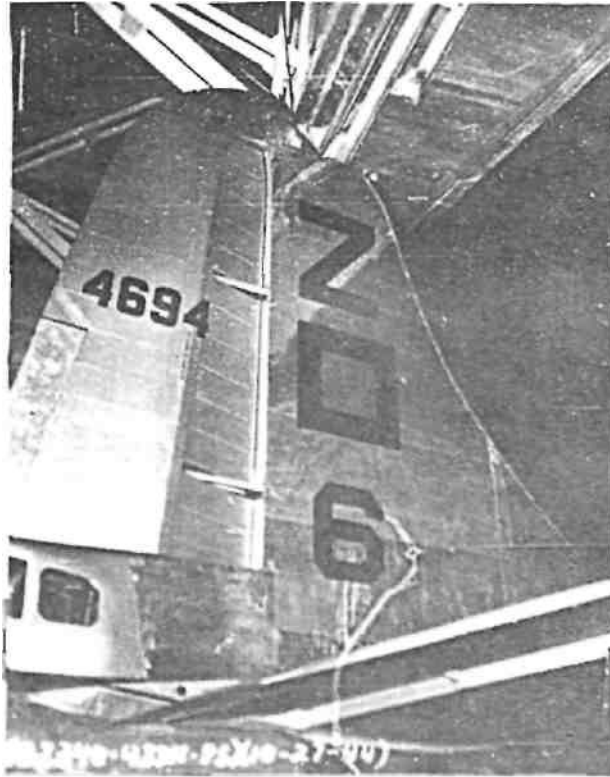
T was in the nose section on with Sgt Atkinson and we were watching the metering valves for any apparent leakage, when we felt the bump. Not knowing what was going on, we didn't pay much attention to it. Then after getting out of the plane, we noticed the stabilizer had been pulled in to the hanger.

TKEODQPE M. PEFRY *U*
Sgt, Air Corps *t*
19178918

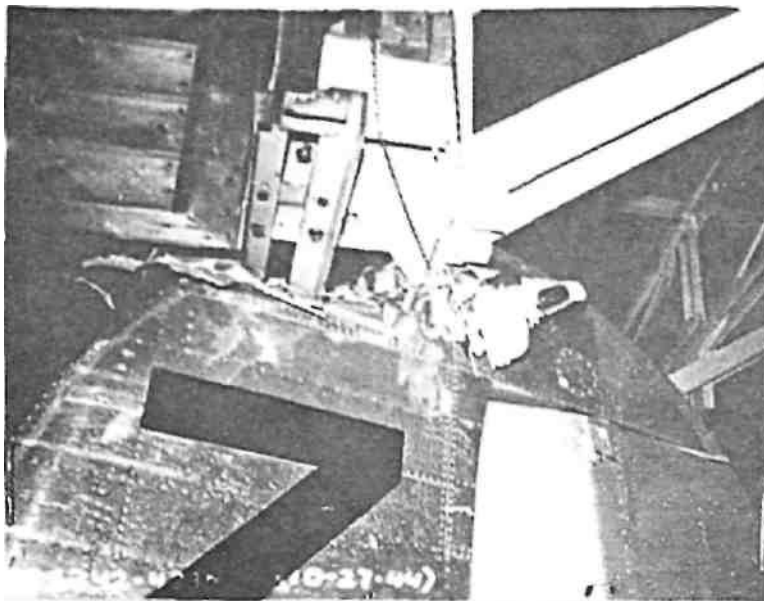
0>

^3 JJ
**-n*

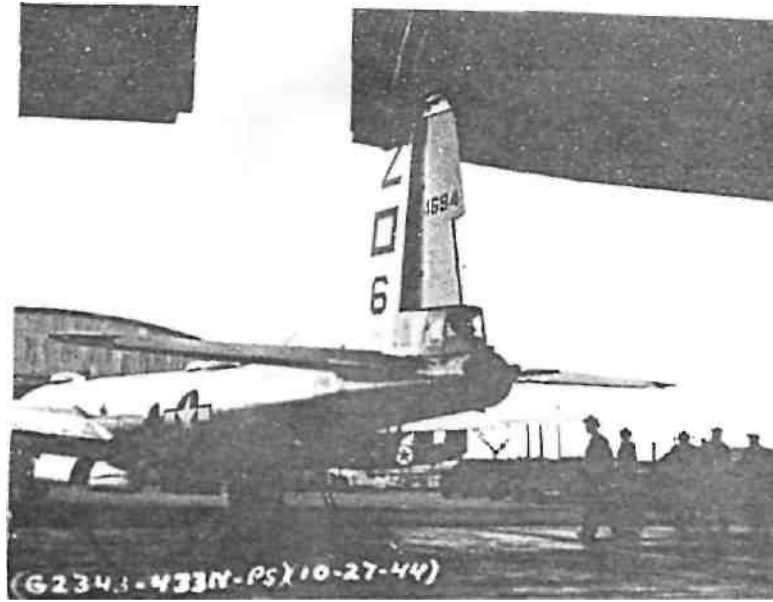
incl # & to \YD AAP Pom Ho 14 for E-29 #42- 24594



Close up view looking West, showing vertical stabilizer in contact with hanger.



Close up view showing damage to vertical stabilizer.



View looking North, showing opening in hangar to allow clearance for vertical stabilizer and point of contact of stabilizer with hangar.

Incl #13 to WD AAF Form No. 14 for B-29 #42-24694. (2)

BA3Z V.2ATHIR STATION
ARMY AIR FIELD
KEARNEY,
NEBRASKA

2S October 19UU

SUBJECT: Accident Report

TO : Rnso Operations, Kearney Army Air Field, Kearney, Nebraska

The following is a report of weather conditions at 1830 C^T 27 October 19UU
at Kearney Army Air Field:

Sky Condition	Clear
Barometric Pressure	1027.8 Mb
Temperature	63° F
Dew Point	53° F
Wind Direction	South
Wind Velocity	10 MPH
Altitude Setting	30.35

WILLIAM M. HAMILTON
1st Lt., AC
Base Weather Officer

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***13**

Incl § //to WD AAF Form No 14 for B-29 #42-24694

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SPECIAL ORDERS
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HEADQUARTERS 271ST STAGING BASE
KEARNEY ARMY AIR FIELD, KEARNEY,
NEBRASKA

NO, 278

4 October 1944

E X T R A C T

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4. The Acft Accident Committee aptd by Par 6/ SO 252, this Kq, ca, as amended, is hereby terminated. The following named Offs are aptd as Acft Accident Committee, to investigate mil acft accidents coming under the jurisdiction of this Base*

MAJ (2162) GEORGE B MUNROE, JR, 0412187, AC
CAPT (2161) H M LOCKER, 0437974, AC, Acft Accident Off
CAPT (2166) DAVID A STEELE, JR, 0725547, AC,
MA J (2161) JOHN VV LIVINGSTON, 0417171, AC, (499th Bomb Gp)

Special Members

LT COL (3100) STUAT P VANDIVIERE, 0311369, MC (Fit Surgeon)
CAPT (9307) JAMES R GARRETT, 0909513, AC (Base 3*2)
CAPT (7536) NORRIS R 3UR3RIDGE, 0571147, AC (Ease Tech Insp)
1ST LT (8219) VILLIAM M HAMILTON, 0880560, AC (Baso Won Off)

By order of Colonel COUSLAND:

EDWIN P DOTY Crptrin,
Air Corps Adjutant

OFFICIAL:

/s/ A.J. Plcucci A.J.
PICUCCI lat Lt, 0's
Air Corps Asat
Adjutant

SPECIAL ORDEhS
)

HEADQUARTERS 271ST STAGING EASE KEARNEY
ARMY AIR FIELD, KEA UEY, NEBRASKA 16
October 1944

NO..... 290

E X T R A C T

«

17. MAJ (1092) CARLOS O PUCKETT, 0299912, AC, is aptd to Board of Offs (Acft Accident Committoe) aptd by Par 4, SO 278, this Hq, cs, vice MAJ (2162) GEORGE B MUNROE, Jr, 0412187, reld.

By order of Colonel COUSLfND:

EDWIN P DOTY
Captain, Air Corps
Adj utant

OFFICIAL:

/s/ Alvin H. Kirsner
ALVIN H. KIRSNER
1st Lt, Air Corps
Asst Adjutant

A TRUE

COPY:
4/C

H.H. LOCKE?. Captain,
Air Corps Base
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Appendix No. 14

HEADQUARTERS 271ST STAGING BASE
Kearney Army Air Field Kearney,
Nebraska

4 November 1944

SPECIAL ACCIDENT REPORT

1. THE ACCIDENT. A B-29 Aircraft, while being towed from the
Leptot Maintenance Hangar, was involved in an accident, due to
vertical stabilizer striking roof of hangar door. No crew members
were involved and there was no injury to tow crew.

2. THE LESSON., Towing crews are lax in watching oil parts of
the airplane which might strike sides and top of hangar

3. ACTION.

o. PRE-FLIGHT SECTION Towing crews will be given further
instructions in regard to towing very heavy bombardment aircraft in and out of
hangars.

By order of Colonel COTSLAND:

p w[^]l

EDWIN P. DOTY
Capt, Air Corps
Adjutant

t >

tf-



Boeing B-29 Superfortress, "Draggin Lady," lost on February 23, 1945, off the Island of Saipan, Marianas Group. Three lives were lost. The cause of the crash was multiple engine failures. This photograph has been on display in the Smithsonian Institution's National Air And Space Museum in Washington, D.C.



Another view of "Draggin Lady" in the water after the crash. Note the bent propellers and the man in the raft. (Photograph from the Charles R. Maples collection).

COMBAT SQUADRONS OF THE AIR FORCE WORLD WAR II



Edited by MAURER

MAURER

USAF HISTORICAL DIVISION
AIR UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
1969

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402-Price \$8.25

p 30/, ?-(*&'. CsUX

881st Bombardment Squadron

Lineage: Constituted 881st Bombardment Squadron (Very Heavy) on 19 Nov. 1943. Activated on 20 Nov. 1943. Inactivated on 17 Jan. 1946.

Assignments: 500th Bombardment Group, 20 Nov. 1943 - 17 Jan. 1946.

Stations: Gowen Field, Idaho, 20 Nov. 1943; Clovis AAFld, NM, c. 16 Dec. 1943; Walker AAFld, Kan, 16 Apr. - 23 Jul. 1944; Isley Field, Saipan, 19 Sep. 1944 - 15 Nov. 1945; March Field, Calif., 29 Nov. 1945 - 17 Jan. 1946.

Aircraft: B-17,1944; B-29,1944-1945.

Operations: Combat in Western Pacific, 11 Nov. 1944 - 14 Aug. 1945; subsequently flew supplies to POW camps in Japan, Korea, and Formosa.

Service Streamers: None.

Campaigns: Air Offensive, Japan; Eastern Mandates; Western Pacific; China Offensive.

Decorations: Distinguished Unit Citations: Nagoya, Japan, 23 Jan. 1945; Japan, 15 - 20 Jun. 1945.

Emblem: None.

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INTERPRETATION OF COMPUTER LEDGER AIRCRAFT RECORDS

In June 1964 the USAF converted its aircraft activity reporting to a system of computer-generated 11 x 14 in. fan-folded sheets which were bound into ledgers. Computer runs for the entire USAF inventory of aircraft were done once a year (in July and December for 1964 only), producing several thick binders which theoretically included every aircraft's activity during the year. In the Ledger Era, an aircraft's annual activity might amount to between one and a hundred twenty entries, with about three to six being average. Simultaneously, various changes were made in both the data codes and the data fields appearing on the reports, so that the Ledger Records make up a distinct, and distinctly different, file series. Although entries in the Ledger Records are quite consistent and standardized, a few points are worth noting:

- 1964 reporting is slightly different. Complete computer inventory reports were run for July-December and October-December. Both reports are needed to cover the July-December 1964 period.
- 1977 reporting is slightly different. In 1977 a problem with reporting occurred which produced two reports (one short, one long), each of which needs to be examined to cover the calendar year.
- Not all aircraft have entries in each report. The explanation for these lacunae is not clear. The frequency of reports seems worst with Air National Guard and AF Reserve aircraft.
- Termination - Very occasionally no termination information will be found, the aircraft simply disappearing from inventory reports.

Entry into the Inventory

In the Computer Ledger era, entry into the USAF inventory is usually shown by the rubric "FORCED GAIN" in the "Gain from or Lost to" column. A few aircraft lack such an indicator, and for these entry must be validated by finding the first report of activity. New aircraft generally come into the inventory during the FY of their serial, or the year after, i.e., an aircraft serialized 66-xxx would probably enter the inventory in calendar years 1966 or 1967.

Year Dates in Computer Ledgers

Data dates in the Computer Ledger era are always shown in the Julian system, i.e., "66097" = 97th day of 1966, or 7 April 1966. When transcribing Julian dates, note the leap years (1964, 1968, 1972, 1976).

Main Data Entry Fields

Aircraft serial - e.g., 66 7587, written without a dash after FY

Aircraft type - **F 4C**, KC 135A, etc., again without a dash

Possessing organization - (1) Number + type of AF unit, or (2) a five-letter code for an Air Materiel Command Air Materiel Area (later Air Logistics Center), or (3) contractor (usually for modification or depot maintenance (almost always AFLC command possession) **Possessing command** - e.g., TAC (Tactical Air Command), SAC (Strategic Air Command), TAF (Pacific Air Forces).

Codes ending in "O" are simply for overseas locations, e.g., TAO = Tactical Air Command possession overseas.

Station number - a four-letter random code representing the aircraft's duty station (requires a code book to decipher)(repeats the plain text duty station). **Possession code** - a two-letter code representing the aircraft's status (requires code books to decipher). **Inventory Acct** - a two-letter code representing a gain or retention ("G"), loss ("L"), or termination ("T" or "Z") + a letter

for cause:

TM = loss to enemy action on combat mission

TA = loss in a flying accident

TJ = authorized reclamation

TL = transfer or diversion to non-US AF activity

TW = transfer to museum or school

TR = abandonment due to enemy action

T1 = loss hostile foreign armed action on combat support mission

T2 = flying accident on combat support mission

T3 = cause unknown on combat support mission

T4 = hostile foreign armed action not on combat support mission

Action date - Julian date + (in 1976 and later reports) the hour

Possessing station - plain text name of aircraft's duty station

Date Fid. - Most confusing data field. One should remember

- Dates are day, month, and year, not later military style.
- Dates during 1944-ca. 1946 are usually partial, the year not being given. In these cases, the year must be found by working forwards or backwards from known years, such as the delivery date.
- Dates 1950 and later are usually include spacing and the year, i.e., '2 50 (September 2, 1950).
- Date fields 1950 and later usually include two dates. The meaning of those two dates is not entirely clear.

Far Left - Last column to left usually records a station number (four digits) during W.W. II period.

- Last column to left usually records an aircraft serial no. during 1950s (ignore this column for 1950s cards).

W.W. II Aircraft Sent Overseas

Records of W.W. II aircraft sent overseas have certain characteristics which warrant special mention here. Instead of the data fields described in "Main Data Fields," above, W.W. II aircraft sent overseas usually follow the following:

- Departure from the US shown as "DEP US" or "Dep US," usually from a Field or Maine location (Morrison, Bangor, and Grenier AAFlds are common) after staging across country from the factory.
- Following "Dep US," one should try to find the shipping code showing the theater to which it was sent. Some of the most common shipping codes were:

SOXO - Eighth AF, England (most common, esp. after 1942)

BOLERO - Eighth AF, England, in mid-1942 era

UGLY - Eighth AF, England, 1942 era

WILDFLOWER - Eighth AF England, 1942 era

GLEN- Twelfth AF, Oran, Algeria

DAUB - Tenth AF, ATC, 20 TSP, Karachi, India

DUKO- Twelfth AF, Italy

GLUE- Ninth AF

IRON - Seventh AF, ATC - Oahu Island, Hawaii

OHAM - Fifteenth AF, Bari, Italy

PACT - Fourteenth AF, Chungking, China

- Dates of assignment/receipt in theater are indicated by "R" and "A" followed by date: "42144" = 21 April 1944, "12.N tf" = 8 Dec. 1945, etc.

Wartime Losses in Theater

For aircraft lost or salvaged overseas, the last line(s) usually contain the command losing the aircraft (i.e., SOXO) + a use of loss + serial number + date:

- CON - Condemned, often followed by
- SAL - Salvage, often followed by either
- BD - Battle Damage or
- NBD - Non-Battle Damage
- MIA, FLAK, CRASH - self-explanatory losses

W.W. II and Post-W.W. Terminations not Overseas

Many W.W. II aircraft returned to the US after combat service. The return to the US ("Ret US") is followed by A' my Airfield where landed, plus subsequent stages across country. Almost all USAAF aircraft excess to need were scrapped in the US. This is indicated by transfer to RFC (Reconstruction Finance Corp.), the agency designated to handle disposition of war-surplus federal property. No aircraft service records are available after disposition.

INTERPRETATION OF SMALL AIRCRAFT RECORDS

In February 1955 the USAF converted its aircraft activity reporting to a system of automated posting cards ca. 3 x 8 in., thus introducing the Small Card period. Simultaneously, various changes were made in both the data codes and the data fields appearing on the cards. Between February 1955 and June 1964, Small Cards were produced for each aircraft either semi-annually or annually, so that aircraft active during this decade may have up to ten or twelve cards (six is about average). Although entries on Small Cards are less irregular than the Large Cards, a couple of points are worth mentioning:

- Small Cards for 1955-56 have no year date on them, making this a confusing period to interpret. The best solution is usually to work forward from the last Large Card or backward from a 1957 card, attempting to follow the unit assignment and station changes.
- Master Cards - Most, but not all, aircraft entering the inventory in the Small Card era have a yellow master card as the first card in their file. These yellow masters show the manufacturer, place of manufacture, and dates of acceptance, availability, and delivery, but no unit or station assignments.
- 1964 Small Cards all have a posting error - the last digit was dropped off the number of the possessing unit (509th Bomb Group was entered as 50th Bomb Group, etc.)

Entry into the Inventory

In the Small Card era, basic data about entry into the USAF inventory is provided on the Master Card mentioned above ("General Comments"). Some Small Card files, especially those after ca. 1962, lack such card, and in other cases the Master Cards are missing.

Year Dates of Small Cards

The report date for each Small Card is usually indicated in the upper right-hand corner, i.e., "6/61" (June 1961) and "1263" (Dec. 1963). As indicated in "General Comments," 1955-1956 Small Cards cannot be reliably dated to their year. The "6" on some cards may not be "1956."

Main Data Entry Fields

"L" or "G" - (for "Lost" or "Gained") immediately followed by Possessing Command (i.e., "LSAC" = Lost by SAC, "GAMC" = Gained by AMC). [some Small Cards also show Possessing Command immediately followed by numbered air force or subordinate unit or agency, i.e., "LAMCCCA" = Lost by AMC Oklahoma City Air Materiel Area]

Assignment - (1) Number of the USAF unit followed by a symbol for its function, i.e., 68ARHSQ = 68th Air Refueling Squadron, or (2) a contractor, i.e., "BOESW" = Boeing, Seattle, Washington.

Aircraft type - i.e., KC135A

Aircraft status - A two-letter code, e.g., "CC" = combat ready, "SS" = storage, "XS" = excess properly, "CW" = contract work, "RN" = depot maintenance, etc.

Aircraft serial number - An easily identifiable, and thus useful, reference for aircraft located in the center of the card.

Right Center Area of Data Field - occupied by a bewildering variety of possibilities, probably either "lost to" or "gained from" in most cases.

Small Card Date Field

Small Card Date Fields are found in the second column from the left-hand edge of the card as a cluster of four to nine numbers, sometimes including a "J" or a "K." The Small Card date fields are difficult, but note the following:

- Two dates are included in most date fields, except for 1962-64 cards, which have only one Julian date.
- Dates may be given as day-month or month-day or Julian dates or by some combination thereof. Note leap years in Julian dates. Months are numbered 1-10 with "J" standing for November and "K" for December.

Duty Stations

Duty Stations on Small Cards are always entered in the last column on the right-hand side of the card and are usually self-explanatory. Location of some "AF Plants" are not known today.

INTERPRETATION OF LARGE AIRCRAFT RECORD CARDS

It should be remembered that the Large Cards span some thirty years in peace and war, thus several varieties exist. Up to **1940, entries** were mostly in **plain** text and thus readily intelligible. World War II saw the introduction of extensive machine posting and various coding systems which make the interpretation of cards today extremely laborious and often problematical. Card researchers should understand that the earliest code book available at the Agency dates from 1951, and even it is incomplete. Under the best of circumstances, then, interpretation of the Large Cards is difficult and subject to guesswork. The following comments, however, may make lay interpretation easier and more meaningful. Please remember—

- Large Card dates are given in the order day, month, and year.
- Machine posting of all data began in 1944, making a machine-posted entry 1944 or later (important for interpreting the date field).
- UNIT ASSIGNMENTS OVERSEAS during WW. II service arc never given. Only the depart and return dates and theatre of assignment are available.

Top of card

Aircraft production and identification information entered in plain text. Project number meanings are not known today.

Data Entry Headings

Large Card data fields can be read beneath each of the printed headings. *Often, however, the vertical alignment of the headings and data fields was not closely respected.*

Entry into Inventory

The first series of entries below the card headings usually record acceptance, availability, and delivery. The plane's progress from factory to first duty assignment can usually be followed in the handwritten notations to the left of, and below, "Accepted," "Available," and "Delivered." A short succession of airfield stops leading to Florida or Maine and thence overseas is typical in the WW. II era.

Main Data Fields (For WW. II Aircraft Sent Overseas, see that heading, below)

Reading across a large card from left to right, one normally finds the following data fields:

Station • Duty station to which the aircraft was assigned, sometimes somewhat abbreviated.

Command - Possessing command (AMC, ATC, SAC, etc.) is immediately to right of station.

Unit - Possessing unit's designation is usually posted directly beneath "Parent Unit" and "Sub-Unit" headings. The oft-seen "BAS" stands for Base Unit, while Air Materiel Command areas (SA AR for San Antonio, SB AR for San Bernardino, MID AR for Middletown, Penn.) are usually given away by AMC & duty station. Many other unit types (FTR, BM, SRCYV) are self-evident, but others can be known only through Agency references and a few are undecipherable today.

Gain/Loss - Normally at end of unit designation - "GB" = Gained from, "LB" = lost to. followed by the other unit.

A/C Type - Normally self-evident.

Status - Numerous aircraft status codes follow to right of aircraft type - RT = transient maintenance; CC = combat ready; RM = depot modification; SS = storage.

Stat. No. - To right of status code may be a four-digit number representing the aircraft's duty station. A comprehensive station number list is available in AFHRA K 134.45-38, USAF Organizations and Station Codes. Sept. 1951, microfilm roll K1074).

[A/C No.] - [Sometimes the aircraft military serial no. appears here.]

From: Kinkaid, Yvonne, Ms, AF/HO <Yvonne.Kinkaid@pentagon.af.mil>
To: Charles R. Maples <crmaples@erols.com>
Date: Monday, May 17, 1999 1:39 PM
Subject: RE: Request help in locating Army Air Corps Official Report on Aircraft Loss

Dear Mr Maples,
Draggin Lady serial number 42-24604 497BG 870 BS 73 BW went down over Tokyo on 4/14/45. Serial number 42-24694 does not have a Missing Aircrew Report as the aircraft went down during a test flight following repairs made due to enemy action. A brief statement says that the aircraft "crashed into the sea near the beach 4 army personnel and 1 sailor died in the crash" Yvonne Kinkaid

>-----

> From: Charles R. Maples[SMTP:crmaples@erols.com]
> Sent: Sunday, May 16, 1999 12:38 AM
> To: yvonne.kinkaid@pentagon.af.mil
> Cc: crmaples@Erols.com
> Subject: Request help in locating Army Air Corps Official Report on
> Aircraft Loss >
> Dear Ladies & Gentlemen: >
> I am seeking your advice and/or suggestions on how I may go about
> locating an Official Army Air Corps Report on the loss of a B-29
> Superfortress on which I flew during World War II. The name of the
> aircraft
> was "Draggin Lady." Her serial number was: 42-24694-BW. The aircraft was
> assigned to the 500th Bombardment Group, 881st Bombardment Squadron, 73rd
> Bombardment Wing, Twentieth Air Force. Duty Station: Island of Saipan,
> Mariana Islands. Date of Crash: Either 2/23/45 or 2/27/45. >
> The Airplane Commander was Lt. Robert Engle; the Co-Pilot was Lt.
> Glenn Pavey (both killed). I have photographs of the aircraft in the water
> after the crash, but I have never seen any thing Official, In Print, on
> the
> loss of the aircraft. Can you help me?
> My name and address are as follows: >
> Charles R. Maples
> 3812 Shadow Lane
> Virginia Beach, Virginia 23452
> Telephone: (757) 486-0412
> E-Mail Address: crmaples@Erols.com
>
> Thank you all so very much for any help you may be able to render
> me.

5/22/99

>
>
>
>
>
>

Most sincerely,

Charles R. Maples

From: AFHRANEWS <AFHRANEWS@MAXWELLAF.MIL>
To: crmaples@Erols.com <crmaples@Erols.com>
Date: Thursday, May 20, 1999 11:37 AM **Subject:** RE: Request
info on WW II B-29, serial # 42-24694-BW

Thank you for your e-mail.

I was unable to locate an aircraft accident report on your B-29 but I did find some mention of the event in the unit history.

23 Feb 1945

At about 1250 today, while on a routine local flight Z Square 6, piloted by 1st Lt Robert E. Engle developed mechanical trouble, tried to land at Iseley, couldn't make it - tried to land at Kobler, failed and finally landed with wheels down in the ocean just inside the reef north of Kobler Field on the west side of the island. The plane almost stood on her nose and Lt Engle and 2nd Lt Glenn E. Pavey were trapped in the nose and drowned. Of six sailors who were passengers five escaped and one (named Granach?) was killed. MSgt Dooley H. Rogers and Sgt John L. Lippa were wounded.

Hope this information will be of assistance.

MRS LYNN GAMMA
Archivist of the Air Force
Air Force Historical Research Agency

----- Original Message -----

From: crmaples@Erols.com [<mailto:crmaples@Erols.com>]
Sent: Thursday, May 13, 1999 9:25 PM
To: afhranews@maxwell.af.mil
Cc: crmaples@Erols.com
Subject: Request info on WW II B-29, serial #
42-24694-BW

Comments:

Comments: NOTE: This message was sent through the
WebMonitor mail form
Comments:

Comments: HOST:

207-172-210-79.s79.tnt2.nrf.va.dialup.rcn.com (207.172.210.79)

Comments: BROWSER: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 4.01; MSN
2.5; Windows 98)

Comments: REFERER: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/afhra/index.htm>

Comments:

(ADDRESS) 3812 Shadow Lane
(CITY) Virginia Beach (STATE)
Virginia (Phone) 757-486-0412
(COMMENTS)

Dear Ladies & Gentlemen:

My WW II B-29, "Draggin Lady," crashed off the Island of Saipan

while on a test flight on either 2/23/45 or 2/27/45. I am trying to

find an Official Report of the crash. How do I go about doing this?

Any help you can offer will be greatly appreciated. The aircraft belonged to the 500th Bomb Group, 881st Bomb Squadron, 73rd Bomb Wing,

Twentieth Air Force, 21st Bomber Command. I was an original crew member on this aircraft. My son is helping me write my WW II memoirs,

and we could really use this information. Thanks so much for any and all suggestions. Sincerely, C.R. Maples

(INFORMATION) REQUEST

"Draggin Lady" Crash Information (Part I)

Excerpt from a letter dated May 29, 1991, from Mr. Raymond Rendina, of La Mesa, California, to Duane Blair Maples.

... "The following is a brief description of some of the things I found out about that you may be interested in:

First, the reason the ball and spear replaced the nose art was [because] a visiting group of Congressmen and their wives found the pictures offensive and all [of] the aircraft were re-painted. This sounds like B.S. to me, but Hurth swears by it.

Second, I met two of my [former] flight crew members. Dooley Rogers, [the] Flight Engineer, and Gerald Auerbach, the Navigator. Both stayed in the Air Force and retired. Rogers flew on B-52s as [a] Flight Engineer and later became a Major in various ground support groups. Auerbach went into Pilot training and became an Aircraft Commander. He flew C-47's during the Berlin Airlift. He retired as a Lt. Colonel..."

... "Gerald missed our hair-raising mission over Nagoya where we lost [our] number two propeller because he fell from the jeep on the way to the aircraft. An alternate Navigator was taken from a pool. Dooley Rogers, one of the unlucky people [who] was on both the Nagoya mission and on the aircraft when it crashed, explained in great detail the Nagoya mission, [during which] he and the Pilots worked out fuel consumption [figures] that enabled us to make it back to Saipan. He verified what I [had been] listening to over the intercom; that each [one of our

remaining] engines ran out of gas one after another [when] we were still airborne and [as we were] coming down the runway. We actually glided in."

"He also told me of his experiences on the day the aircraft crashed. The new tail gunner, the one [who] replaced me, was on his first flight¹ Most of [our] regular crew members gave up their positions [in order] to accommodate the marines or sailors [who went along as sight-seers]. No one [apparently] can verify if [the] marines or sailors [actually] flew [on the aircraft during the ill-fated flight].² Rogers explained that they were at 8,000 feet³ when the props started to rotate, and the Pilot's couldn't control the proper angle of pitch on the propellers, so they made a sudden descent [in an attempt] to land on an alternate field at sea level."

"As they came in for a landing, the Pilots lost all [of their] engines. They attempted to retract the landing gear, which was still down, so [they] could ditch. [However], the landing gear was still going up when the ship hit the water [which] caused the nose to plunge into the water. The aircraft broke in [half] just forward of the tunnel.⁴ The Pilots were killed instantly.⁵ Rogers, facing rear,⁶ had all [of] his

¹ The Tail Gunner on the aircraft on the day of the crash was Mr. Russell E. Bookman. He had volunteered to fly, and was an experienced Tail Gunner with close to thirty missions at the time of the crash. He was not a new man. (ED).

² Apparently a sailor was on board and died in the crash according to Army Air Force records, and records of the 73rd Bomb Wing Association. (ED).

³ It is highly doubtful that the aircraft reached 8,000 feet with improper angles of pitch on all four propellers. Perhaps it reached 800 feet. (ED).

⁴ In a B-29, a long tunnel running over the twin bomb bays, runs between the Gunners* compartment in the rear of the aircraft to the flight deck at the forward portion of the aircraft (ED).

⁵ Aircraft Commander, Lt. Robert Engle, was not killed immediately. See my letter to Mr. Raymond Rendina in this Appendix. (ED).

control panel break loose and hit him in the front [of his body]. He got a skull fracture and banged up his legs. He pushed the control panel back [while] totally under water, and swam out through the fractured opening. [Once] on the surface, he noticed [that] a sailor [was] trapped in the Navigational dome,⁷ so he went back in [the aircraft] and pulled him out."⁸

"The most seriously injured crew member was the Radio Operator.⁹ He sustained seriously torn tendons in his legs. Eventually, he recovered, went on another mission and [later] shot himself in the stomach. Somehow he didn't die, but was returned to the United States [as] a mental basket case. There has been no word about him or any other [members] of our crew."

⁶ In a B-29, the Flight Engineer sits behind the Pilot on the right side of the aircraft, facing the rear. (ED).

⁷ The Navigator used this observation dome in order to take his "star shots," which helped him plot the aircraft's course and position. (ED).

⁸ This statement seems to contradict an earlier statement Rogers made about not anyone actually being able to verify whether or not a sailor was on board at the time of the crash. (ED).

⁹ Although the identity of the Radio Operator is known, I have chosen not to reveal his name here. (ED).

"Draggin Lady" Crash Information (Part II)

Excerpt from a letter dated June 12,1991, from Duane Blair Maples, of Virginia Beach, Virginia, to Mr. Raymond Rendina of La Mesa, California.

... "At this point, I would like to offer a version of the "Draggin Lady" crash story that is very different from the one Dooley Rogers told you at the reunion. Recently, I had the opportunity to interview a man who had been the Tail Gunner on the aircraft when it crashed. He and his wife had been in Virginia Beach on vacation and had dropped by to visit with my folks one evening. The gentleman's name is Mr. Russell £. Bookman. On the day of the crash, Bookman had volunteered to fly in the Tail Gunner's position during the flight to slow time a new engine."

"As best as he can remember, he was a veteran of some thirty missions at the time.¹ The aircraft's problems began immediately after it became airborne. First, the number three engine began smoking and quickly caught fire. This was the new engine that the crew had intended to slow time. Next, while turning the aircraft back with the intentions of making an emergency landing at the B-24 strip at sea level, the Pilots saw a second engine start to smoke and it, too, caught fire. The events described thus far had happened so fast that the Pilots had not retracted the landing gear, as they had immediately determined to land the aircraft as soon as smoke had started trailing from the number three engine."

¹ Not a new Tail Gunner on his first mission, as told by Dooley Rogers.

"Then, before the stricken aircraft could reach the B-24 strip, its remaining two engines started smoking and caught fire. Finally, Bookman told me that because the flaps were down, the aircraft slammed nose down when it hit the water and broke in two just in front of the wings. After having recovered his senses, (he had sustained a few minor scratches behind one of his ears), Bookman opened the rear door, forced two frightened sailors² in the rear compartment to jump out of the aircraft, and then did so himself. Once in the water, he made his way to the submerged nose and, along with a number of men who had waded or swam out to the aircraft from the island, joined in a collective effort to attempt to rescue the Pilots."

"One of the pilots, Lt. Glenn Pavey, had apparently died instantly, but the Aircraft Commander, Lt. Robert Engle, was still alive as efforts to free him were initiated. Bookman seized a fire ax from one of the men in the rescue group and tried in vain to smash his way through the wreckage in order to reach Lt. Engle. By reaching through the broken windows of the nose section near Lt. Engle, Bookman said that some of the would-be rescuers could feel his pulse and determined he was still alive. Bookman said that every so often during the rescue attempt, Lt. Engle moved his head once or twice but the rescuers were unable to keep his head above the water.

"Lt. Engle was so badly trapped in the wreckage that he could not be pulled out and most likely drowned. The aircraft was eventually pulled out of the water and after an examination of what was left of it, Bookman believes the general opinion among many was that an electrical system malfunction had been the cause of the engine fires and subsequent loss of power to all engines. Bookman agrees with

² **If Bookman's version of the crash is correct, then it can be verified that one or more sailors went along on the flight as sight-seers.**

Rogers on the fact that the Radio Operator who had been on board later attempted suicide and was returned to the United States with mental disorders... "

... "By the way, Bookman apparently led a charmed life during World War n. In addition to having come out of the "Draggin Lady" crash alive, he had also previously survived a bail out from a B-17 and a ditching at sea in another B-29. He was also one of the best B-29 Gunners in the Western Pacific Theater with five confirmed enemy aircraft shot down to his credit He should write a book about *his* experiences."

"Draggin Lady" Crash Information (Part III)

The information below was provided, at the request of Duane Blair Maples, by Mr. Russell E. Bookman, Tail Gunner on the "Draggin Lady" flight on the day of the crash.

"My name is Russell E. Bookman. My address is: P.O. Box 431, Chase City, Virginia 23924. During World War II, I was a member of the Twentieth Air Force. I was assigned to the 73rd Bombardment Wing, 500th Bombardment Group, 881st Bombardment Squadron on the Island of Saipan. I was assigned to Lt. Lewis' crew as Tail Gunner. The name of our aircraft was "Twentieth Century Limited."

I was credited with five enemy aircraft shot down, fourteen probably destroyed and twenty eight damaged. My decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross with one bronze star, Air Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, Good Conduct Medal, World War n Victory Medal and the American Defense Medal.

The reason I was on the "Draggin Lady" flight on the day of the crash is as follows: Most of my crew had gone home after having flown thirty combat missions which was the required number for a tour at that time. I had missed a mission with my crew and was waiting for an opportunity to make it up when Bomber Command changed the required number of missions from thirty to thirty five. Thus, I found myself having to fly a few more missions than I had anticipated.

One day, I was called to fly with Lt Engle's crew on a mission to Japan, and since I was not assigned to a specific crew, I went with them. A few days later, I was again asked to fly with Lt. Engle's crew while they checked out a new engine on

"Draggin Lady." When we took off, we had just cleared the end of the runway when one of our engines started smoking and then caught on fire. I believe we had only reached an altitude of eight hundred feet when the engine caught fire.

I am aware that Dooley Rogers, the Flight Engineer, has claimed that we reached an altitude of eight thousand feet when the first engine caught fire but I do not believe that was the case because if we *had* reached eight thousand feet, we would have been able to land at the opposite end of the runway from which we took off. Since we had taken off over Suicide Cliff and had banked to the right, we would only have had to make another right turn in order to land after having flown a little more than the length of the runway if Rogers* version of our attained altitude is correct

Any way, it was not long before a second engine started smoking and it, too, caught on fire. Before we had reached the other end of the field, a third engine had also caught on fire and was failing badly. The Pilots decided to attempt an emergency landing on the B-24 strip which was almost at sea level. The flaps were lowered, but just before we made a right hand turn to approach the runway, aU of our power gave out and we were told to prepare to ditch. As we hit the water with our flaps down, the aircraft broke in two in front of the wings and settled in the water with the tail in the air.

It was my job to get every one out of the rear section of the aircraft in the event of a ditching. On this flight, in addition to getting the other gunners out of the aircraft, there were two sailors flying along with us in the rear compartment whom I had to assist out of the aircraft. There was another sailor flying in the front of the aircraft. He was killed, as were the Aircraft Commander, Lt. Engle, and Pilot, Lt. Pavey. Dooley Rogers, the Flight Engineer, sustained a back injury and was sent to

"Draggin Lady" Crash Information (Part TV)

**73rd Bomb Wing Association
Group**

500th Bombardment

881st - 882nd - 883rd Bombardment Squadrons

**Hurth M. Tompkins W148
N8417 Albert Place
Menomonee Falls, WI53051**

**Duane Blair Maples Post
Office Box 7343 Virginia
Beach, Virginia 23458**

Dear Mr. Maples:

In reference to your letter dated March 21, 1991, I will try to answer your questions as best that I can.

The 500th Bombardment Group was assigned sixty squadron numbers, but each squadron only had nineteen aircraft. The 881st Squadron had numbers one to nineteen, the 882nd Squadron had numbers twenty one to thirty nine and the 883rd Squadron was assigned numbers forty one to sixty.

Whenever an aircraft was lost to enemy action, shot down, ditched, crashed on Saipan or lost to mechanical failure, such as was the "Draggin Lady," another aircraft then was assigned in its place so as to bring the squadron back up to original strength.

[For the aircraft noted in the above squadrons], the Z [on their tail assemblies] indicated the group [to which they belonged], the 500th. The square indicated the

73rd Bombardment Wing, followed by an individual aircraft's squadron number. [For example: Z Square 6].

The number six was carried by two aircraft; the original "Draggin Lady," serial number 42-24694(BW), credited with six combat missions¹ before being ditched off the coast of Saipan on February 27, 1945² while [attempting] to slow-time a new engine, and [then] by "Booze Hound," serial number 44-69746. [When] "Draggin Lady" crashed, members of her alternate crew were flying her. Killed in the crash were [Aircraft Commander] 1st Lt Robert E. Engle, [and Pilot, 1st Lt. Glenn Pavey]. A sailor [who had gone along on the flight as a sight-seer] was also killed.

[Her] replacement aircraft, "Booze Hound," flew forty six missions before the war ended. This aircraft was named [for] Captain George Booze [and crew] who were also assigned to Z Square 6. They flew [44-69746] from the States to Saipan.

My records show that your father, Charles R. Maples, flew with the original crew [of "Draggin Lady"] as Radio Operator with Captain Richard [A.] Field, and finished out the war on Lt [later Captain] Patrick Calhoun's crew, flying [on] the replacement aircraft ["Booze Hound."] Some times crews flew different aircraft on missions other than the [ones originally] assigned to them.

¹ There seems to be some confusion as to the correct number of credited combat missions "Draggin Lady" flew before she crashed. For example, note that she clearly has *ten* mission symbols on her nose in one of the close up photographs in Appendix A. (ED).

² Once again, the accepted date of the crash as having been February 27, 1945, surfaces. I still feel, based on USAAF records, (see Appendix A), that the correct date of the crash was February 23, 1945. (ED).

the base hospital Of the crew, I only knew Engle, Pavey, Rogers and the Radio Operator, John Lipa. I noticed on a crew roster you sent to me that Cpl. Nicholas Gladkey was the assigned Tail Gunner on the Engle crew.

I do not know why he was unable to fly that day, but I was assigned as his replacement We were all very sad that we could not get Lt. Engle out of the aircraft. It seems to me that he lived for about twenty minutes after the crash but his head went under the water and he drowned as he was trapped in the wreckage of his seat. Apparently, Lt Pavey and the sailor were both killed instantly. I was taken to the Squadron's Flight Surgeon and checked out OK. I had only sustained a couple of scratches behind one of my ears as a result of the crash. Let me know if I can help you in any way in the future."

As ever,

Russell E. Bookman

Requiem For The B-29 Superfortress, "Draggin Lady"

For many years now, wherever I have gone in my life, I have heard her whispering to me while softly crying. She is a restless spirit wishing to be remembered. Countless are the quiet moments when I have felt her tears falling upon my heart, and the photograph of her crumpled and mangled body is burned indelibly into my mind. I believe with the deepest conviction that her soul has joined with mine in a marriage that will last forever.

Often in my loneliness and despair, I hear borne by the wind her haunting refrain, as she sadly but sweetly sings of that day in February, 1945, when she struggled so desperately to become one with the sky but, instead, she fell burning and dying into the sea. *Te Deum Laudamus*, but why in thy wisdom did thee proclaim on that fateful day that her death and the deaths of three other souls she carried within her bosom be a necessity?

One night, warm Western Pacific winds carried the answer to me in a soft, sweet rhapsody, and from her watery grave in the gentle, sparkling waters caressing the Island of Saipan, I heard her singing: "Please honor our memory in a requiem, but let now the shadow that lies heavy upon your heart that you associate with me be lifted, and cast it from thee, for it was our fate that sad day to meet our destiny. Now, it will be through *your* eyes that I am allowed to see again; and it will be with the beating of *your* heart, free now from its shroud of despair and sorrow, that will allow me to live again; and, as you allow it to be so in *your* mind, I will be released from the embrace of the sea and I will soar aloft and fly toward heaven in order that I may touch the face of God. And, in the end, it will be *your* hand that will bring about the resurrection of our memory in order that we may then be free to rest at peace in history."

Oh beautiful spirit so dear, you have my eternal thanks, for the message you have delivered in your enthralling song has given me new hope for the future. It has given me the courage to step forward with a surer and quicker step so that I may persevere, and it has given me the indomitable strength I will use to conquer my fears. With a strong voice I tell you now that when next you come to me, I will take your hand in mine, and *together*, we will rise into the sky and waltz across the face of time with our destination being eternity.

Now, as each of you looks down from your thrones on high, you will read these words and the epitaph that follows, and you may then rest in perfect peace; knowing that I have fulfilled your request of me to insure that your memory has been quietly and reverently placed within the pages of history; so that forever more, men, women and children will remember a B-29 Superfortress named, "Draggin Lady," and the brave souls who perished with her.

In Memoriam

B-29 Superfortress, "Draggin Lady," serial # 42-24694BW, and three brave men, who perished on February 23, 1945, after crashing into the waters off the Island of Saipan as a result of massive engine failure during a test flight while participating in the Western Pacific Campaign against the Empire of Japan during World War.

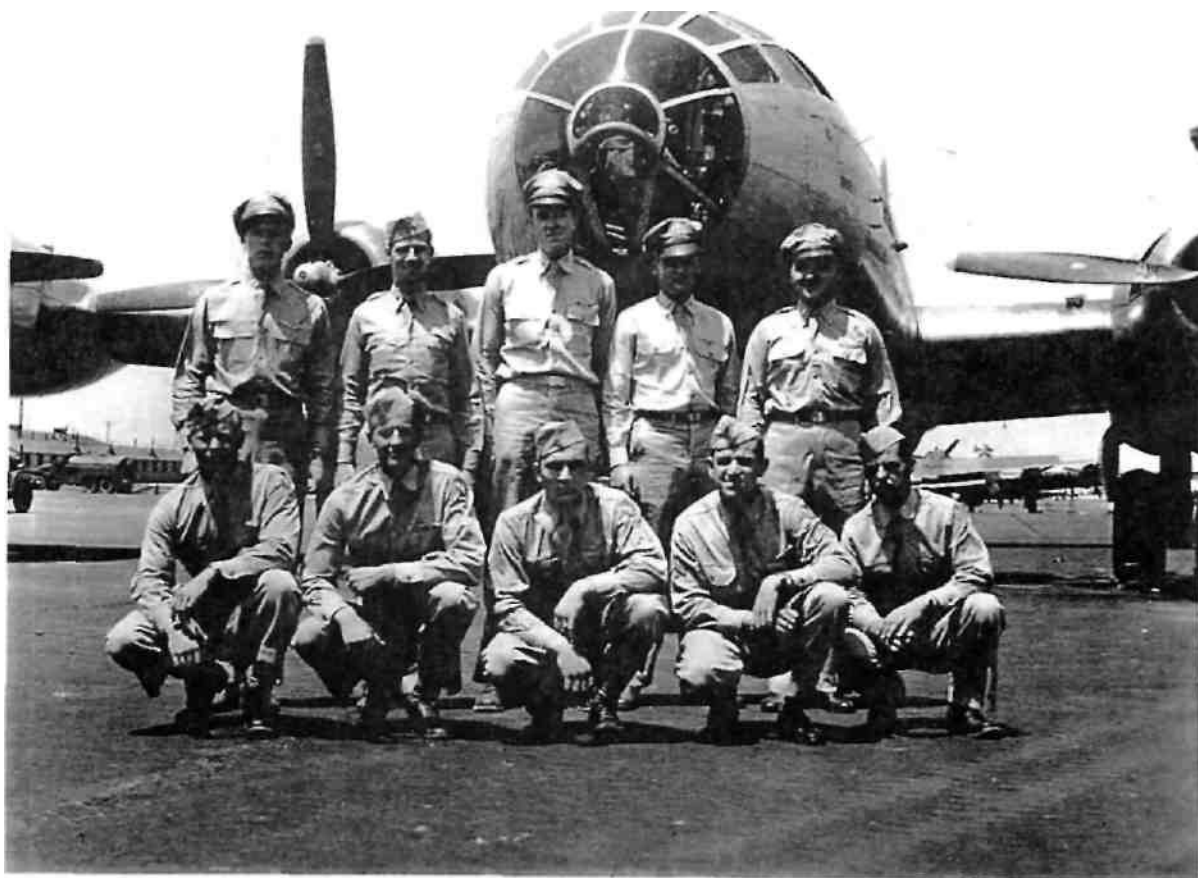
And as you all fell from the sky, God's angels wiped tears from their eyes; and as the final chapter closed upon each life's story, God entered your names in His Book, to be forever honored by Heaven's Glory. May your spirits be forever free now to take off on new missions, knowing that you will never be forgotten for your sacrifices for



In the photographs above, Captain Patrick Calhoun and some of the "Draggin Lady" crew are looking at some minor flak damage on their aircraft following a mission. Staff Sergeant Harry Gerson, Radar Operator, pointing, seems to be saying: "They got us right there in the national insignia ... See!" In the photograph at left, Mr. Maples is standing fourth from the right. In the photograph at right, he is standing second from right. (Charles R. Maples collection).

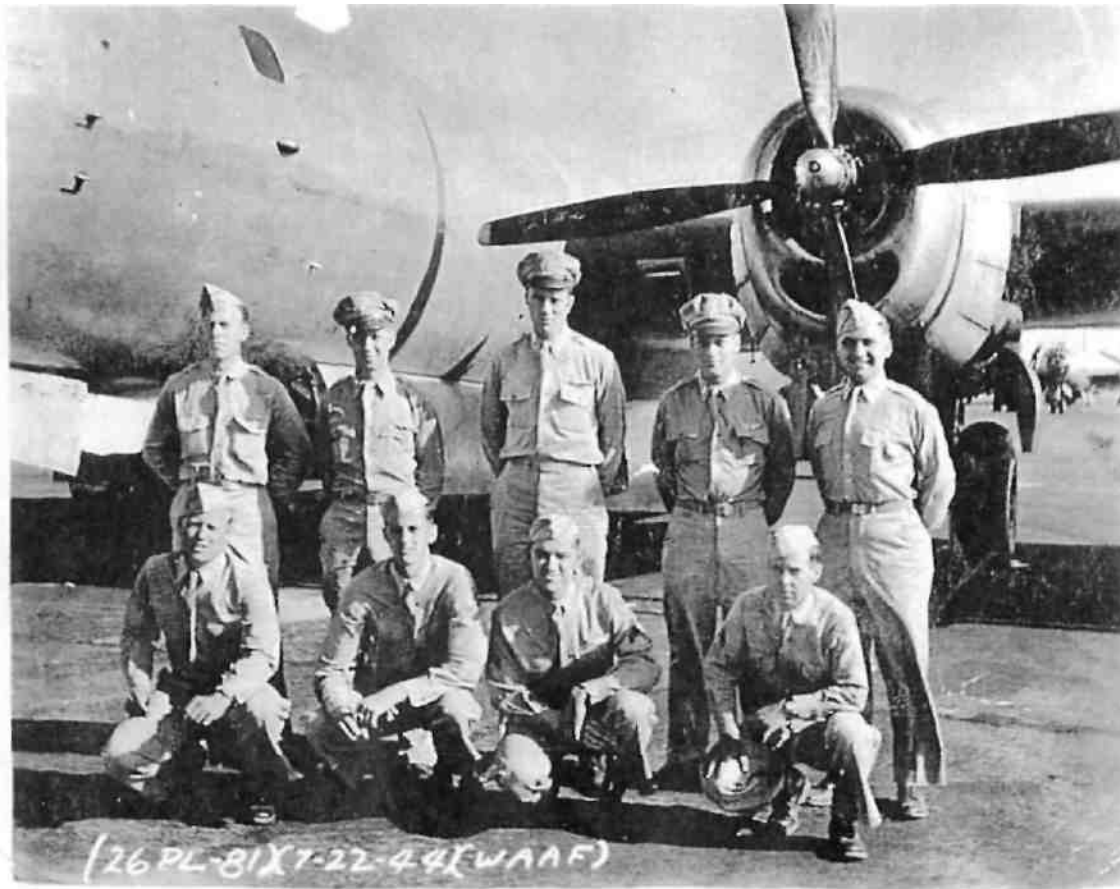


Having just returned from a harrowing mission, the crew of "Draggin Lady" was in no mood to have their picture taken. Charles R. Maples is directly above the words, "U.S. Army" on the side of the jeep. (Charles R. Maples collection).



Official AAF Photo

WINNING CREW - Captain Richard A. Field and his crew won the Aircraft Recognition Contest conducted by the Intelligence Section of the 881st Bombardment Squadron. Standing, left to right: Captain Field; 2/Lt. R. O. Dodds; 2/Lt. F. Merrick; 2/Lt. H. A. Portigal; 2/Lt. V. A. Kolesh. Kneeling, left to right: PFC C. R. Maples; PFC D. F. Bullock; Sgt. R. D. Cookson; Cpl. O. Dortch; Cpl. A. Wortovitch. Captain Field, who has flown many combat missions, recognizes the importance of recognition, and his crew was well in front.



The original crew of "Draggin Lady." Standing, left to right: Captain Richard A. Field; Lt. R.O. Dodds; Lt. F. Merrick; Lt. H.A. Portugal and Lt. V.A. Kolesh. Kneeling, left to right: PFC C.R. Maples; PFC D.F. Bnllock; Cpl. O. Dortch and Cpl. A. Wortovitch. Not pictured are: Sgt. R.D. Cookson and T/Sgt. E. Gaither. Note the date, 1944, at the bottom of the photograph. The WAAF, in parentheses, indicates that the photograph was taken at Walker Army Air Field in Kansas. (Photograph from the Charles R. Maples collection).



Pilot, Lt. Richard O. Dodds, standing beneath the "nose art" on "Draggin Lady." (Photograph from the Dnane Blair Maples collection).



A B-29 crew - possibly the Lt. Robert E. Engle crew - poses beside "Draggin Lady" for their group picture. Lt. Engle lost his life when "Draggin Lady" crashed. Cpl. Ray Reidina, whose story on how the aircraft received its name (Appendix A), stands at the extreme right in the back row. (Photograph from the Duane Blair Maples collection).



A rare view of the "nose art" on the right, Pilot's side, of "Draggin Lady."
(Photograph from the Duane Blair Maples collection).



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p.

During training in Kansas, crews were given simulated ditching practice with inflated life rafts while wearing heavy wool-lined flying suits. Recognize anyone?

73rd Bombardment Wing 500th
Bombardment Group 881st
Bombardment Squadron¹

Z Square 6 "Draggin Lady" Serial Number: 42-24694-BW

Crew Number	Crew	185
Missions Aircraft		
Commander Pilot		Captain Richard A. Field
Bombardier		1/Lt. Richard O. Dodds
Navigator Flight		1/Lt. Horace A. Portigal (deceased)
Engineer Radio		1/Lt. Francis F. Merrick (deceased)
Operator CFC		1/Lt. Victor A. Kolesh
Gunner Right		S/Sgt. Charles R. Maples
Gunner Left		Cpl. Othello Dortch
Gunner Radar		T/Sgt. Edwin S. Gaither (deceased)
Operator Tail		S/Sgt. Douglas F. Bullock
Gunner		S/Sgt. Robert D. Cookson (killed in action)
		S/Sgt. Alexander Wortovitch

Ground Crew: M/Sgt. Ben H. Eilers (Crew Chief) S/Sgt.
Joe E. Raiter, Sgt. Claude N. Neal Cpl.
James F. Travers

Note: This aircraft crashed off the coast of Saipan with Lt. Engle as Aircraft Commander during a slow timing flight on February 23, 1945. Lt. Pavey, as Pilot, and a sailor along for the ride also lost their lives.

¹ This crew roster, as well as some of the other ones in this book, were obtained from the 73rd Bomb Wing Association, by way of Mr. Raymond Rendina,* to whom I *extend my* grateful thanks. (ED).

73rd Bombardment Wing 500th
Bombardment Group 881st
Bombardment Squadron

Z Square 6

"Draggin Lady"

Serial Number: 42-24694-BW

Crew Number	Crew	185
Missions Aircraft		
Commander Pilot		Captain Patrick Calhoun (deceased)
Bombardier		1/Lt. Richard O. Dodds
Navigator Flight		1/Lt. Horace A. Portigal (deceased)
Engineer Radio		1/Lt. Francis F. Merrick (deceased)
Operator CFC		1/Lt. Victor A. Kolesh
Gunner Right		S/Sgt. Charles R Maples
Gunner Left		Cpl. Othello Dortch
Gunner Radar		T/Sgt. Edwin S. Gaither (deceased)
Operator Tail		S/Sgt. Douglas F. Bullock
Gunner		S/Sgt. Harry Gerson (deceased)
		S/Sgt. Alexander Wortovitch
Ground Crew:		M/Sgt. Ben H. Eilers (Crew Chief) S/Sgt. Joe E. Raiter, Sgt. Claude N. Neal Cpl. James F. Travers

Note: Captain Patrick Calhoun took over Captain Field's crew.

