



Lt. William A King Nagasaki Bomb Core Courier to Tinian

Bill was drafted January 22, 1942 from Queens Village, L.I., NY and sent to Ft. Eustus, VA for basic training. In June 1942, rather than go to Officer Candidate School (O.C.S.), he accepted an assignment as Sgt. Agent, in civilian clothes, in the Counter Intelligence Corps (C.I.C.), Third Service Command, Baltimore MD.

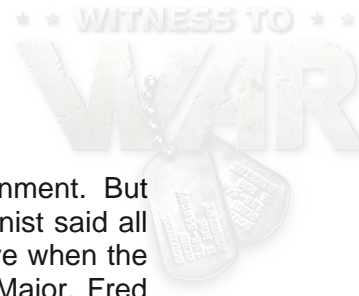
At the CIC training in Baltimore, his roommate in the lower bunk was Fred "Dusty" Rhodes, a young law school graduate from Baltimore MD and Washington DC. They became friends and a few months later, Fred received orders to go to O.C.S. The commanding officer asked Bill to give Fred a one-week crash course in the "basics" of military training, because Dusty had never been in uniform or had any prior military training.

In September of 1942, Bill was transferred to the Pittsburgh, PA C.I.C. office, and remained there until the summer of 1944. He received a number of special assignments including background investigations for personnel in the Manhattan Engineer District (M.E.D.). Knowledge about these cases was to be strictly limited to his CO.

Other assignments included providing discreet surveillance of civilian personnel as they moved through the Pittsburgh airport. During one such case he was shadowing a man dubbed "the absent-minded professor" who was changing planes in Pittsburgh. The scientist's code name was 'Nicholas Baker'. Sitting in the waiting area, he immediately became lost in a book and seemed to disregard the reboarding announcements made over the loudspeaker, calling him by name. Afraid the professor would miss the flight, Bill decided to move in and "accidentally" stumbled across the professor's feet to get his attention. Then, as Bill helped the professor to stand up, Bill told him quietly he had "better get on the plane" and directed him to the gate. Bill found out after the war that his charge at the airport was the Danish scientist – and Nobel Prize winner - Neils Bohr, who had been smuggled out of Denmark to England. He played a significant role in the early research and development leading up to the creation of the atomic bomb and was a frequent visiting consultant at Los Alamos.

In the summer of 1944 Bill was ordered to Baltimore for an interview regarding attendance at a Military Police Officer Candidate School. Intending to turn down the OCS offer, he and his pregnant wife, Emily, - a native New Yorker who had just learned how to drive - drove to Baltimore. However, his friendly interview with the Lt. Col was terminated with the comment that the Transportation Corps needed privates on the ALCAN Highway in Alaska, if he was not interested in MPOCS. Bill laughed, shook hands, saluted, and accepted orders and tickets to leave that night on the train for Fort Custer, MI. Emily had to drive back to Pittsburgh alone.

At OCS, which moved to Fort Sam Houston TX in October, there were rumors of some special assignments to be made at graduation. Bill and a new acquaintance, Larry Smith, a young lawyer from Brooklyn, NY, agreed that this would be worth trying for. After graduation, quite a few of the new 2nd LTs., including Bill and Larry, were sent to Camp Ritchie, MD to attend Military Intelligence Class #25.



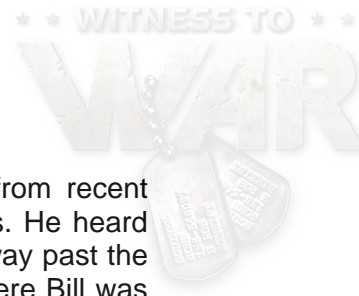
In early February 1945, the new 2nd LTs. were interviewed for a special assignment. But by late afternoon only Bill was left in the waiting room and the WAC receptionist said all interviews had been completed. His ego totally deflated, Bill prepared to leave when the office door opened and several officers entered, led by his old friend, now Major, Fred "Dusty" Rhodes. They laughed when Dusty said, with a straight face, "I thought you knew - you were already pre-selected!" It was a gag that Dusty had set up for Bill. The other Major with Fred was Frank Smith, the brother of Bill's friend Larry, from Military Police O.C.S. The two majors were key assistants to Col. John Lansdale, the Security Intelligence Officer under Major General Leslie R. Groves, head of the Manhattan Project. That evening over dinner and drinks Bill took a good ribbing from his friends.

Bill's new assignment was to the Intelligence Security Division, M.E.D., Area Engineer, New York City branch office. But on May 21, 1945, Bill was ordered by the Adjutant General of the War Department to be relieved of his duties with the M.E.D. and was sent to Washington D.C. Two days later he was assigned to the 1st Technical Service Detachment by order of the Secretary of War. All documents, orders, etc. showed no connection with or reference to either the Manhattan Project or the 509th Composite Air Force Group. The purpose of the 1st Technical Service Detachment was to serve as the connecting link between the two organizations. It was clear to Bill by the end of May that, assuming the bomb program stayed on track, he would be going overseas for some official purpose. Bill was cleared at this time as an official courier by the War Department and Major General Groves signed the order.

Bill's first courier activity (May 31 through July 19) was by water - on a cargo ship from Port Chicago CA to Tinian. The ship transported classified material - high explosives, bomb casings, electronic equipment, etc for the bomb drop, under the name Project Alberta. Bill traveled back to the states via a 509th Green Hornet C-54.

Events specific to the movement of the "Fat Man" core started on July 23, 1945 when orders came from the War Department. Bill was ordered to proceed to Albuquerque to await air transportation to Guam, Marianas Islands by special plane. He flew from Washington DC to Albuquerque by commercial airplane and was issued a .45 pistol and a hunting type knife. He was driven to Los Alamos in an Army staff car and stayed overnight at Fuller Lodge. The next morning, a small group of Security Intelligence Officers at Los Alamos - (names known at the time but now forgotten) - took him to a small storage shack - actually an "icehouse" - on the shores of Ashly Pond within the highly classified Tech area. They brought out a container which Bill jokingly called the "bird cage". It was a steel rod frame with a sphere in the middle, approximately 8 to 12 inches in diameter and between 2 to 3 feet in height. The lead-lined sphere contained the plutonium, for what was to be the heart of the Nagasaki bomb - "Fat Man". The group headed for Kirtland Field in Albuquerque escorted by a few cars with Military Police guards. The only delay en route was a flat tire as they descended the winding mountain road from Los Alamos to Albuquerque.

A Green Hornet C-54 was waiting at Kirtland Field to take Bill and the "bird cage" to Tinian via San Francisco and Hickam Field in Hawaii. They landed at Hickam in the early morning hours and were met by a friend of Bill's from Pittsburgh. The Honolulu Counter Intelligence Officer, George B Raisin, and a contingent of guards, were ready to watch over Bill and the plane. While the plane was refueled, the guards cleared the dining hall at 3:00 AM so that Bill could eat and wash up - with the bird cage always at his side.



Also at Hickam Field that early morning was an Army Colonel in transit from recent fighting in the Pacific, looking for a way to move his men back to the states. He heard about the C-54 sitting on the runway with only one passenger. Pushing his way past the guards around the plane, he started up the steps to the plane's doorway where Bill was positioned. Bill requested the officer to back off and not attempt to enter the plane. But the Colonel was determined. Bill finally unholstered his .45, cocked it, and said. "You can't come aboard this plane!!" After some further "discussion" in front of the "shaking" .45 automatic, the Colonel backed down and left the C-54. Bill turned to the 19 year old Italian pilot from Brooklyn and told him to " get this plane off the ground and out of here, or I'm going to get in trouble!" They took off.

During the flight from Johnson Island to Tinian, they ran into bad weather and the flight became a bit rough. Bill was afraid the opportunity to use the hunting knife he had been issued might develop. The "bird cage", which had floatation and signaling devices built in should it be necessary to jettison it or ditch the plane, had been strapped down to the plane's floor. The knife was to be used to cut the straps. The plutonium was not be lost, no matter what.

Upon arrival at Tinian, the "package" mentioned in his orders was turned over to its rightful owners, the technical personnel of Project Alberta. Bill stayed in Captain William "Bud" Uanna's tent – he was security officer at Tinian. (Uanna later worked in the Personnel Security Program for the Atomic Energy Commission in Washington DC, at the same time that Bill ran the Personnel Security Program at Los Alamos.)

Bill hoped that he would be on Tinian when the "Enola Gay" completed its mission of dropping "Little Boy" on Hiroshima on August 6, but he was recalled to Washington DC to deliver documents to General Groves. When he arrived in Washington, he knew that the mission had been successful from the atmosphere and the conversation among the personnel in the General's office.

Bill then received orders on August 10, 1945 to move from Washington DC to San Francisco for another potential trip to Tinian with another plutonium core, located at Mare Island Navy Yard. He was at station there for a few days awaiting final orders to go. Finally his driver arrived to pick him up at the Fairmont Hotel, but as they prepared to drive away, the car had a flat tire. While they were changing it, word came to cancel the trip and Bill checked back into the hotel. Within literally a matter of hours the town started to celebrate as word of Japan's surrender hit the airwaves. The delivery of the second plutonium core for the third bomb was unnecessary.

After checking with the Oakland California Security and Intelligence staff, Bill was assigned as a Security Courier, with the tasking of collecting all Manhattan Project sensitive and classified material, explosives, documents, and equipment from the West coast facilities to other more secure locations. Material was moved by automobile, truck, plane and freight train.

In October 1945, Bill returned to Washington DC and received compliments from General Groves. Instead of being re-assigned to the MED New York Office for termination of his military service, Bill asked for and received a transfer with his family by private auto to Los Alamos. He was assigned as Post Intelligence Officer at Los Alamos in March 1946. He stayed on as the first civilian employee and Security Branch Chief in



the Intelligence and Security programs and later stayed on with the Atomic Energy Commission, which became the civilian descendent of the Manhattan Project.