

B-29 Crew of Carl B Sturm

Our crew was assembled at Lincoln Army Air Base in Dec. 1944. We got our B-29 training at Alamogordo, New Mexico. Training was done in old B-29's - and we got our first taste of high altitude flying there.

After 3 months at Alamogordo AAB we flew to Harrington Field, to get our brand new B-29. It's spent the first week of June '44 calibrating all the instruments to perfection. Then we flew to Oakland, California for embarkation to combat duty!

Our first leg was to John Rogers Field in Honolulu. The next to Kwajalein Island where Sturm opened our orders to go to Saipan. On arrival at Saipan we were greeted on the tarmac by Brigadier General "Rosie O'Donnell". After seeing we were truly in a combat zone, we really appreciated the reception. However, they took our brand new B-29 away from us and assigned us an old war weary plane.

Our first combat mission on July ^{25th} 1945 was to bomb an army arsenal at Osaka, Japan. Although we had extensive training at high altitude bombing, this mission was a daylight raid at 8,000 feet, and with 500 pound bombs. General Curtis LeMay had taken charge of the 20th Air Force and decided that we were using too much ^{effort} to bomb from 20 to 30 thousand feet, and the results were not too good either. Previously, the arsenal had been targeted, but the attack had missed. This time we got it! I think all 300 planes hit the target, but they put up a lot of flack. One burst hit outside my window. I still wonder why it didn't cripple our plane. Lt Zeigler and I both got awarded ~~for~~ the purple heart medal for wounds received. (See Zeigler's letter to his son)

He flew 5 missions in 7 days - each mission was 10 to 14 hours. When you include briefing for the mission and pre-flighting the airplane, we were one tired bunch!

On one flight back from Japan, Ed Ziegler the co-pilot told me to take his seat as it was more comfortable + warmer. Sturm told me to get some sleep as I had worked on the way up. Ed was spread out between the pilot + co-pilot's seats. After some time sleeping I woke up and there was Sturm sound asleep. I looked back at the flight engineer and he too was asleep! Ditto for the navigator + the radar operator. Every body was asleep and that old airplane was headed for home. Since it was on auto-pilot it was off only one or two degrees from our heading back to Saipan.

In early August we were sent to Iwo Jima to ~~test~~ fly navigation for the P-51 + P-47 fighters stationed there. Higher planes were not able ~~to~~ to navigate the 800 miles from Iwo to Japan with the instruments on their planes.

During our detached duty to Iwo, Japan surrendered to end the war.

There was a great effort to get the American prisoners of war back to the US. Getting airplane gas was essential to refuel the transports landing in Japan for their return trip home. During this time one of the C-54 pilots invited our crew of officers to fly up to Japan with his load of gas. Since the air field at Tsugui was over crowded, we were directed to land at another field. It was similar to our Wright Field - experimental planes. There also was a B-17 there, probably captured in the Philippines.

There was a delay in unloading the fuel drums from our C-54 so we were able to do some sight-seeing. With the delay our water supply ran out. There was a rumor that the Japs would poison the water supply, but thirst finally dictated that we drink their water. It really tasted good! He tried using our point to talk back on a Japanese civilian, but he was so scared of us he couldn't help us. He finally gave up and gave away most of our cartons of cigarettes. They were probably worth a fortune later on.

The war being over our crew was broken up - the married men were sent home, but single men were declared essential. I was transferred to the 315th ^{Wing} group on Guam, and after several boring months I was given a job as Combat Maintenance Officer. I had charge of 300 airplanes that were almost new, and all I knew was how to drop bombs.

Orders were finally sent down to return to the States for discharge in March 1946. I elected to come home by boat. I had enough of flying. He took the great circle route back to San Francisco and ran into a tsunami coming down from Alaska. Every body on board was sea sick but me, so I had the run of the ship. I got a hot shower for the first time in 9 months.

Seeing the greeting at San Francisco really was moving. Boats were blowing their horns & bands were playing. It was a greeting I will never forget.

See: News article - Miami Herald Aug 7, 1945

Remarks By Hap Halloran, 1993 Reunion 73rd Bomb Wing