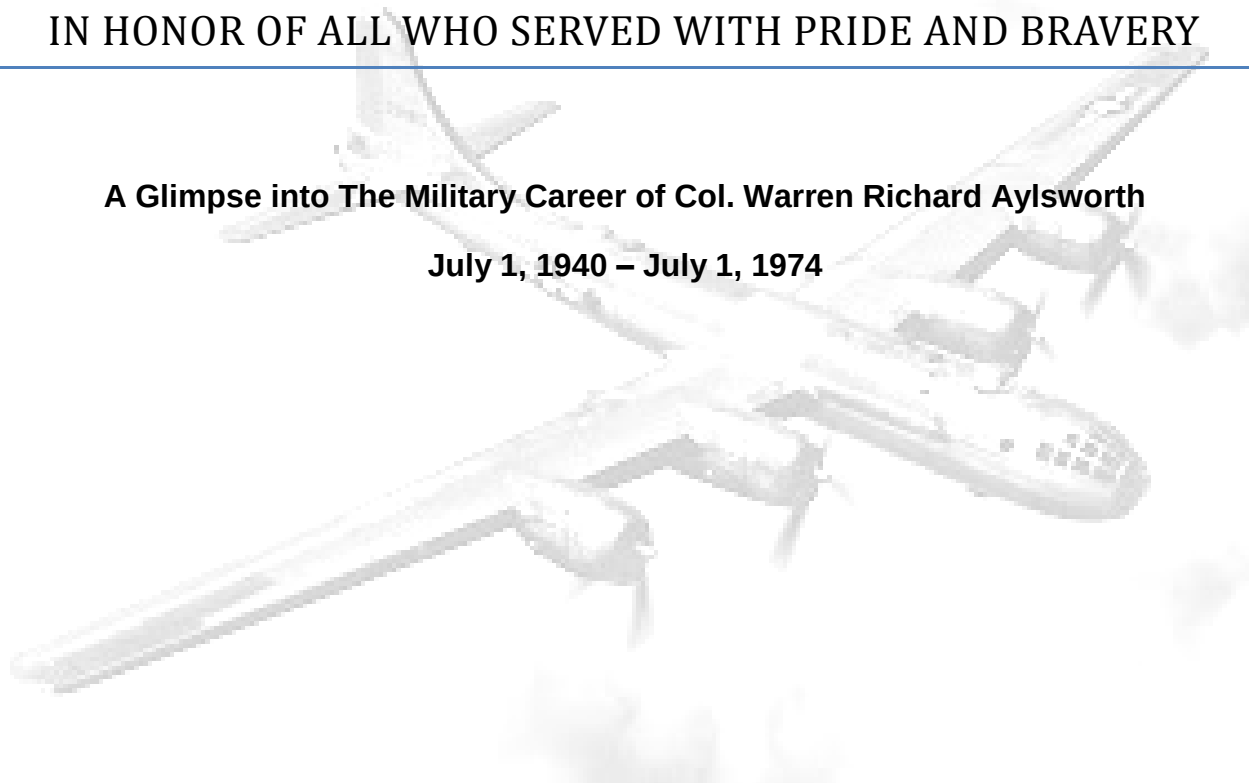


IN HONOR OF ALL WHO SERVED WITH PRIDE AND BRAVERY

A Glimpse into The Military Career of Col. Warren Richard Aylsworth

July 1, 1940 – July 1, 1974



Compiled by Claude Fields

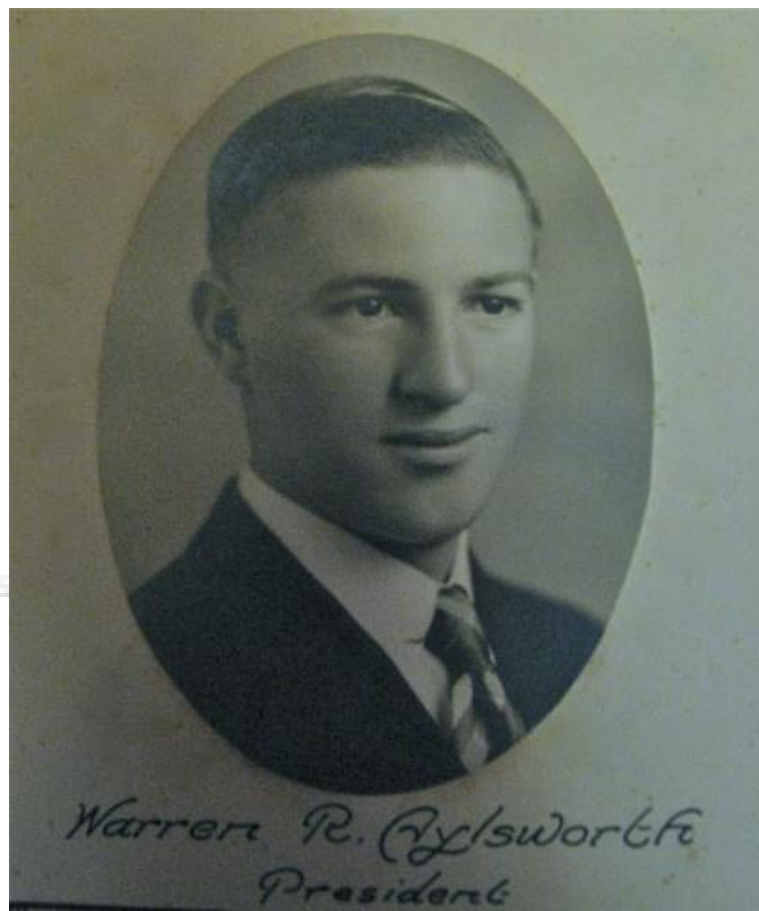
April 2015

Warren Richard Aylsworth

The Aylsworth family originated in England or Wales and came to America in 1679. Arthur Aylsworth settled in Rhode Island. Arthur was appointed an inspectorship position in 1698-9. He deeded a quantity of land to Henry Tibbets in 1697. I mention this because Henry was an ancestor of Colonel Paul Tibbets, Pilot of the B-29 named *Enola Gay*, which dropped the first nuclear bomb on Japan. During WWII Colonel Paul Tibbets was stationed on Tinian Island at the same time as Warren Aylsworth, both flying B-29's. How ironic the members of these two families were stationed as B-29 Aircraft Commanders on the same island, 8,000 miles away from their common heritage which began almost 250 years ago. From Rhode Island the Aylsworth family grew and migrated to several of the American states.

Warren's Grandfather George came to North Manitou Island, Michigan, in 1866 and was engaged in the lumber business. While he lived on the island, the small village there was named Aylsworth. Later it became Cresant. In 1872 George came to Empire, commenced farming, and settled again in the lumber business building the first sawmill here. Grandfather George built the first dock in Empire so he could sell cordwood fuel to the passing ships and also load lumber. He held the office of supervisor for a number of years and took a very active part in the building of Empire in the early days. In 1883 George was contracted to carry the mail between Empire and Traverse City. During the winter of 1885, the weather was very severe. He returned home and nearly perished benumbed with cold. It was thought this was the beginning of a terrible malady that affected his brain. He gradually failed until his death on February 26, 1888. George's son, Alonzo Aylsworth, would have five children: Glenn, Warren, Wayne, George and Helen. They were 11th generation Aylsworth's. Warren was born in Empire on August 26, 1920, to Alonzo and Gladys Purdy Aylsworth. Alonzo fought in the ditches of France during WWI and was an American veteran of the US Army. T/Sgt. George (1931-1956) was killed in a plane crash in Missouri. Warren, Wayne, and Glenn all served in WWII.

In 1938 Warren graduated from Empire High School as class president.



Warren then went to work as a farmer and truck driver making wages of 30 dollars a month until 1940. He milked cows and worked the farm. On July 1, 1940, he enlisted in the Army.

He was sent to Texas for training. He was on duty on December 7, 1941, listening to the radio when he heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor. When he went out to tell folks, they laughed at him, not believing that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by the Japanese. Warren went to cadet training to become an officer. After becoming a second lieutenant, he began his flight training in Texas.

He flew the PT-19 for 60 Hours.



He flew the BT13 for 80 hours.



He had 110 hours in the AT-6



500 hours in the AT-7



He then flew the B-24



Warren flew the B-17 for the navigation students.



By June of 1944 he had 1,368 hours of flying time. He was rated in all the previous mentioned aircraft. One of his instructor pilots made this comment on his final report: **"Student has good natural flying abilities and should make a good aircraft commander"**. It was after this he was assigned to pilot the new B-29. While waiting for his B-29, he flew B-24's and B-17's for training navigators. He was then assigned to the 505th Bomb Group, 482nd Squadron, as Aircraft Commander. Sometime in November 1944 1st Lt. Warren Aylsworth received his orders to lead a group of B-29's from Mather Field in Sacramento, California, to the Mariana Islands.

Copy of the original flight log of *Purple Shaft* which still exists today.

Staging Area to Combat, Tinian, Mariana Islands.				Day	alt. ft.	miles	Time
Date	Aircraft No.			night			
12/8/44	B-29 802	got our own ship today. Flew Calibration mission. Everything is O.K. with the ship. Took off without flaps. Took off for Mather Field, Calif. (DORR). Landed at Fairchild, Calif. due to bad weather at Mather.		Day	16,000	650	3 40
12/9/44	" "	Fairchild, Calif. to Mather, Field Calif.		Day	17,000	1200	5 35
12/11/44	" "			Day	4,000	100	30
12/13/44	" "	Final proceeding at Mather. took off for John Rogers Oahu, Hawaii.		Night	15,000	2400	11 45
12/16/44	" "	Hawaii to Kwajalein - no ammo. Saw Bill Ross and Felica. Named ship "The Purple Shaft".		Day	15,000	2100	9 15
12/17/44	" "	Kwajalein to Saipan - 100 rounds per gun.		Day	20,000	1,560	4 26
12/19/44	" "	Saipan to Guam - tried to get our ship. Went to Guam because of air raids.		Day	25,000	125	40
12/20/44	" "	Guam to Saipan. We were supposed to land on Tinian but they didn't have any landing lights.		Night	25,000	200	/
12/21/44	" "	Saipan to Tinian - First B-29 to land on Tinian. Made good second & Captain Folger's third. Big reception. Brought Day 2,000 all Buzz got - twice.					45
				Page total	8,505	37	46
				Amt. Forward	29,204	100	39
				Total to Date	29,209	138	25

Taken from Original Flight Log of *Purple Shaft*

<u>DATE</u>	<u>A/C</u>	<u>NO.</u>	<u>NOTES</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>ALT. FT.</u>	<u>MILES</u>	<u>TIME</u>	
12/8/1944	B-29	802	Got our ship today. Flew calibration mission. Everything is o.k. with the ship. Took off without flaps.	Day	16,000	650	3 hrs. 40 min.	
12/9/1944	B-29	802	Took off for Mather Field, California. Landed at Fairfield, California due to bad weather at Mather.	Day	19,000	1,200	5 hrs. 35 min.	
12/11/1944	B-29	802	Fairfield, California to Mather Field, California	Day	4,000	100	30 min.	
12/13/1944	B-29	802	Final processing at Mather. Took off for John Rogers, Oahu, Hawaii	Night	15,000	2,400	11 hrs. 45 min.	
12/16/1944	B-29	802	Hawaii to Kwajalein - no ammo. Saw Bill Roos and Felicia. Named ship "The Purple Shaft".	Day	15,000	2,100	9 hours, 15 min.	
12/17/1944	B-29	802	Kwajalein to Saipan - 100 rounds per gun.	Day	20,000	1,560	4 hours, 25 min.	
12/19/1944	B-29	802	Saipan to Guam - tried to get our ship. Went to Guam because of air raids.	Day	25,000	125	40 min.	
12/20/1944	B-29	802	Guam to Saipan. We were supposed to land on Tinian but they didn't have any landing lights.	Night	25,000	200	1 hr.	
12/21/1944	B-29	802	Saipan to Tinian - First B-29 to land on Tinian, Major Dendy, second and Captain Forburger third. Big reception, braid and all.	Day	2,000	150	45 min.	
<i>*Taken from original flight log of Purple Shaft</i>						Page Total:	8,505	37 hours, 46 min.
						Amt. Forwarded:	20,704	100 hrs. 39 min.
						Total to Date:	29,209	138 hours, 25 min.

*Taken from original flight log of *Purple Shaft*

Purple Shaft aka Black Cat

On December 9, 1944, a flight of three B-29's, one being flown by Lt. Aylsworth left California's Mather Field in Sacramento and flew first to Oahu, Hawaii. It was here the crew named their brand new B-29 *Purple Shaft*. The crew was formed at Harvard AAF, Nebraska. Before arriving at Harvard AAF from Pensacola gunnery school the older NCO's assured their young 19 year old buddies not to worry. They would make sure they got an older experienced Aircraft Commander. Somehow they pulled it off and the crew was assigned to fly with Major Blauw as their pilot and Lt. Aylsworth as their co-pilot. They spent time flying practice missions from Harvard AAF to Cuba and back. Just before leaving for Sacramento, California, Major Blauw left the crew to become a Staff Officer. Lt. Aylsworth was promoted to Aircraft Commander. Their young pilot loved to fly fighters as well as the B-29 and they felt he sometimes flew their large bomber as if it were a P-40 fighter. The crew felt they got the "purple shaft" by being assigned on his crew. They would comment later on his skills that saved their lives numerous times on bombing missions over Japan. From Hawaii they flew to Saipan but had to land on the island of Guam because of air raids. The following day they would fly the 200 miles from Guam to Saipan because there were no lights at Tinian.

On December 21st the flight of three B-29's flew on to Tinian. They buzzed the field twice before landing. There was a big reception upon the arrival of the three B-29's. This was the day for which the Navy, Marines, and Seabee's had fought, the day that the 20th Air Force could now begin combat operations against the Japanese homeland from the island of Tinian. The average bombing mission from Tinian to Japan lasted 15.5 hours.

The 505th plane, *Purple Shaft* AKA *Black Cat*, the first B-29 to land on Tinian, was flown by Lt. Warren Aylsworth. They had a general on board and another higher ranking officer. They were part of a three plane formation and although they landed first, the General went over to Julian Dendy on the crew of *Indian Maid* and congratulated him first because he was a major vs Aylsworth who was only a lieutenant.

Two of the first three B-29's that landed on the island of Tinian would be lost in combat. *Deaner Boy*, serial # 42-24815, was lost over Japan on February 10, 1945. *Indian Maid*, serial # 42-24809, was shot down on June 5, 1945. On June 1, 1945, Aylsworth's aircraft was under constant danger from enemy fighters, intense flack, difficult navigation problems, and mechanical failure while in flight over long stretches of water. Having completed 30 combat missions, now he was faced with the possibility of bail-out over enemy territory. His determination to attack the enemy in spite of obstacles and mechanical malfunctions, together with his display of advanced professional skills, was outstanding and reflected great credit on himself and the Army Air Forces.

Seabee's and the Island of Tinian

The first paragraph is taken from a war story titled "World War II Experiences", Seabees, and Americans Veterans Center, written by George W. Larson.

"Seabees built several hundred acres of re-vetted bomb and ammunition dumps, 1700 acres of camp facilities, 300 acres of supply dumps, 75 miles of coral surfaced roads, and 50 miles of asphalt topped roadways. On December 21, 1944, the first B-29 landed at North Field, while construction continued. Larson was operating a road grader on an adjacent runway. He stopped the road grader and stared at the landing B-29. Sirens began to blow while jeeps and command cars burst onto the finished runway next to the one Larson was working on, clearing construction equipment and personnel off the runway".

Seabee's of the 6th Naval Construction Brigade consisting of the 9th, 13th, 18th, 38th, 50th, 67th, 92nd, 107th, 110th, 112th, 121st, and 135th Battalions commanded by Commodore Paul James Halloran built the largest airport in the world. The massive construction project was begun on the North end of Tinian. Operating for over 45 days and nights, often while under fire, the Seabee's initially repaired and extended the existing 4,380 foot long runway and then added two additional runways, each 8,000 feet long. Nearly the entire North end of the island was occupied by runways, the airfield area, and various support areas. The Seabee's moved nearly 1,000,000 cubic yards of earth and coral and accumulated 900,000 truck miles.

"This B-29, aircraft number 42-24802, named *Purple Shaft*, and carried Army Air Forces Brigadier General F.V.H. Kimble, (Twentieth Air Force Commander assigned to coordinate Tinian, North Field operations)". A very special relationship developed between Seabees and Airmen. Many Seabee battalions would adopt an aircraft by officially painting their logo and name on the B-29's nose. The quality of life for the air crew improved considerably because the Seabees provided their crew with better Quonset huts, washing machines, better mattresses, ice cream, cold beer, steak, and other comforts. Notice The Seabee's Cat logo from the 13th battalion is on the left side of the *Purple Shaft*.



Below is a picture of the *Purple Shaft* crew. Notice in this picture the crew had 14 missions.



Crew of the Boeing B-29 "THE PURPLE SHAFT", pose in front of their plane at an air base on Tinian, Marianas Islands. They are, left to right, back row: 2nd Lt. Llewellyn J. Evans, Washington, D.C., engineer; 2nd Lt. Francis E. Williamson, New York, N.Y., bombardier; 2nd Lt. Harry H. Kutner, Bronx, New York, pilot; 1st Lt. Warren R. Aylsworth, Empire, Michigan, Commander; 1st Lt. Albert M. Skea, East Orange, N.J., navigator; Charles J. Edwards, Whitman, Mass., left blister gunner. Front row, left to right: Don Fendler, Pelham Manor, N. Y., right blister gunner; Irving Des Roches, Rumford, Me., radar operator; James R. Cox, Jr., Cordele, Ga., tail gunner; John E. Shoemaker, Mt. Vernon, Mo., radio operator; and James K. Christensen, Oakland, Calif., gunner. 11 April 1945.

Search Lights over Japan

Search lights on a night bombing run were hair-raising to say the least. Flying in total darkness on a night bombing run and being caught by a searchlight meant you were tagged not only by the ground anti-aircraft guns but the enemy fighters as well. You go from total darkness around you, to the bright of day in a flash. To survive the flack and enemy fighters, pilots had to take evasive action immediately and perform drastic flying maneuvers to avoid the tracking searchlights. Gunner, Sgt. Donald Fendler, crew member of *Purple Shaft*, told me that Lt. Warren Aylsworth was really good at making evasive maneuvers. The Japanese searchlights would lose their tracking ability on the *Purple Shaft* because of Lt. Aylsworth's flying skills.

Chapel Flyover

In March 2015 this Chapel flyover incident was told to me by Sgt. Donald Fendler, gunner on the *Purple Shaft*. The B-29 *Purple Shaft* maintenance crew changed out one of the four engines and it required a flight check. Warren asked Don if he would like to go on the flight check. He told Don he could ride up front instead of in the back where his gunner station was. Sgt. Fendler jumped at the chance to ride in the bombardier's seat, right up front where he had a great view. It was Sunday and they took the *Purple Shaft* up and ran the engine through its paces. The engine checked out fine. Upon returning to base, with all four engines running at full speed, Warren made a low pass just over the roof of the chapel. It was said that the prop wash from the big B-29 blew out the candles in the chapel. When the *Purple Shaft* landed and taxied into its parking spot there was an officer there to meet Warren.

The officer with a stern face, said, "Aylsworth, for that incident you get two more combat missions to fly." Later his crew would see that the added two combat missions would be deleted. After a bombing mission, his crew being debriefed within earshot of the disciplining officer stretched the truth a bit on how difficult the mission had been. The officer came over to their pilot and told him to forget the two extra missions.

The Superfortress was made to fly with four Wright R-3350 “Cyclone” radial engines not one and a half.

The *Purple Shaft* was hard hit on one of its missions over Japan. Taking hits while over the target, the aircraft lost three engines. One of the engines actually had a cylinder knocked off. They were losing altitude fast and their pilot ordered the crew to get rid of all the weight they possibly could. Their Flight Engineer, 2nd Lt. Lew Evans, got a second engine started again but during the process the engine was backfiring. Backfiring on the big radial engine is very dangerous as it can cause the engine to catch on fire. Lt. Evans eventually got all engines to run at limited power for temporary periods. A/C, Lt. Warren Aylsworth coaxed the *Purple Shaft* home and landed with one and a half engines running. The fuel tanks had only fumes remaining.

Quoting the *New York Herald Tribune* on April 30, 1945; “It took sheer brilliance under great stress”.

Thirty Six Combat Missions Over Japan

By August 1, 1945, the *Purple Shaft* would fly 36 missions over Japan. They flew low level bombing missions as well as high altitude missions. Lt. Aylsworth was awarded the **Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal, and Western Pacific Campaign Star.**



Tinian from the air.



B-29 Loading up



Eye Witness Reports

Among Warren's archives you will find his eye-witness reports of aircraft lost during the bombing missions over Japan or written notes of B-29's from his squadron which were lost. On February 10, 1945, 2nd Lt. Jack L Nichols, flying in the left seat as Command Pilot aboard the B-29 nicknamed *Wolf Pack*, serial #42-24787, call sign: Victor 4, was one of 120 aircraft launched to bombard the Nakajima Aircraft Assembly Plant at Ota, northwest of Tokyo, Japan. While over the target area, the group was attacked by a band of Nakajima Ki-44 single-engine "Tojo" fighter planes. On the 1500-mile return flight back home, his B-29 aircraft was reported by the Tinian tower at 2257 hundred hours stating that the plane was 20 minutes out from base and OK. The aircraft never returned and a search was held the next day with negative results. It is believed that the aircraft was forced to ditch in the ocean due to fuel starvation, resulting in the loss of the crew; Pilot, 2nd Lt. Jack Nichols, Co-Pilot, Capt. Robert Cady, Navigator, 2nd Lt. Lloyd Riddle, Bombardier, 2nd Lt. Everett Stenman, Flight Engineer, 2nd Lt. John McLean, Radio Operator, S/Sgt David Bauer, Radar, Sgt., Robert Carter, CFC Gunner, Sgt. John Chovanec, Left Gunner, Sgt. Tom Harwell, Right Gunner, Sgt. William Hendersen, Tail Gunner, Sgt. James Hogg.

On the same mission 12 B-29's were lost. Two B-29's from the 505th collided in mid-air over the Nakajima Aircraft Factory. Twenty three crew members from the two aircraft died that day. The crew members were from the B-29's *Deaner Boy* and *Slick's Chicks*. B-29 serial #42-24784, 92 Naval Const Batt AKA *Slick's Chicks* crew members were Pilot, Capt. Carmel Slaughter, Co-Pilot, 2nd Lt. Dan Godsy, Navigator, 1st Lt. Kenneth Swanson, Bombardier, 1st Lt. Herbert Weiner, Flight Engineer, 2nd Lt. Joseph Jarosz, Radio Operator, S/Sgt. Nick Corbo, Radar, Sgt. Kenneth Mago, Right Gunner, S/Sgt. Ralph McLellan, CFC Gunner, S/Sgt.. Robert Yonce, Tail Gunner, Sgt. Frank Kastenmeier, Left Gunner, Sgt. James Melvin, Col. Birrell Walsh (Passenger/observer).

B-29 serial #42-24815, 121 SeaBees AKA *Deaner Boy* crew members were Pilot, 1st Lt. Owen Barnhart Jr., Co-Pilot, 2nd Lt. Donald Morrison, Navigator, 2nd Lt. Cornelius Kerns, Bombardier, 1st Lt. Hugh Burner, Flight Engineer, 2nd Lt. Harley Hazelwood, Radio Operator, S/Sgt. Norman Smith, Radar, Sgt. James Greup, CFC Gunner, Sgt. George Wilbur III, Left Gunner, Sgt. Harry Harz Jr., Right Gunner, Sgt. Donald Kissinger, Tail Gunner, Sgt. Harvey Fitzpatrick.

B-29 Serial #42-24815

One of the first three B-29's to land on Tinian



B-29 Serial #42-24784



Today there is a monument in the Japanese village of Akizuma close to where the two B-29's crashed. The Japanese villagers cremated the bodies and enshrined them. The ashes were later returned to the United States. 68 years later on March 20, 2013, a ceremony was held in honor of the 23 fallen airmen. Some family members of the B-29 crews which participated in the mission were present as well as local Japanese citizens and members of the Yokota AFB. Another person present was Dan Owens, the namesake of the Co-Pilot of ***Slick's Chicks***. He was so inspired as he grew up that he became a member of the flight crew of ***Fifi***, the only flying B-29 in the world today.

The memorial unveiled carried a message of peace: "We wish to commemorate the 23 brave souls and offer a wish for world peace and friendship between Japan and America".



This monument is located in the Seiganji Temple in Ora, Japan.

***Indian Maid* - One of The Original Three to Land on Tinian**

On June 5, 1945, four hundred seventy-three B-29's attacked Kobe with 3,077 tons of incendiary bombs; eight attacked other targets. The attack burned off over four square miles and damaged over half the city. B-29's claimed 86 Japanese fighters. Eleven B-29's were lost, among them serial #42-24809 nicknamed *Indian Maid*. The five crew members killed in action were Pilot, Capt. Edward Fishkin, Co-Pilot, Alfred V. Boulton, Radar, FO William H. Moore, Bombardier, 2nd Lt. Gerald McIntosh, Engineer, S/Sgt. John Driapsa.

Four of the crew members became prisoners of war and later were either executed or died from disease or injury. They were Navigator, 1st Lt. John Meehan, Radio Operator, Sgt. Henry W. Sutherland Jr., CFC Gunner, Sgt. Osmond J. Hannigan and Tail Gunner, Sgt. Joseph G. Kanzier.

There were two crew members executed at Shinodayama Military Parade Ground near Osaka on or about July 20, 1945. They were Right Gunner, Sgt. James N. Fitzgerald and Left Gunner, Sgt. Harvey B. Kennedy, Jr.



Warren Aylsworth after WWII

On February 6, 1946 Captain Aylsworth was released from active duty but remained in the Air Force Reserves. He returned home to Empire, Michigan, and married Aleta Hodge on April 2, 1946. Following in his fathers and grandfathers footsteps, he became Empire Village President from 1950 until being called back to active duty in February 1953. Then a Major he attended AOB School (Air Order of Battle) and graduated in June of 1954. He was assigned to the 55th SRW (Strategic Reconnaissance Wing) as an Aircraft Commander flying the RB-47E, Squadron Commander and Staff Officer. The 55th mission is to provide worldwide reconnaissance: real-time intelligence, command and control, information warfare, and combat support to U.S. leaders and commanders. Called the "Fightin Fifty-Fifth", it has made significant contributions to the defense of the United States of America for more than 50 years.

The RB-47E Stratojets conducted a variety of classified overflights of the Soviet Union during the 1950's. Some of these flights were mounted from Thule in Greenland and probed deep into the heart of the Soviet Union. They took photographic and radar recordings of the possible route SAC (Strategic Air Command) Bombers might take if the U.S. were to go to war with the USSR. These flights were deep into mainland Russia and termed SENSINT (Sensitive Intelligence) missions. The only B-47's to see anything resembling combat were the RB-47E's. They operated from almost every airfield that gave them access to the USSR. They would take off often and probe the USSR. At least five of these aircraft were fired upon; three of these aircraft were shot down. The E Model had an extended nose and could carry 11 cameras including an O-15 radar camera for low altitude work, a forward oblique camera also for low altitude, a K-17 three angle camera for panoramic shots, and a K-36 telescope camera. These are the types of missions Major Aylsworth flew.



On September 25, 1955, Major Aylsworth distinguished himself while participating in aerial flight as Aircraft Commander on a RB-47 aircraft during the Strategic Air Command Reconnaissance and Navigation Competition. His display of superior airmanship during all phases of the competition contributed directly to the winning of the P.T. Cullen Award by the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing. This accomplishment reflects great credit upon him, SAC, and the United States Air Force.



Warren Aylsworth is second on right.

In July 1961 until June 1962 Warren attended Command Staff College and was reassigned to SAC Headquarters, Offutt AFB in Nebraska. He would serve here until December 1966 as Branch Chief for RB-47's as well as Operations and Chief of the SR71, U2, and the Drone Division of the Strategic Air Command. SAC owned all the KC-135 tankers, allowing the SR-71 and RB-47/RC-135 assets to cover tasks in virtually any part of the globe within 24 hours. He was promoted to Lt. Col. He played a major role in the planning and coordination for all SAC reconnaissance missions, not only in Southeast Asia, but also other worldwide locations. His office was located in a Top Secret vault room underground located near Omaha, Nebraska. One could say he was the President and CEO of these operations reporting to the Board of Directors!

SR-71 BLACK BIRD



U-2



Ryan Firebee Drone



Operations Officer for 343rd Strategic Reconnaissance Sq.

In 1966 Warren earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, majoring in Political Science. In 1967 Lt. Col Aylsworth attended KC-135 Combat Crew Training at Castle AFB in California. This training provides aircrews the ability to perform air refueling any time and any place. The KC-135 Tankers support fighters, bombers, reconnaissance, and airlift aircraft from all branches of the U.S. Military as well as allied military aircraft.

After graduation he was assigned Operations Officer for the 343rd SRS stationed at Offutt AFB, Omaha, Nebraska. The mission of the 343rd is to provide worldwide reconnaissance for national command authorities, commander in chiefs, the intelligence community, and war fighters. As Operations Officer, he was not only responsible for writing plans for the Air Force, joint services, or combined plans; he was also responsible for executing such plans. The plans had to be responsive to Air Force doctrine and capable of fully exploiting the Air Force's unique war-fighting capabilities. The new RC-135 arrived at this time and the squadron still flies them today. The RC-135 fleet has participated in every armed conflict involving U.S. during its tenure. Many variants have been modified numerous times resulting in a large number of designations.

In February 1968 Col. Aylsworth was assigned Operations Officer for the 82nd SRS and was deployed to Kadena, Air Base, and Okinawa, Japan. The 82nd had just moved to Kadena from Yokota AB in Japan. The 82nd flew reconnaissance sorties using the RC-135's on missions supporting the Vietnam conflict. The RC-135 can accommodate 27 crew members including the flight crew, electronic warfare officers, intelligence operators, and in-flight maintenance technicians. The missions averaged 19 hours in duration and involved 12 hour orbits over the Gulf of Tonkin and later over Laos. The 82nd routinely flew other Strategic Air Command (SAC) reconnaissance missions as well, performing peripheral reconnaissance missions over the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and Gulf of Tonkin. By the end of the Vietnam Conflict, the 82nd had flown over 3,250 operational sorties and 39,268 orbit hours. Although deployed to Kadena, Japan, the 82nd remained under the 55th Strategic Air Command based at Offutt AFB, Nebraska. In June of 1969, Lt. Col Aylsworth returned to SAC Headquarters as Chief, RC-135 Operations Director for the Reconnaissance Center. On July 28, 1968, he was promoted to full Colonel. He would serve in the position of Deputy Director until September 1972.

KC-135 Refueling F-4 Phantoms and F-105 Nickels



Inside of KC-135



34 Years of Flying and almost 8,000 Hours Flight Time!

Many of the aircraft Col. Warren Aylsworth flew had more than one or two designations but we do not show them all here. For instance we show the KC-135, but he also flew the EC-135. This is the same with the different RB-47 configurations.

Most of his time in the United States Air Force was spent in the 55th Reconnaissance Group. Unfortunately everything he did during that time was highly classified and we may never know all the aircraft he flew.



Warren is third from left lower row.

B-29



RB-47



U-3A Blue Canoe



T-29A



T-33 Shooting Star



T-39



KC-97



KC-135



C-47



RC-135





Col. Aylsworth Decorations and Awards

Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf Clusters



Silver Star



Bronze Star



Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters



Air Force Commendation Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters



Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with two Oak Leaf Clusters



Combat Readiness Medal



American defense Service Medal



American Campaign Medal



Cont.

Asiatic-Pacific Campaign medal



World War II Victory Medal



National Defense service Medal



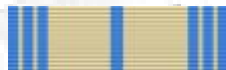
Vietnam Service Medal



Air Force Longevity Service Award Ribbon with 5 Oak Leaf Clusters



Armed Forces Reserve Medal



Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon



Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal



The bronze oak leaf cluster represents one additional award, while the silver oak leaf cluster is worn in lieu of five bronze oak leaf clusters.

A service star is a miniature metal device worn by members of the seven uniformed services of the United States on medals and ribbons issued by the uniformed services to denote additional awards or periods of service.

The Final Air Force Years

Col. Warren Richard Aylsworth returned to his home state of Michigan in September 1972. The Colonel became the Deputy Commander for Maintenance at K.I. Sawyer's AFB, 410th Bombardment Wing. The 410th Bomb Wing continued to conduct strategic bombardment training and air refueling operations to meet operational commitments of Strategic Air Command. From 1964 to 1975, the wing supported combat operations over Vietnam by rotating B-52 and KC-135 flight crews to Guam and Okinawa. As Deputy Commander, Col. Aylsworth was responsible for keeping the men and women and both KC-135 tankers and B-52 bombers in full readiness condition.

In February 1974 Col. Aylsworth took over Director of Logistics for SAC's 40th Air Division located at Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Oscoda, Michigan. He would serve in this position until his retirement on July 1, 1974, culminating a 34 year career which began on July 1, 1940.

Warren returned to Empire, Michigan, and went back into the sawmill business after retiring from the Air Force. Sometimes he would be visited here in his home town of Empire, Michigan, by old Air Force buddies like General Regis Urschler who served in the 55th with him or General Chuck Yeager. Warren was one of the founding members of the DOMC (Dirty Old Men's Club). General Urschler would become President of the DOMC after making an emergency landing in his P-51 Gun Fighter at the Empire Airport.

Col. Warren Richard "Smoky" Aylsworth, would die of natural causes while running his saw at the mill on October 12, 2006. He was 86 years old.



"Smoky" now wears Angels Wings. His gravestone is etched with a B-29 and a RB-47, the wings he flew while on earth.

Thank You

To Don Fendler crew member of the *Purple Shaft*

The Aylsworth family for providing documentation and direction

To my wife Pat for her encouragement

Nancy Samp 505th Historian for all her help

Google

