

RICHARD B. ROGERS
282 Deyo Hill Rd.
Hilltop Retirement Community
Johnson City, NY 13790 607-797-0738

VETERANS DAY REMARKS-Unitarian Universalist Congregation
Binghamton, NY

When I was first asked to say a few words as a Veteran,
several thoughts came to mind:

It was during WW ll, the 1940's, that many of us came
of age.

--
Millions worked in war plants on the home front or
in the services fighting on foreign soil.

--
There were equally gallant soldiers and Conscientious
Objectors doing their duty as they saw it.,

During WW ll, sixteen million men and women--children
of the Great Depression, were drawn into the
armed services,

----- 400,000 died----- never to return home from
the ground, sea and air wars.

----- Millions of others across the globe were
casualties of this worldwide conflict-----

Over the past several years, I have been working on a
biography of the experiences, missions and comradeship of our
WW ll B-29 crew.

After a dozen CBI and Pacific missions, we had returned to
the states for advanced lead crew training-- for the final
assault on the Japanese homeland,

an experience I doubt

we would have ever survived

We were on our return flight back to the Pacific when the war ended.

Ronald Spector's Book--"Eagle Against The Sun"

speaks to this period, from the perspective of the infantryman and the marine and it could have well applied to our own Air Corps crew.

--

"When the atom bombs dropped and news began to circulate that "Operation Olympic", the invasion of the Japanese homeland, would not take place and we would not be obliged to storm up the beaches near Tokyo, assault firing while being mortared and shelled.

--for all the fake manliness of our facades,

we cried with relief --- we were going to live.

----- We were going to grow

up to adulthood after all"

A feeling we all shared together-----

Two experiences have always remained with me:

After dropping our bombs on a Japanese Dry Dock off Singapor, I gave the Bombs Away signal. As I began shedding my flak jacket, out of the clouds came a Japanese fighter. As I scrambled for my gunsight; shooting it down as it bore in on us.....I have often wondered who that pilot could have been, also, doing his duty.

the other more vivid experiences were the "prisoner of war camp missions" where we dropped supplies to the Allied soldiers waving below.

For America, the war was an awakening that marshalled in the struggles and accomplishments that have evolved into the complex and wondrous America we have today.

KHARAGHPUR AND BEYOND
THE ENDING OF WORLD WAR II

AN UNFINISHED BIOGRAPHY



LEIGHTY'S CREW
792ND SQUADRON
468TH "BILLY MITCHELL GROUP"
58TH BOMBARDMENT WING
20TH AIR FORCE
U. S. ARMY AIR FORCES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|------|
| Acknowledgements | | |
| Preface | | |
| Historical Perspective | | |
| Prologue | | |
| Tour of Duty | (August 1944-October 1945) | 1 |
| Chapter 1 | Clovis, New Mexico | 8 |
| Chapter 11 | The India Period | 16 |
| Chapter 111 | The Tinian Period | 30 |
| Chapter IV | End of the War | 37 |
| Autobiographies/ Flashbacks | | 44 |
| Obituaries | | 64 |
| Appendix | | 99 |
| Super Fort | | 100 |
| Excerpts From Official Records | | 111 |
| Correspondance | | 120 |
| Crew Residences | 01/2000 | 1 40 |

PROLOGUE

Dear Carl:

... "You had an outstanding crew, Carl. It was one of the finest of the replacement crews to come to the 468th Group, which was an obvious reflection of your leadership." ...

James V. Edmundson
Lt. Gen. USAF (Ret)



468th Bomb Group (VH)

James V. Edmunason

Li. Gen. U.S. Air Force (Ret.)

813 Marbury Lane
Longboat Key, Fla. 34228

28 May, 1997

Colonel Carl C. Leighty
Aircraft Commander Crew #106
792nd Squadron, 468th Group,
58th Wing, 20th Air Force

Dear Carl,

It's been a good many years since our days in the 468th together. I feel honored that the members of your crew have asked me to take a part in their tribute to their Aircraft Commander. It is a testimonial to your leadership ability that, after all these years, their feeling for you is so warm and so strong that they would tackle a project such as this. It is also unusual that there are so many members of your crew still alive and in contact with each other. Of the crew that flew with me from Salina, Kansas to Kharagpur, India, I am the only one still alive.

You had an outstanding crew, Carl. It was one of the finest of the replacement crews to come to the 468th Group, which was an obvious reflection of your leadership. The fact that I selected your crew as a lead crew and sent you back to the States to the Lead Crew School, is an indication that the outstanding quality of your crew was recognized. Also, the fact that both you and your navigator, Bill White remained in the service as career officers and retired with the rank of colonel after a distinguished career, reflects favorably on the caliber of your crew.

When you joined the 468th Group, it was known as the General Billy Mitchell Group. How the unit acquired that name is interesting. While the 58th Wing was still training in Kansas, the General's widow came to see the B-29s and said that she thought that the B-29 was the airplane her husband had envisioned. General K. B. Wolfe was commanding the 58th Wing then and she gave him General Mitchell's house flag, which he used to fly on his boat, "The Canvasback". She asked that he present it to his best group, with the understanding that it be known as the General Billy Mitchell Group. It was a green and white pennant, with a duck in flight.

When the 58th Wing arrived in the CBI, the wing devised a set of ground rules to evaluate how each of it's four groups performed in combat. On each major combat mission, the group that had the fewest aborts and did the best bombing would receive the Billy Mitchell flag to keep until the next mission. When any group had won the flag three times, they would retain permanent possession. The wing was sure that the competition would be extended. It didn't work out that way. The 468th Group won the flag on the first three missions and the competition was over. This is how we became the General Billy Mitchell Group and we incorporated the flag into our group insignia.

Carl, you and your crew were off to Lead Crew School when my good friend and flying school classmate, Paul Tibbets and his 509th Group dropped the two big ones on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but you were back on Tinian with the 468th when the B-29 show of force mission of 500 airplanes flew in formation over the deck of the battleship, USS Missouri while the surrender papers were being signed. You may remember that the 468th led that formation and how we were chosen to lead is an interesting story and one that is not too well known.

One afternoon, I was in my office and received a phone call that General Roger M. Ramey, Commander of the 58th Wing, wanted to see me in his office immediately. I dashed up to his headquarters in my jeep and General Ramey told me, "Eddie, I've just had a phone call from General LeMay down on Guam and he told me that the 58th Wing was the finest wing in the 20th Air Force and would have the honor of leading the formation. Now I'm telling you, Eddie, that the 468th is the finest group in my wing, so you will lead the parade and I'm going to fly with you". This was an honor won for our group by the outstanding performance of you and the guys on your crew, as well as the rest of the dedicated troops in our outfit.

I understand, Carl, that this is to be a wedding anniversary gift to you from the guys on your crew. It is a fitting tribute to your leadership in combat and I am honored that they have asked me to take a part in it.

With my warmest congratulations and good wishes,



James V. Edmundson
Lt. Gen. USAF (Ret)