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Defending the Indefensible: A Meditation on the Life of Hiroshima Pilot Paul Tibbets, Jr.

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On November 1, Paul Warfield Tibbets, Jr., the man who piloted the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, died at his Columbus, Ohio home at age 92. Throughout his adult life, he was a warrior. He bravely fought the Nazis in 1942 and 1943. He fought the Japanese in 1944 and 1945. And he spent the next 62 years fighting to defend the atomic bombings.

Tibbets and the Enola Gay

In the days since his passing, Tibbets has been both lionized and vilified. Among the most laudatory assessments is a piece (really a pair of blogs) by Oliver Kamm that quickly shot up to #1 at History News Network. (http://hnn.us/roundup/entries/44318.html) Basing his judgment of Tibbets on the "accounts of those who knew him," Kamm declared that Tibbets was "a humane man, who reflected publicly and thoughtfully on the A-bomb decision, the lives it cost and also the lives it saved."[1] A closer look at Tibbets's life and comparison of his views with those of others who participated in the atomic bombings will shed light not only on whether Tibbets was as humane and thoughtfully reflective as Kamm suggests, but on why so many World War II veterans share Tibbets's difficulty in moving beyond official pieties of 1945 and today to understand the complex history of the end of the Pacific War, the role the atomic bombings played in the Japanese surrender, and their own role in the historical process.[2]

Paul Tibbets was born in Quincy, Illinois on February 23, 1915 and raised mostly in Miami, Florida. His father, a wholesale confectioner, sent him to Western Military Academy in Alton, Illinois. As a young man, Tibbets had aspired to become a doctor. In his 1978 autobiography The Tibbets Story, in what some might consider ominous foreshadowing, Tibbets explained how his interest in medicine evolved. "The prospect of becoming a doctor was appealing to me," he wrote. "On my grandfather's farm in Iowa during the summers of my boyhood, I had been fascinated by such things as the birth of animals and the castration of pigs. The sight of blood gave me no squeamish moments."[3] But at age 12, Tibbets participated in a unique promotional giveaway while working for a candy company. He sat in the front seat of a tiny Waco 9 biplane and, as the barnstormer sitting behind him flew low to the ground over Hialeah race track and other places where

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people gathered, he dropped Baby Ruth candy bars with parachutes attached to people below.[4] He later remembered the thrill and the sense of power this afforded, commenting, "No Arabian prince ever rode a magic carpet with a greater delight or sense of superiority to the rest of the human race." Thereafter, medicine could not compare with the excitement of flying. Tibbets transferred from the University of Florida to the University of Cincinnati, but dropped out to join the Army Air Corps in 1937. His experience administering arsenic treatments to syphilitics in two Cincinnati venereal disease clinics only convinced him that he was making the right choice.[5]

Though a mediocre student, Tibbets was a gifted pilot, and quickly worked his way up the ranks. On August 17, 1942, as captain and commander of the 340th Bomb Squadron in the 97th Bombardment Group, he led a dozen B-17 "Flying Fortresses" in the first daytime raid by American bombers against German targets in occupied France, bombing railroad yards in Rouen. Subsequent strikes targeted marshalling yards, a shipyard, an aircraft factory, and a base for FW-190s. Tibbets demonstrated both exceptional creativity and bravery in implementing U.S. tactical bombing strategies of the early war years. Daylight precision bombing was particularly important because it allowed the U.S. to pinpoint military targets in a way that minimized the deaths of civilians who were killed indiscriminately in the far-less-accurate nighttime bombing raids conducted by the British. Before that first attack, Tibbets told a reporter that he felt great apprehension over the possibility of civilian casualties, admitting he was "sick with thoughts of the civilians who might suffer from the bombs dropped by this machine." Watching the bombs fall, he thought, "My God, women and children are getting killed!"[6] In all, Tibbets flew 43 combat missions with the 8th Air Force in England and the 12th in North Africa.

Following a run-in with Col. Lauris Norstad,[7] operations officer of the 12th Air Force, the army transferred Tibbets back to the U.S., where he was given responsibility for testing and perfecting the new B-29 "Superfortresses," the largest, best-equipped, and most modern bombers in the world. In August 1944, Tibbets was called to Colorado Springs, where he met with Col. John Lansdale, chief of security for the Manhattan Project, and then with Gen. Uzal Ent, who commanded the 2nd Air Force, Navy Cptn. William "Deak" Parsons, associate director of the Los Alamos laboratory, and physicist Norman Ramsey. Lansdale grilled him about having been arrested by the North Miami police, who caught him in the back seat of a car with a young lady. Convinced that such a blemish on his record did not disqualify him for what lay ahead, Ent, Parsons, and Ramsey proceeded to fill him in on the Manhattan Project's efforts to make an atomic bomb and the special role that he was to play.[8] Gen. Ent's initial words deeply impressed him. "This thing is going to be very big," he informed the young pilot. "I believe it has the potential and possibility of ending the war."[9] At that first meeting, Ramsey said, "The only thing we can tell you about the bomb is it's going to explode with the force of twenty thousand tons of TNT."[10]

Ent put Tibbets in charge of planning for delivery of the atomic bombs when they were ready, including assembling and training the teams that would carry out that task. Tibbets, who Army Air Force Commander Gen. Henry "Hap" Arnold described as "the best damned pilot" in the Army Air Force,[11] handpicked the top pilots, bombardiers, radar operators, navigators, flight engineers, and crewmen and put them through rigorous training. "My job, in brief," he wrote in his 1989 book Flight of the Enola Gay, "was to wage atomic war."[12] In all, the 509th Composite Group that he headed consisted of 15 B-29 Superfortress crews and 1800 men. Tibbets was awed by the authority he was given at such a young age. He reflected,

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"Nobody in the future will ever be given the responsibility and authority that was given to a 29-year old man."[13]

Those he selected endured extremely tight security while preparing for their mission at the desolate air base in Wendover, Utah. A security force of 30 special agents bugged telephones, opened mail, and eavesdropped on conversations. The agents quickly shipped out those they considered insufficiently discreet. Tibbets imposed the same discipline on himself, never divulging the nature of the project to his wife or closest associates. He admitted, "I learned to be the world's best liar. People were always asking what I was doing. I was always thinking ahead of what would sound logical. Then if I met someone six months later I'd have to try and remember what I told him before."[14]

Tibbets once described Wendover as "the end of the world, perfect."[15] His men weren't so sure. Lt. Jacob "Jake" Beser expressed the prevailing view when he wrote, "if the North American Continent ever needed an enema, the tube would be inserted here at Wendover."[16] Theodore "Dutch" Van Kirk agreed with Beser, describing the cold termite-infested barracks and rancid drinking water as "a shanty town with plumbing.[17] On June 27, 1945, Tibbets relocated his men to Tinian Island in the Marianas for final preparations.

Enola Gay ground crew with Tibbets (center)

While never revealing the precise nature of the weapon under development, Tibbets went out of his way to impress upon the men the importance of their endeavor. Forty years later, Beser, who was 24 at the time, recalled that the first thing Tibbets told the assembled men at Wendover was that, if what they were training for worked, it would significantly shorten the war.[18] Navigator Van Kirk, who had often flown with Tibbets in Europe, thought to himself at the time, "I've heard that before, too." He would later change his mind and believe Tibbets had been "pretty correct."[19]

Beser, who had been studying engineering at Johns Hopkins when the war began, and Van Kirk both later claimed to have figured out what kind of bomb they were training to deliver. Shortly after arriving at Wendover, Beser was sent to Los Alamos for a security briefing by Norman Ramsey who spoke of fundamental forces and chain reactions. Beser put that together with the presence of famous physicists whose names he recognized and immediately understood the kind of bomb that was being readied.[20] Van Kirk similarly reasoned, "if you had any scientific training at all, you knew something about nuclear fission. And if you knew about that, you knew that a nuclear weapon was theoretically possible.

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Plus, we were surrounded by some of the top nuclear physicists of the day throughout our training. It didn't take much to put two and two together."[21] Others at Wendover, though aware that something major was afoot, would remain in the dark until the day of the Hiroshima bombing.[22] Thirty year old Sgt. Joe Stiborik, an Enola Gay radar operator recalled, "We never did realize, of course, just what we had." He thought "The Thing," as he called it, was a souped-up blockbuster.[23] Most called it simply the "gadget" or the "gimmick."[24]

Over the next 11 months, Tibbets remained involved in most aspects of planning. He made several trips to Los Alamos and met with J. Robert Oppenheimer on at least three occasions. He was fully aware that civilians were to be targeted and apparently felt no qualms about doing so.[25]

He got his chance on August 6, 1945 when he piloted B-29 No. 82 in the attack on Hiroshima. He named the plane after his mother, Enola Gay Haggard, formerly of Glidden, Iowa but at the time of Miami, Florida. His father had objected strenuously when he left school to join the Army Air Corps. His mother, however, gave him her blessing and encouragement. He showed his appreciation for her support by forever associating her with what would become the most controversial, flight in history.[26]

In the days immediately preceding the flight, the men learned more about their historic mission and were again told of the tremendous contribution they would make to ending the war. Almost all would cling fiercely to this version of events throughout the rest of their lives. On August 4, Tibbets and Parsons briefed the crews of the seven planes that would participate in the historic mission. Parsons told them, "The bomb you are going to drop is something new in the history of warfare. It will be the most destructive weapon ever devised. We think it will wipe out almost everything within a three-mile area, maybe slightly more, maybe somewhat less." Tibbets spoke later and told them that their mission would shorten the war by six months. "At least six months," he emphasized.[27] At the following night's closed Strike Mission General Briefing for immediate participants, he estimated the bomb's destructive force as equivalent to 20,000 tons of TNT.[28] Tibbets announced proudly, "Tomorrow, the world will know that the 509th helped end the war."[29] Abe Spitzer noted in his diary, "And you got the feeling that he really thought this bomb would end the war, period."[30] Prior to takeoff, only "Deak" Parsons, who went along as the weaponeer, the crew member in charge of preparing the bomb for release, and Tibbets actually knew for certain they would be delivering an atomic bomb. If the others needed assurance about the historic nature of their mission, though, they got it when they boarded the plane in the glare of klieg lights, flashbulbs, and cameras. Tibbets sat in the plane's cockpit, smiling and waving to those recording the event for posterity. Twenty-four year old Van Kirk compared it to a Hollywood movie opening.[31] Stiborik agreed. "The place looked like Hollywood," he observed.[32] It reminded Beser of a Broadway opening.[33] Physicist Harold Agnew, who flew aboard one of the accompanying planes, compared it to "the opening of a drug store."[34] The Enola Gay crew posed in front of the plane for a final photo, with tail gunner George "Bob" Caron wearing his prized Brooklyn Dodgers cap. Tibbets had packed cigarettes, cigars, and a pipe.

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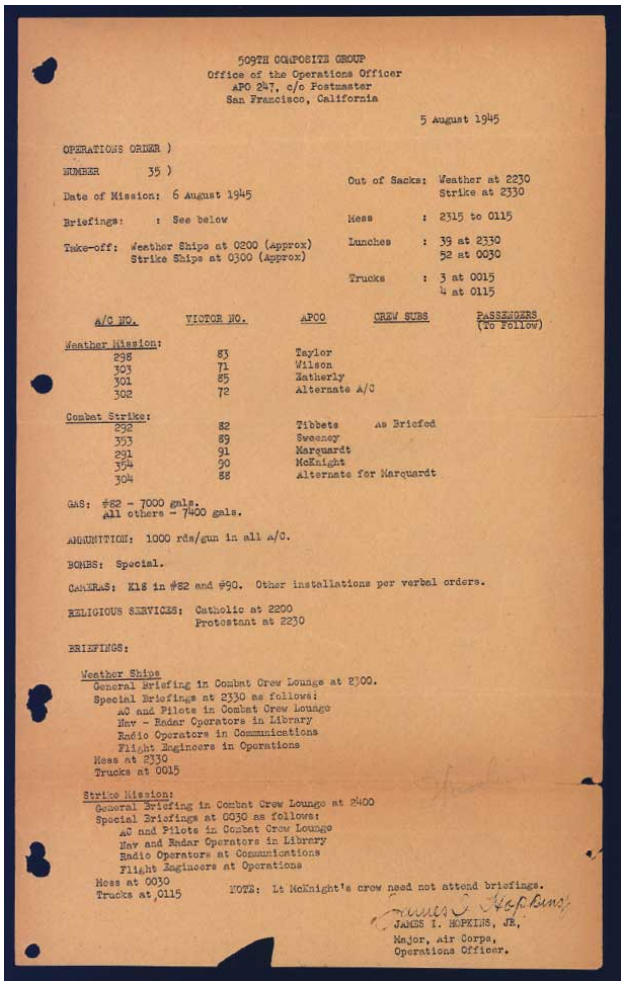

509TH COMPOSITE GROUP
Office of the Operations Officer
APO 247, c/o Postmaster
San Francisco, California

5 August 1945

OPERATIONS ORDER)
NUMBER 35)

Date of Mission: 6 August 1945

Briefings: : See below

Take-off: Weather Ships at 0200 (Approx)
Strike Ships at 0300 (Approx)

Out of Sacks: Weather at 2230
Strike at 2330

Mess : 2315 to 0115

Lunches : 39 at 2330
52 at 0030

Trucks : 3 at 0015
4 at 0115

A/C NO.	VICTOR NO.	APOO	CREW SUBS	PASSENGERS (To Follow)
Weather Mission:				
298	83	Taylor		
303	71	Wilson		
301	85	Eatherly		
302	72	Alternate A/C		
Combat Strike:				
292	82	Tibbets	As Briefed	
293	89	Sweeney		
291	91	Marquardt		
294	90	McKnight		
304	88	Alternate for Marquardt		

GAS: #82 - 7000 gals.
All others - 7400 gals.

AMMUNITION: 1000 rds/gun in all A/C.

BOMBS: Special.

CAMERAS: K18 in #82 and #90. Other installations per verbal orders.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES: Catholic at 2200
Protestant at 2230

BRIEFINGS:

Weather Ships
General Briefing in Combat Crew Lounge at 2300.
Special Briefings at 2330 as follows:
AC and Pilots in Combat Crew Lounge
Nav - Radar Operators in Library
Radio Operators in Communications
Flight Engineers in Operations
Mess at 2330
Trucks at 0015

Strike Mission:
General Briefing in Combat Crew Lounge at 2400
Special Briefings at 0030 as follows:
AC and Pilots in Combat Crew Lounge
Nav and Radar Operators in Library
Radio Operators at Communications
Flight Engineers at Operations
Mess at 0030
Trucks at 0115

NOTE: Lt McKnight's crew need not attend briefings.

JAMES I. HOPKINS, JR,
Major, Air Corps,
Operations Officer.

Orders for the Enola Gay strike on Hiroshima

Before embarking, a flight surgeon handed Tibbets a dozen cyanide capsules to distribute to crew members in case the plane was shot down. The capsules, he said, would take three minutes to work. Although crew members possessed limited information, they were not to be taken captive. Tibbets was ordered to shoot anyone who refused, under those circumstances, to swallow the capsule. Tibbets explained, "I had been given the order by the Commander-In-Chief, Pacific, shortly before take-off. It was a helluva thing to know you might have to kill your own crew." But Tibbets understood that there was very little risk of getting shot down. Lt. Morris "Dick" Jeppson, the crew's weapons specialist, said Tibbets referred to the flight as "a milk run." "And it really was," Jeppson confirmed. "There were no problems, there was no opposition from the Japanese—the plane was flying so high their fighter planes couldn't get that high anyway."[35] Tibbets boasted, "I wasn't nervous. I tell people I was shot in the ass with confidence. There wasn't anything I couldn't do." Twenty-seven year old Brooklyn-born Irishman Robert Lewis expressed his optimism differently by putting a packet of condoms into his flight jacket, wanting to be ready for the postwar party. When Tibbets told his copilot about the suicide pills, Lewis showed him the condoms. Tibbets did not find this amusing.[36]

The Enola Gay took off at 2:45 A.M. Parsons and Jeppson completed assembly of the bomb in mid-air. The plane rendezvoused successfully with the two accompanying planes—No. 91, which its crew later called Necessary Evil, and the Great Artiste—over Iwo Jima and, after receiving a radio report from pilot Claude Eatherly's plane Straight Flush that the weather was clear over Hiroshima, proceeded to its primary target. During the flight, Tibbets informed crew members that they would be dropping an atomic bomb. That information, in itself, did not dramatically change anyone's perception of the task at hand. Several crew members, having already been awake for very long hours, tried to catch some sleep to be ready to perform their duties. An exhausted Jake Beser fell asleep shortly after the plane lifted off. As they neared Japan, the men in the front of the plane entertained themselves by bowling oranges down the tunnel, trying to bounce them off Beser's head. Jeppson armed the bomb, changing plugs and activating internal batteries, as the plane began its final 30 mile approach to the target. Tibbets started his countdown with three minutes to go. Having taken no flak, they arrived at their destination only 17 seconds behind schedule. Twenty-six year old Major Ferebee spotted the target, the T-shaped Aioi Bridge, which he recognized from photographs. He described it as a bridge "where all the fingers kind of came

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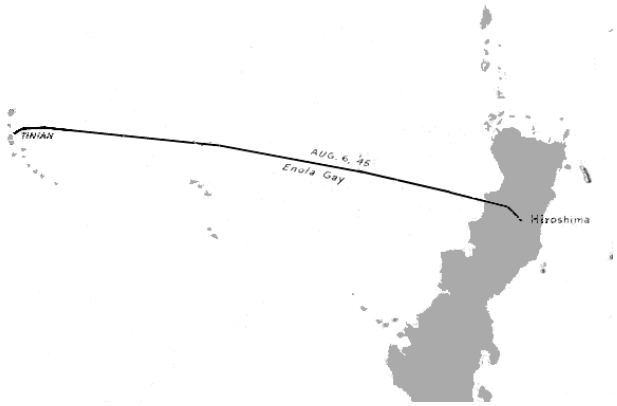
together—kind of like the wrist on a hand." It was located in downtown Hiroshima, a city with approximately 300,000 civilians, 43,000 soldiers, 45,000 Korean forced laborers, and several thousand Americans, mostly children whose parents were interned in the U.S., and a density of approximately 35,000 people per square mile.



The Enola Gay route: Tinian to Hiroshima

At 8:15, Ferebee released the 8900 pound uranium bomb nicknamed Little Boy from 31,600 feet over the city of Hiroshima and shouted, "Bomb away!" Tibbets announced over the microphone, "Fellows, you have just dropped the first atomic bomb in history." Ferebee, watching through the plexiglass nose of the plane, saw the bomb hover momentarily: "It porpoised a little to pick up speed." The bomb exploded only a few hundred feet off target 43 seconds later at a height of 1890 feet, detonating with a force now estimated at 16 kilotons.[37] Within seconds, tens of thousands of people were dead. Tens of thousands more would die over the next few days and weeks. Others would suffer from the effects of the blast, burns, and radiation for the rest of their lives. Many still do so today.

Upon releasing the bomb, Tibbets immediately undertook the escape maneuver he had been practicing for months, turning the plane, which had expectedly lurched upward when the bomb was released, at an angle of 155 degrees, descending 1700 feet, and speeding away to minimize damage from the shock waves, which still hit with a force 2.5 times that of gravity. Tibbets explained, "We got kicked in the butt with 2 ½ G forces."[38] Crew members thought they were taking flak. Lewis said it felt like a giant was smashing the plane with a telephone pole.[39] The plane had gotten nine miles away by the time of the explosion. Still the explosion was so bright that some of the crew members feared at first they had been blinded.[40]

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times.

LATE CITY EDITION

FIRST ATOMIC BOMB DROPPED ON JAPAN; MISSILE IS EQUAL TO 20,000 TONS OF TNT; TRUMAN WARNS FOE OF A 'RAIN OF RUIN'

HIRAM W. JOHNSON, REPUBLICAN DEAN IN THE SENATE, DIES

Jet Plane Explosion Kills Major Bong, Top U.S. Ace

KYUSHU CITY RAZED

REPORT BY BRITAIN

Steel Tower 'Vaporized' In Trial of Mighty Bomb

NEW AGE USHERED

MORRIS IS ACCUSED OF 'TAKING A WALK'

CHINESE WIN MORE OF 'INVASION COAST'

War News Summarized

ATOM BOMBS MADE IN 3 HIDDEN 'CITIES'

TRAINS CANCELED IN STRICKEN AREA

New York Times, August 7, 1945

Only Staff Sgt. Bob Caron, sitting in his turret in the back of the aircraft, actually watched the bomb explode. Others waited about 30 seconds for the plane to complete its evasive maneuver and then Van Kirk saw "12 faces diving for windows."[41] The following day, Tibbets described what he had witnessed for reporters on Guam: "It was hard to believe what we saw. Below us, rising rapidly, was a tremendous

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black cloud. Nothing was visible where only minutes before the outline of the city, its streets and buildings and waterfront piers were clearly apparent." "It happened so fast we couldn't see anything and could only feel the heat from the flash and the concussion from the blast." "What had been Hiroshima was going up in a mountain of smoke. First I could see a mushroom of boiling dust—apparently with some debris in it—up to 20,000 feet. The boiling continued three or four minutes as I watched. Then a white cloud plumed upward from the center to some 40,000 feet. An angry dust cloud spread all around the city. There were fires on the fringes of the city, apparently burning as buildings crumbled and the gas mains broke."[42] In his memoir, The Tibbets Story, he described "the awesome sight that met our eyes as we turned for a heading that would take us alongside the burning, devastated city." "The giant purple mushroom…had already risen to a height of 45,000 feet, 3 miles above our own altitude, and was still boiling upward like something terribly alive. Even more fearsome was the sight on the ground below. Fires were springing up everywhere amid a turbulent mass of smoke that had the appearance of bubbling hot tar."[43] On another occasion, he reflected: "If Dante had been with us on the plane, he would have been terrified. The city we had seen so clearly in the sunlight a few minutes before was now an ugly smudge. It had completely disappeared under this awful blanket of smoke and fire."[44]

For many on board the Enola Gay and the two accompanying planes, the image of instantaneous destruction, even from miles above and miles distant from what was left of Hiroshima, was so terrifying as to be transformative. They would never be able to exorcise the apocalyptic images from their minds. The images were so indelibly imprinted that few ever changed their descriptions over the years, often using the exact same words to describe what they had seen.[45] Tibbets had instructed Beser to record the crew's reactions, for which he brought along a special disc recorder. Tibbets warned crew members to "watch your language—keep it clean." For the most part they did, but their images remain hauntingly graphic nonetheless and merit reiteration at a time when many seem to have lost sight of what even these relatively tiny atomic bombs could do. Twenty-four year old Caron described the view as "a peep into hell."[46] Caron, sitting in the back of the aircraft in his turret, was the only crew member to actually watch the bomb explode. He observed, "A column of smoke is rising fast. It has a fiery red core. A bubbling mass, purple grey in color with that red core. It's all turbulent. Fires are springing up everywhere, like flames shooting out of a huge bed of coals. I am starting to count the fires. One, two, three, four, five, six…14, 15…it's impossible. There are too many to count." "Here it comes, the mushroom shape that Captain Parsons spoke about. It's coming this way. It's like a mass of bubbling molasses." "The mushroom is spreading out. It's maybe a mile or two wide and half a mile high. It's growing up and up and up. It's nearly level with us and climbing. It's very black, but there is a purplish tint to the cloud. The base of the mushroom looks like a heavy undercast that is shot through with flames." "The city must be below that. The flames and smoke are billowing out, whirling out into the foothills. The hills are disappearing under the smoke."[47]

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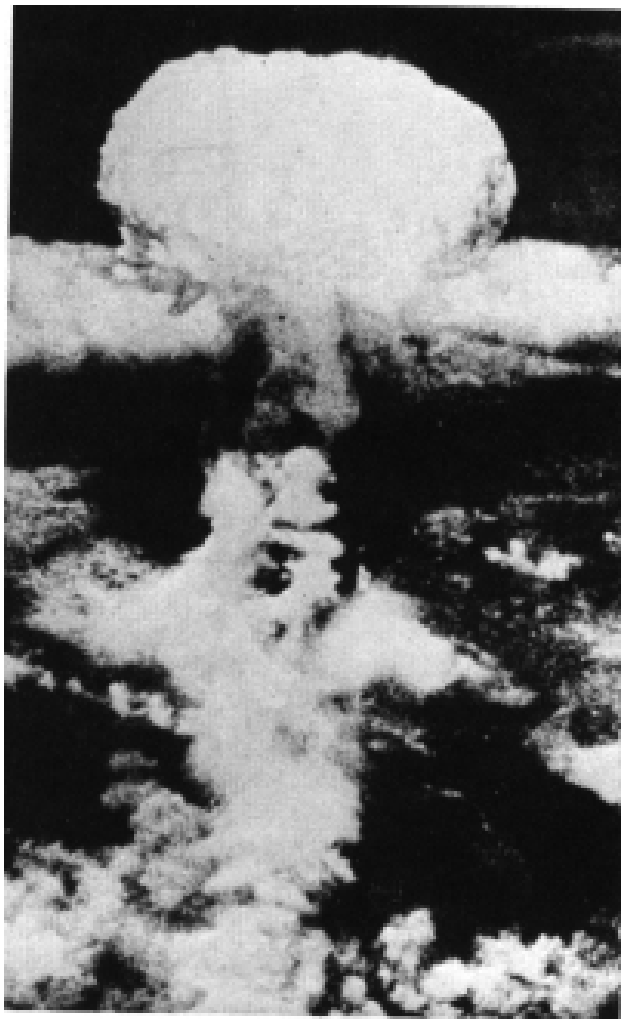

Aerial view of the mushroom cloud over Hiroshima

Ferebee recalled, "There are no words to describe how bright the flash was. The sun doesn't compare at all."[48] He noted, "At first, I saw this boiling on the ground and the stem (of the mushroom cloud) was going up and you could see buildings going up with the stem. It was all colors. You can imagine, I think—brown, red, white—and it was just spreading out in all directions. Then finally the stem formed completely and the top was there and it kind of broke off."[49] When interviewed by the London Mail in July 1995, Ferebee remembered, "The whole city was just covered with a mushroom cloud. The stem was forming and you could see pieces of houses sucked up in it, pieces of things flying through the air. You couldn't see people, not at the height we were flying."[50]

Robert Lewis recalled in 1982, "I'll never forget that feeling. You could see a good-sized city, then you didn't see it anymore. It was simply gone."[51] Van Kirk described the city as "a pot of black, boiling tar."[52] Twenty-four year old Enola Gay assistant engineer Robert Shumard commented, "There was nothing but death in that cloud," he explained. "All those Japanese souls ascending to Heaven."[53]

Hiroshima after the bomb

George Marquardt, who piloted B-29 No. 91, which accompanied the Enola Gay, told the Salt Lake Tribune in 1995, "It seemed as if the sun had come out of the earth and exploded. Smoke boiled around the flash as it rose. It felt as if a monster hand had slapped the side of the plane."[54]
Abe Spitzer watched from the Great Artiste and thought he was hallucinating: "Below us, spread out almost as far as I could see, was a great fire, but it was like no ordinary fire. It contained a dozen colors, all of them blindingly bright, more colors than I imagined existed, and in the center and brightest of all, a gigantic red ball of flame that seemed larger than the sun. Indeed, it seemed that, somehow, the sun had been knocked out of the sky and was on the ground below us and beginning to rise

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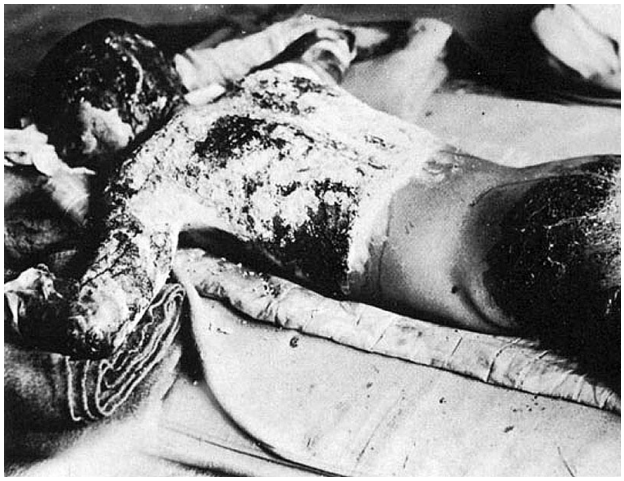
again, only coming straight up toward us—and fast." "At the same time, the ball itself spread outward, too, until it seemed to cover the entire city, and on every side the flame was shrouded, half-hidden by a thick, impenetrable column of grey-white smoke, extending into the foothills beyond the city and bursting outward and rising toward us with unbelievable speed." "Then the ship rocked again, and it sounded as if a giant gun—some large artillery or cannons—were firing at us and hitting us from every direction." "The purple light was changing to a green-blue now, with just a tinge of yellow at the edges, and from below the ball of fire, the upside down sun, seemed to be following the smoke upward, racing to us with immeasurably fast speed—although, we at the same time, though not so quickly—were speeding away from what was left of the city." "Suddenly, we were to the left of the pillar of smoke, and it continued rising, to an estimated height, I later learned, of 50,000 feet. It looked like a kind of massive pole that narrowed toward the top and reached for the stratosphere.

Aerial view of bomb damage to Hiroshima

The scientists later told us they believed the pole was as much as four or five miles wide at its base and a mile and a half or more wide at the top." "As I watched, hypnotized by what I saw, the column of smoke changed its color, from a grey-white to brown, then amber, then all three colors at once, mingled into a bright, boiling rainbow. For a second it looked as though its fury might be ending, but almost immediately a kind of mushroom spurted out of the top and traveled up, up to what some say was a distance of 60,000 or 70,000 feet….the whole column seethed and spurted, but the mushroom top shot out in every direction, like giant waves during an ocean storm." "Then, quite suddenly, the top broke off the column, as if it had been cut away with a sharp blade, and it shot still further up; how far I don't know; nobody did or does; not even the pictures show that, and none of the apparatus could measure it exactly. Some said it was 80,000 feet, some 85,000 feet, some even more…." "After that, another mushroom, somewhat smaller, boiled up out of the pillar…" Spitzer heard someone say, "I wonder if maybe we're not monkeying around with things that are none of our business."[55]



Hiroshima burn victim

It fell to the youngest member of the crew, 20 year old radio operator Richard "Junior" Nelson, to transmit the two word message

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"Results, excellent" back to U.S. authorities.[56] Van Kirk remembered Nelson commenting after witnessing the devastation below, "This war is over."[57]

The crew of the Enola Gay ate sandwiches on the flight back to Tinian. They could still see the mushroom cloud from 250 miles away. Some claimed to see it from over 400 miles away.[58]
Joe Stiborik remembered the crew sitting in stunned silence on the return flight. The only words he recollected hearing were Lewis's "My God, what have we done." He explained, "I was dumbfounded. Remember, nobody had ever seen what an A-bomb could do before. Here was a whole damn town nearly as big as Dallas, one minute all in good shape and the next minute disappeared and covered with fires and smoke." "There was almost no talk I can remember on our trip back to the base. It was just too much to express in words, I guess. We were all in a kind of state of shock. I think the foremost thing in all our minds was that this thing was going to bring an end to the war and we tried to look at it that way."[59]

Spitzer reported almost complete silence on the Great Artiste too. Tailgunner Al "Pappy" DeHart said he wished he had never seen what he had just witnessed, adding, "I won't be mentioning it to my grandchildren. Not ever. I don't think it's the kind of thing to be telling kids. Not what we saw."[60] On the flight back, Spitzer took some solace in his certainty that the war was now over—the Japanese would have no choice but to surrender immediately--and they would soon be heading home.[61]

The crews returned to a heroes' welcome, with hundreds of cheering soldiers lining the taxiways. With over 200 looking on, including what Van Kirk described as "more generals and admirals…than I had ever seen in my life," Lt. Gen. Carl "Tooey" Spaatz, new chief of the strategic air force, pinned a Distinguished Service Cross on Tibbets's chest. Capt. Bill Long, who had delivered Little Boy to the bomb bay of the Enola Gay the previous day, remembered the crew's response to the weapon's destructiveness: "The guys on the crew were overwhelmed. They said they'd never seen anything like it. They said, 'the war can't go on after what we saw. The war's over for sure.'"[62]

Authorities interrogated the exhausted crew members at a session that Van Kirk said "had more generals than Carter had pills."[63] On the way to the interrogation, Spitzer observed someone asking a young, dark-haired scientist if he was proud to have been a part of the bomb's success. The scientist answered, "No. I'm not proud of myself right now."[64]

Following debriefing of crew members, festivities included a softball game, a jitterbug contest, the Sonja Henie movie It's a Pleasure, and a lot of eating and drinking. Each man received four bottles of beer and no ration cards were required. Beser later insisted the heavy drinking was not in celebration but in a desperate effort to relieve the pressure resulting from what they had just done.[65] Spitzer drank more than he ever had before. He still couldn't sleep, unable to get the vision of what he had seen out of his mind. He kept waking with nightmares of Hiroshima with trees and green grass and bridges and houses being covered with black smoke and a giant multicolored mushroom rising above the city.[66]

Three days later Tibbets chose another specially reconfigured B-29 from the 509th to drop the second atomic bomb. Major Gen. Curtis LeMay expected Tibbets to fly the August 9 mission, but Tibbets convinced him to give that honor to Maj. Charles Sweeney.[67] Spitzer said that he and other crew members of the Great Artiste, after what they had seen in Hiroshima, were incredulous to learn that a second city was to be wiped out. Just sit tight and give the Japanese time to surrender, he

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thought. "There was no need for more missions, more bombs, more fear and more dying. Good God, any fool could see that."[68] Besides that, hours before the start of the second bombing mission, the Soviet Union had declared war against Japan.

As many historians now recognize, it was the Soviet invasion, even more than the atomic bombings, that effectively undermined both Japanese diplomatic and military strategies and convinced Japanese leaders to surrender.[69] Enola Gay and Bock's Car crew members had no knowledge that a Soviet declaration of war was imminent, but Truman and his advisors certainly did and fully recognized that this would likely deal a final death blow to desperate Japanese leaders. Truman contended that he went to Potsdam principally to press for and confirm Soviet entry. Upon receiving Stalin's assurances, he wrote jubilantly, Stalin will "be in the Jap War on August 15th. Fini Japs when that comes about."[70] As a June 30 War Department report had stated, "The entry of the Soviet Union into the war would finally convince the Japanese of the inevitability of complete defeat."[71]

Truman and Secretary of War Henry Stimson, August 8, 1945

When Kokura, the original target, was masked by cloud cover and visibility was further hampered by smoke from the previous day's firebombing of nearby Yawata,[72] Sweeney decided to switch to his secondary target—Nagasaki. As Bock's Car approached the city, copilot Capt. Don Albury, who had just three days earlier witnessed the destruction of Hiroshima on board the Great Artiste, confessed that, on the flight to Nagasaki, "I asked God to forgive us for what we were about to do."[73] Visibility over Nagasaki was also very limited. When a hole appeared in the clouds, bombardier Kermit Beahan thought he had spotted the target, and released the plutonium bomb Fat Man. He missed the target by almost two miles, hitting the Urakami district north of the industrial center of the city. Beahan described the scene below: "I saw a mushroom cloud bubbling and flashing orange, red and green. It looked like a picture of hell. The ground itself was covered by a rolling black smoke. I was told the area would be destroyed, but I didn't know the meaning of an atomic bomb."[74] Copilot Lt. Frederick Olivi offered the following description: "The atomic cloud rose directly toward us. I would imagine that all this took only seconds, but it seemed like a century. I could see tongues of flame shooting out of the mouth of the mushroom. It resembled a huge, boiling caldron. It was frightening." Olivi insisted, however, that they had no other choice given the "fanatical defense capabilities of the Oriental."[75]

Nagasaki after the bomb

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Shortly after the formal Japanese surrender ceremony on board the USS Missouri on September 2, Tibbets, Sweeney, Van Kirk, and Ferebee traveled to Nagasaki to observe the devastation firsthand. Sweeney, who never loaded his gun, did so in Nagasaki. He wondered how they would sign the hotel register, assuming that their names were well known in Japan. Tibbets walked to the desk first and signed "Col. Paul Tibbets."[76] But Ferebee recalled that when one Japanese man asked them if they'd ever met the men who bombed Japan, "We said no we never met them."[77] Tibbets never visited Hiroshima, though, on this occasion, they flew low over the city to catch a glimpse.

After the war, most of the Enola Gay crew members returned to civilian life and started families. Beser, Caron, Ferebee, Jeppson, and Van Kirk each had four children. Lewis had five.[78] Many Americans considered them heroes, especially the hundreds of thousands of servicemen who were led to believe that the atomic bombs ended the war and, by obviating an invasion, saved their lives.

Over the years, people repeatedly asked Tibbets if he felt remorse for what he'd done. Not a bit, he always insisted, much like Harry Truman. He never wavered in his public statements about the rectitude of his actions, always crediting the bombs with ending the war and emphasizing the lives saved by avoiding an invasion rather than the lives lost in the bombing. Tibbets told Studs Terkel in 2002, "I had no problem with it. I knew we did the right thing. I thought, *Yes, we're going to kill a lot of people, but by God we're going to save a lot of lives. We won't have to invade Japan.*" (italics in original)[79] He told the Columbus Dispatch in 2003, "That's what it took to end the war. I went out to stop the killing all over."[80] In 1994, upon receipt of the Air Force Sergeants Association's Freedom Award, he broadened the justification by including Japanese lives saved and the long-term consequences: "We had a mission. Quite simply, bring about the end of World War II.…The objective was to stop the fighting, thereby saving further loss of life on both sides…." "Those of us who gained that victory have nothing to be ashamed of, neither do we offer any apology. Some suffered, some died. The million or so of us remaining will die believing that we made the world a better place as a result of our efforts to secure peace that has held for almost 50 years."[81] On another occasion, Tibbets stated, "we wanted to save lives. And I've had Japanese since [the war] tell me that we saved their lives, too, because the invasion would have been nothing but bloodshed. It would have been terrible."[82] Far from being ashamed, Tibbets was proud of his achievements. He told an interviewer in 1975, "I'm not proud that I killed 80,000 people, but I'm proud that I was able to start with nothing, plan it and have it work as perfectly as it did."[83]

Tibbets believed that nations at war would always use whatever weapons they had and could therefore not be constrained by rules of conduct. In 1995, he told an interviewer, "No. 1, there is no morality in warfare—forget it. No. 2, when you're fighting a war to win, you use every means at your disposal to do it."[84] That year, in the U.S. public television documentary "The Men Who Brought the Dawn," he turned the morality issue on its head, commenting, "It would have been morally wrong if we'd have had that weapon and not used it and let a million more people die."[85]

Tibbets occasionally stumbled when he departed from message. He justified killing noncombatants on the grounds that everyone in Japan contributed to the war effort. But on one occasion in 1995, he curiously compared killing Japanese civilians to the Japanese bombing a General Motors plant in Detroit and killing American women and children. He tried to explain, "That's my point. You can't distinguish. Everybody contributes to the war effort—to the

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ability of that nation to defend itself. So what you're out to do is to destroy their ability to wage war, and, unfortunately, that means killing."[86] On another occasion, he declared that Hiroshima was "the center of everything being done to resist an [Allied] invasion."[87] In August 2002, he maintained that he had been instructed, in September 1944, to prepare for coordinated attacks on both Europe and Japan. He announced, "My edict was as clear as could be. Drop simultaneously in Europe and the Pacific because of the secrecy problem. You couldn't drop it in one part of the world without dropping it in the other."[88] In 2005, he made the surprising claim that "The urgency of the situation demanded that we use the weapons first—before the technology could be used against us."[89] He never indicated who might be in a position to do so.

He also defended the legality of what he did. In 1961, during the Eichmann trial, Tibbets's name was brought up by critics who said he deserved the same fate as the Nazi butcher. Tibbets insisted that he wasn't bothered by such accusations because Eichmann's acts were illegal and he had behaved in accord with international law.[90] Even LeMay, the mastermind behind U.S. wartime firebombing of 64 Japanese cities, understood that deliberately targeting civilians was a war crime. Robert McNamara was on hand in Guam when LeMay announced, "If we lose the war, we'll be tried as war criminals." McNamara agreed: "On that last point, I think he was right. We would have been."[91]

In 1995, Tibbets told William Lowther of the Glasgow Herald, "Right after we dropped the bomb, I felt much the same as I do now except that I hadn't drunk as much coffee that morning." He added, "I was satisfied that I had accomplished my mission. I had no emotion about it then, and I have none to this day except to tell you that war is hell. I know. I have had the experience. If you are trying to get an emotional expression out of me, you won't do it. I'm a cold fish."[92]

Whether Tibbets was indeed a "cold fish" or a man desperately trying to repress deep conflicts, he adamantly refused to express any remorse. When asked about his feelings in 1985, he responded, "I've got a standard answer on that. I felt nothing about it.…I'm sorry for Takahashi and the others who got burned up down there, but I felt sorry for those who died at Pearl Harbor, too.…People get mad when I say this but--it was as impersonal as could be. There wasn't anything personal as far as I'm concerned, so I had no personal part in it…" "It wasn't my decision to make morally, one way or another…I did what I was told--I didn't invent the bomb, I just dropped the damn thing. It was a success, and that's where I've left it.…I can assure you that I sleep just as peacefully as anybody can sleep.…" When August 6 rolled around each year "sometimes people have to tell me. To me it's just another day."[93] In 1980, Tibbets commented, "I would be hypocritic if I said I suffered remorse. I had to do this in the best interests of my country. I was following orders from competent authority."[94] Though this was rarely Tibbets's primary line of defense, his friend Van Kirk should probably have qualified his comment that "I was always proud of the fact that, unlike the Germans, none of us ever used the excuse that we were just following orders."[95] Psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton and co-author Greg Mitchell characterized Tibbets's stubborn refusal to admit remorse as an "extreme version of numbing" designed to "ward off ever-threatening feelings of guilt."[96]

Tibbets, however, always viewed dispassion as a virtue. He contended, "The doctors who are failures are the doctors who begin assuming the symptoms of the patient. They begin to identify too much with them. To think about what was happening on the ground was like the doctor identifying with the patient." Tibbets said he responded to breaches of discipline at Wendover by controlling "my emotions so

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nobody knew what I was thinking, often to the chagrin of my parents and people close to me. I schooled myself to take things away from the emotional into reality."[97] In 1985, Tibbets disclosed that he would go even further to banish painful thoughts from his mind. "If I decide I don't want to think about something, I turn it off," he admitted.[98]

To prove how clear his conscience was, he often bragged about how well he slept, in much the same manner that Truman did. "I sleep well every night," he assured an interviewer in 1975."[99] "I've never lost a night's sleep over it, and I never will," Tibbets told a Canadian television interviewer.[100] Truman, whose conscience must have been even clearer, claimed he never even lost a minute's sleep over the bombings.

The two sound sleepers met only once, a few years after the event that, more than anything else, would define their place in history. Truman invited him to the Oval Office in 1948 and asked him, "What do you think?" Tibbets responded, "Mr. President, I think I did what I was told." Truman replied, slapping the table, "You're damn right you did, and I'm the guy who sent you. If anybody gives you a hard time about it, refer them to me."[101] In The Tibbets Story, however, he relates the conversation a little differently with Truman advising him, "Don't you ever lose any sleep over the fact that you planned and carried out that mission. It was my decision. You had no choice."[102]

In 1980, Tibbets insisted that his critics were few and far between: "Only one in a thousand people criticize me. Those who do forget we were fighting a popular war against an unrelenting enemy. I looked on bombing Hiroshima as an act in defense of our country. And so it was."[103]

Over the years, others involved in the fateful August 6 and August 9 missions defended their actions in much the same terms as Tibbets and often contended that, if again faced with the same circumstances, they would behave in a similar fashion. They, too, took solace in calculating that the numbers who would have died in an invasion exceeded the numbers killed in the atomic bombings. In order to adhere to this questionable version of events, they refused, in the succeeding years, to consider the mounting evidence that even with the bomb an invasion would have been unlikely or to grapple with the broader consequences of their actions. Perhaps this is a testament to their fundamental decency. But there is no indication that they--or Tibbets--knew, as did Truman and other top policymakers, of Japanese leaders' willingness to surrender if they could secure acceptable terms.[104] Few of the other participants, however, were as combative as Tibbets, who, when asked about regrets in 2005, shot back, "Hell no, no second thoughts. If you give me the same circumstances, hell yeah, I'd do it again."[105] Tibbets and the others demanded that their actions be judged in the context of the times in which they were performed, not with the wisdom of hindsight. But it was clearly Tibbets who, in the public mind, bore more responsibility than other Enola Gay crew members and who stuck most blindly to his version of history, as if the tiniest concession to his critics would open a door that could never again be slammed shut. Most of the other participants acknowledged far greater misgivings about what occurred. And many were much more vocal than Tibbets about their desire to rid the world of nuclear weapons to insure that such actions were never repeated.

In fact, contrasting Tibbets's unapologetic and combative words with the generally more humane reactions of his fellow crew members yields valuable insights into participants' motivations and the lessons they learned and provides a contemporary basis for understanding and assessing Tibbets's actions. Among the staunchest defenders of the bombing is navigator Theodore "Dutch" Van

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Kirk, who graduated from Bucknell after the war and spent 35 years as a chemical engineer with DuPont. The son of a truck driver from Northumberland, Pennsylvania, and one of only two Enola Gay crew members still alive, Van Kirk flew 58 combat missions over Europe and Africa. He was convinced the bombings ended the war without an invasion that would have been "a bloodbath," given what had happened on Okinawa and other Pacific islands.[106] He understood that his views may have been influenced by his low wartime opinion of the Japanese. He had never met any Japanese before the war and felt inundated with newspaper images of buck-toothed Japanese who were "horrible monsters." He knew what they had done to his friends in prisoner-of-war camps. "I knew a navigator," he recalled, "who was shot down and subjected to horrible indignities, including being put on display in a cage in Tokyo Zoo."[107] Because they were fanatics, he reasoned, the Japanese refused to surrender even though, from a military standpoint, the "war was over before we ever dropped the atomic bomb." The bombs simply helped convince the Japanese to accept U.S. surrender terms.[108] Moreover, he believed, the bomb saved the lives of thousands of Allied prisoners who were near death and about to perish. He was gratified that many had written to thank him for saving their lives.[109]

In 2000, he remained steadfast in his conviction that what he had done was right. He told an interviewer, "Everybody keeps trying to get me down on my knees and cry about it and say I am sorry and everything. None of us ever have."[110] But, when the San Francisco Chronicle asked in 1995 if he was sorry, he replied a bit less stridently: "I really don't think 'sorry' is the right word. I think it's more about regret. I regret this weapon had to be used. But I also believe we did have to use it. We used it to stop the war, to stop all that killing. It was definitely the lesser of two evils."[111]

In later years, though his defense of the bombings never wavered, he spoke more forthrightly about the need to rid the world of nuclear weapons and avoid war. He attended the September 1994 reunion of the 509th. One of the attendees, intelligence officer Norris Jernigan, defended the gathering, explaining, "Everyone thinks we're gathering to celebrate the devastation. But we're here for the camaraderie we developed. The whole group went over and the whole group came back. None of us celebrates war." During the reunion, Van Kirk also denied that the purpose was to celebrate war: "I don't want anyone to get the impression we're for nuclear war. We're as anti-war and anti-nuclear war as anyone you'd ever see in your life."[112]

On the 60th anniversary, Van Kirk criticized war as an instrument for solving problems and thought it time that all nuclear weapons be eliminated. He explained, "The whole World War II experience shows that wars don't settle anything. I personally think there shouldn't be any atomic bombs in the world—I'd like to see them all abolished." But he wasn't ready for the U.S. to disarm unilaterally, wanting his country to retain at least one bomb more than its enemies.[113]

Van Kirk told another interviewer the week before that anniversary, "I pray no man will have to witness that sight again. Such a terrible waste, such a loss of life. We unleashed the first atomic bomb, and I hope there will never be another…I pray that we have learned a lesson for all time. But I'm not sure that we have."[114]

Van Kirk never broadcast his wartime role and assumed his next-door-neighbors in Novato, California had no idea what he had done.[115] He regretted that subsequent generations, who couldn't appreciate the way it felt to Americans in 1945, sometimes judged the participants too harshly. "People forget how it was," he complained in 1995. "The war involved the entire country. Everyone suffered and

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sacrificed. My wife lost two brothers, one in the Death March of Bataan and one in the invasion of Makin Island in the South Pacific."[116]

Van Kirk participated in a 1995 forum at Sonoma State University at which a student asked, "How do you feel about killing 100,000 people?" He explained to a reporter who observed the exchange that students no longer understood the context in which he and his colleagues acted: "There's a popular feeling now that we should feel guilty and remorseful....It comes from the differences between generations, differences between the world as it is now and as it was then. But the survivors of that time understand why it was necessary to do what we did."[117]

Unlike Tibbets and Van Kirk, several of the crew members managed to keep their feelings pretty much to themselves over the years. In their rare public statements, they neither gloried in what they'd done nor disavowed their involvement. Radio operator Richard Nelson was born in Moscow, Idaho, but raised in Los Angeles. After spending six months at the University of Idaho, he joined the Army Air Force in 1943, hoping to become a pilot until poor eyesight forced him to abandon that dream. After the war, he studied business administration at the University of Southern California and later worked in industrial sales. In 1995, he told the Riverside Press-Enterprise that he didn't regret what he'd done: "War is a terrible thing. It takes and it destroys. Anyone feels sorry for people who are killed. We are all human beings. But I don't feel sorry I participated in it. If I had known the results of the mission beforehand, I would have flown it anyway."[118]

At 32, Wyatt Duzenbury was the oldest member of the plane's original crew. The son of a carpenter, he dropped out of high school in Lansing, Michigan and worked as a tree surgeon and gas station attendant before being drafted at the start of the war. Tibbets added him to the crew because of his skill with engines and put him in charge of making sure all the engines ran properly. Duzenbury always felt he was just doing his job and had no reason for regrets. "That was my job," Duzenbury told an interviewer. "I don't know if you've ever been in the military or not, but when you're told to do something, you don't ask questions or argue about it. You go and do, whether it's right or wrong." On the other hand, he never expressed pride in what he and his comrades had done: "We were ordered to do it. I don't think anybody can be glad when they take 100,000 lives." After retiring from the Air Force in 1970, he worked as a country club storeroom manager in Atlanta. Like many veterans, he rarely spoke of his wartime experiences. His son said, "I talked to him a couple times about it. We didn't go into it very deep. He didn't want to talk about his wartime experiences." In 1985, the Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution wrote about his "lonely life" following the death of his wife four years earlier. He never attended one of the 509th's reunions. He told the paper, "frankly, I don't do anything. I stay at home." He let his white hair and white beard grow long and watched television almost constantly. Duzenbury had surgery for prostate cancer in 1989 and died of bone cancer in 1992.[119]

When asked in 1956 if he had had any sleepless nights, radar operator Joe Stiborik, a Texas native who studied cotton grading at Texas A&M before volunteering for the Army Air Corps, responded, "No. It was part of a dirty job that somebody had to do. If it hadn't been us somebody else would have had to." Stiborik, who was of Czech descent, was motivated to sign up by Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia. He worked after the war as a superintendent of maintenance for a power generating company. So far as he knew, crew members had all drifted apart and never held a reunion.[120]

Bob Caron commented in 1978, "No bad dreams. No remorse. It had to be done without

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delay. Statisticians say a million American lives were saved by not having to invade the Japanese Empire, plus probably as many Japanese lives."[121] Caron used the word "guilt" on one occasion, after seeing photos of the burned children and other victims. He said, "That is the only time I might have had a partial feeling of guilt." "I wish I hadn't seen them," he added. Robert Shumard understood that feeling. "You don't brag about wiping out sixty to seventy thousand at one time," he said.[122] Shumard who, like the others, thought the bombing justified, declared, "If it had to be done all over again, I wouldn't hesitate," moved to Detroit after the war and sold plumbing supplies. He died of leukemia at age 46. His doctor and his wife both attributed the fatal illness to excessive radiation.[123]

Jacob Beser recalled that, when Dick Jeppson, a 23 year old Mormon from Logan, Utah, returned on August 6 to Tinian, he appeared "slightly shaken and…[was] finding it difficult to reconcile what he had seen with his fine sense of humanity."[124] But Jeppson later asserted that the bomb "did, in fact, end the war," which, he reasoned, "saved a lot of US armed forces and Japanese civilians and military. History has shown there was no need to criticize [Tibbets]."[125] After the war, Jeppson studied physics at Berkeley. He worked for a while developing the hydrogen bomb at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, before going into business for himself.[126] He started one company that built electron beam accelerators for cancer therapy and another that made microwave systems for industrial heating. In 1960, he told an interviewer that a demonstration might have ended things "without the need for destroying a city." He later wrote of his "sorrow" at the "great tragedy" in Hiroshima.[127] He was glad that he didn't have to make the decision to use the bomb: "There's always the wondering that maybe there would have been a better way to end the war. But at the young ages of all of us then, and being in the military and the war, you accept what you are told to do and that gives you a reasonable out for the situation." In 1985, he wrote to President Reagan outlining a plan for cutting nuclear arms. He explained, "I keep thinking about the reducing of nuclear arms in a reasonable way. It's something that must be done and there hasn't been a reasonable way to do it thus far."[128] Reflecting 58 years later on the only combat mission he had ever flown, Jeppson admitted, "It's not a proud thing. It was a devastating thing." But he still held to the belief that the bomb probably saved hundreds of thousands of American lives and far more Japanese lives." In 2005, he again insisted he had no regrets and told an interviewer that his wife's car sported a bumper sticker that read, "If there hadn't been a Pearl Harbor, there wouldn't have been a Hiroshima."[129]

Bombardier Thomas Ferebee had aspired to be a professional baseball player before the war, even trying out for the St. Louis Cardinals. Raised on a farm in Mocksville, North Carolina, Ferebee had joined the Army after attending Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina for two years. A football knee injury kept him out of the infantry. He tried flight school, wanting to be a pilot, but didn't succeed and was sent to bombardier school. He flew on the same bomber crew in England with Van Kirk and Tibbets, participating in the first daylight bombing raid over France and serving as lead bombardier in the Allies' first 100 plane daylight raid in Europe. In all, he flew 64 bombing missions in Europe and North Africa.[130]

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Thomas Ferebee

He, too, always maintained that the bombings were justified, explaining, "I'm not proud of killing all those people, but I'm proud of saving all the lives we did."[131] In 1995, he told the London Mail, "I don't believe in killing, but this was a war where we were fighting for survival. Millions of people are alive and free because of what our mission accomplished." "Sure, Hiroshima was horrible. But war is horrible. I saw what the Germans did to Coventry and London, and I saw what the Japanese did to Allied prisoners of war. If we hadn't forced the surrender, there would have had to be a land invasion of Japan and estimates are that one million Americans and as many Japanese would have died in it." "None of us who were on the Enola Gay ever lost a minute's sleep over it. In fact, I sleep better because I feel a large part of the peace we have had in the last 50 years was what we brought about."[132] In 1982, Ferebee commented, "If I could go back in time, I wouldn't hesitate to do it again. I saw the American prisoners who came out of Japan—they were eyeballs and bones."[133] He was motivated by the desire to end the war as quickly as possible: "People have to go back and study the history of the war and the attitude of the people at that time. Everybody wanted the war to end. That's what I wanted the most. I wanted the bomb to work and end the war."[134]

Before retiring from the Air Force as a colonel in 1970, he flew as an observer on bombing missions in Vietnam. Out of the service, he moved to Orlando and sold real estate. He drew upon his wartime experience to insist that nuclear war could never be allowed to happen again. He told the Charlotte Observer in 1995, "Now we should look back and remember what just one bomb did, or two bombs. Then I think we should realize that this can't happen again."[135] He retired to Windermere, Florida, where he grew tomatoes, cabbage, and beans, played golf, and fished.[136]

Ferebee's parents, like Tibbets's, were proud of what he had done, but his grandmother told him, "I hope the Lord will forgive you."[137] In 1995, he admitted to the Charlotte Observer that he felt more isolated after his Nagasaki counterpart bombardier Kermit Beahan died in 1989: "It was easier when Beahan was alive. Because there were two of us who had done it. Now I'm the only one in the world. It should stay that way."[138]

Beahan was born in Joplin, Missouri, but raised in Houston, where he attended Rice University on a football scholarship. Like Ferebee, he joined the Army Air Corps aspiring to be a pilot, but, failing that, became a bombardier. As a bombardier, he flew 40 missions in Europe.

In the years before his death, Beahan, a space technology consultant in Houston for Brown & Root who had turned 27 on the day of the Nagasaki bombing, was somewhat conflicted about what he'd done. In 1985, Houston

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psychotherapist Glenn Van Warrebey wrote to city officials in Nagasaki, informing them that Beahan, feeling great remorse, desired to return to Nagasaki and apologize in person. Nagasaki Mayor Motoshima Hitoshi explained to Van Warrebey that that would not be possible because, though some hibakusha would be willing to meet with him, "there are those who say the agony of the hibakusha continues even today." The Mayor put himself in that category, adding, "I cannot find it in my heart to meet Mr. Beahan."[139] But when Japanese newspapers reported Nagasaki officials' response, the government was flooded with protests from hibakusha and other citizens. Oobo Teruaki, who was in charge of relief for Nagasaki bomb victims, said they would be happy to welcome Beahan after the ceremony and would ask him to "join a campaign to abolish nuclear weapons from the earth."[140] Beahan felt that Warrebey misconstrued his remarks and conveyed a false impression. He told the Houston Chronicle, "I regret I had to drop an atomic bomb. For that matter, I regret the first 100-pound bomb I ever dropped. I regret the whole damn war ever started. Van Warrebey apparently didn't understand the difference between 'regret' and 'guilt'—I certainly feel no guilt for bringing World War II to an early conclusion." In fact, he thought his actions saved many lives. "It was a terrible weapon to be used," he added, "but it prevented a land invasion which would have resulted in many more, millions, of casualties. I call it a blessing in disguise." He said he used the bags of letters he had accumulated from grateful veterans "to allay any dormant feelings of guilt that might crop up."[141] "Those are the things that I choose to remember and dwell on rather than the agony that I know must have occurred to the survivors of the two cities."[142]

By the time he retired from the Air Force in 1963 as a lieutenant colonel, he had witnessed 10 atomic explosions, which was enough to convince him to support the abolition of all nuclear weapons. "Any person would like to see the abolition of nuclear weapons," he stated. In 1985, though rebuffed in his attempt to visit Nagasaki, he voiced his hope that he would be the last person to ever drop an atomic bomb on humans. When learning of Beahan's death in 1989, Sweeney said, "We named our airplane for him. We used to call him the Great Artiste. He was so good at his work. He was the sparkplug of our crew. We all loved him. We called him Honeybee because he was so likeable."[143] Abe Spitzer said it was not only Beahan's popularity with the other crew members but his popularity with the women that inspired the nickname.[144]

The pilots of the two planes that accompanied the Enola Gay on that fateful mission, one of whom later piloted the plane that bombed Nagasaki, also defended the bombings, but showed greater sympathy for the victims. No. 91 commander Cptn. George Marquardt declared in 1995, "I have never for one moment regretted my participation in the dropping of the A-bomb. It ended a terrible war."[145] But in 1990 Marquardt did admit to a twinge of remorse. In November 1989, he, Sweeney, and other former members of the 509th returned to Hiroshima to film a BBC documentary and met a Japanese doctor, whose physician father had witnessed the bombing. Not knowing who the Americans were, the doctor said that his father told him, "he had never seen such cruelty and could not comprehend the inhumanity of those who had inflicted it." Marquardt said in a telephone interview that when, at the end of their meeting, the doctor learned who the Americans were, "Tears came into his eyes. He said, 'I wish my dad was here to meet you guys.' He was bewildered, you could see it. His expressions changed….He didn't know what to say." Marquardt admitted, "That was the only time in all these years I've felt remorse." A few minutes later, Marquardt called back the interviewer. "There was a word I used that I want to change—remorse. I don't like it. Change it to 'saddened.'"[146] Marquardt had

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been slated to lead the next mission, if a third bomb was needed.

Major Charles Sweeney, who piloted the Great Artiste during the Hiroshima attack, and then piloted Bock's Car, which dropped the plutonium bomb Fat Man on Nagasaki three days later, published a memoir in 1997 titled War's End: An Eyewitness Account of America's Last Atomic Mission. Sweeney wrote, "I took no pride or pleasure then, nor do I take any now, in the brutality of war, whether suffered by my people or those of another nation. Every life is precious. But I felt no remorse or guilt that I had bombed the city where I stood." "The true vessel of remorse and guilt belonged to the Japanese nation, which could and should call to account the warlords who so willingly offered up their own people to achieve their visions of greatness."[147]

In 1990, Sweeney emphasized the positive legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: "As a military man, I think…maybe we stopped some world wars." He had a formula to deal with budding feelings of guilt: "If I ever approach that feeling, I start thinking about the rape of Nanking, and the duplicity of them lying to our president while they were bombing Pearl Harbor. I think of all my classmates who were killed."[148] Sweeney opposed nuclear abolition. In 2001, he told the Boston Globe, "I hope we never use them again, but…we cannot afford to eliminate them and stay strong. The best defense, I think, is the strongest offense."[149] But Sweeney quietly donated earnings from speaking engagements to an orphanage in Hiroshima.[150]

In 1995, Sweeney's copilot Fred Olivi said he tells audiences, "It is my fervent hope that there won't be any atomic bombs dropped anywhere on any civilization, and that the two we dropped will be the last. I hope that these governments get together and work things out so we don't have any more wars, because the next war will be a nuclear war…and a lot of people will die."[151]

Spitzer took comfort in his belief that "the A-bomb has made another war impossible." He was convinced "That it would be suicide for man and his world." "I was there," he explained. "I ought to know." A garment industry sales representative, Spitzer was killed in an auto accident in 1984 while returning to his Westchester home from work. Murray described his brother as "a man of peace" who thought the bomb was "a horrific instrument of death." His brother, he said, had thought the bomb would help end the war and save many lives. He had hoped "that it would be the last war mankind would face."[152]

Among those most troubled about the bombings was Robert Lewis, who, after initial astonishment over the power of the bomb, wrote in his flight log, "My God. What have we done?" In 1955, Lewis appeared on Ralph Edwards's television show "This Is Your Life" with Rev. Tanimoto Kiyoshi of Hiroshima and two of the 25 badly disfigured Hiroshima Maidens Tanimoto and Norman Cousins had brought to the U.S. for surgery. As Edwards was detailing what happened to Tanimoto on the day of the bombing, Lewis speaking from off stage said, "And looking down from thousands of feet over Hiroshima, all I could think of was, 'My God, what have we done.'" Edwards brought Lewis on stage to meet Tanimoto and asked him to tell about his experience that day. Lewis began talking and then stopped to gather himself, appearing to fight back tears. After steadying himself, he explained that after they dropped the bomb "in front of our eyes the city of Hiroshima disappeared." Edwards asked what he wrote in his log and Lewis repeated his words. At the end of the show, Edwards gave the audience an address to mail contributions to help those still suffering in Hiroshima. Lewis stepped forward with a $50 check that he said came from him and his fellow crew members.[153]

Among those who watched Lewis closely that

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day was 10 year old Tanimoto Koko. Koko had grown up around the Maidens and other bomb victims, many of whom spent considerable time at her father's church and felt like older sisters to her. She had always fantasized that when she got older she would find those responsible for her friends' suffering and somehow take revenge. Now, confronted with Lewis and seeing the tears in his eyes as he told what happened, her anger evaporated.[154]

After the war, Lewis worked briefly as a pilot and then became a manager for a candy company. Though he, too, believed that the bombings hastened the end of the war and saved lives, he said, "I can't get it out of my mind that there were women and children and old people in that mess."[155] He especially feared what would happen if nuclear bombs were ever used again. He warned, "If we were forced into a situation where nuclear weapons were used, there wouldn't be much of a world left." He understood, "There is no conscience to a bomb like that. It's overkill, overkill, overkill." In later life, he took up sculpture. Among his prized creations was one of a mushroom cloud.[156]

A more peripheral participant in the Hiroshima bombing, Major Claude "Buck" Eatherly broke most sharply with the official story and was, at times, pilloried for it. Eatherly, a native of Van Alstyne, Texas, joined the Air Corps in 1939, one year shy of graduating from North Texas State University. He piloted the advance scouting weather plane Straight Flush that reported clear skies over Hiroshima, effectively giving the go-ahead signal to Tibbets to proceed to his primary target.

Following the war, Eatherly reenlisted and participated in the 1946 Bikini atomic bomb tests. After the first test, he and his crew were ordered to fly into the radioactive cloud and take samples of the air with precipitrons. By the time they found their way out of the cloud, they had received a heavy dose of radiation.[157]

After that, Eatherly began to suffer serious emotional problems. He was discharged from the Air Force in 1947 on the grounds that he was suffering from a "neurosis with psychotic manifestations."[158] Eatherly always attributed his condition to "guilt" over his role in the destruction of Hiroshima. Beginning in 1947, Eatherly had the first in a long series of run-ins with the law, mostly for robbery, burglary, and writing bad checks. His psychological problems also worsened. He attempted suicide in 1950 and was in and out of psychiatric wards for much of the next decade and a half.[159] In 1954, doctors administered shock treatments to Eatherly, who had been expressing guilt about his role in the Hiroshima bombing.[160] In March 1957, the Dallas Morning News reported on his impending trial for breaking into two Texas post offices, indicating that he had spent much of the past seven years being treated in mental hospitals for "extreme nervousness." The paper noted that he didn't blame his psychological problems on the war.[161] In the ensuing April trial, however, a psychiatrist testified that Eatherly suffered from a guilt complex and felt responsible for 100,000 deaths in Hiroshima.[162] His case gained international notoriety when an article about him appeared in Newsweek on April 1, 1957. After an attempted holdup of a Dallas 7-Eleven in April 1959, his attorney stated, "He's got hallucinations that the Japanese are after him. He's anxious to go back in the hospital."[163] While waiting in Dallas County jail before being remanded to the care of Veterans Administration psychiatrists who were to ascertain why his Hiroshima experience had led him to petty criminality, he told a reporter, "I do feel I killed those people. I wish I could die. I tried to commit suicide twice, but it didn't work."[164]

In July, Eatherly wrote directly to the hibakusha in Hiroshima, decrying all warfare

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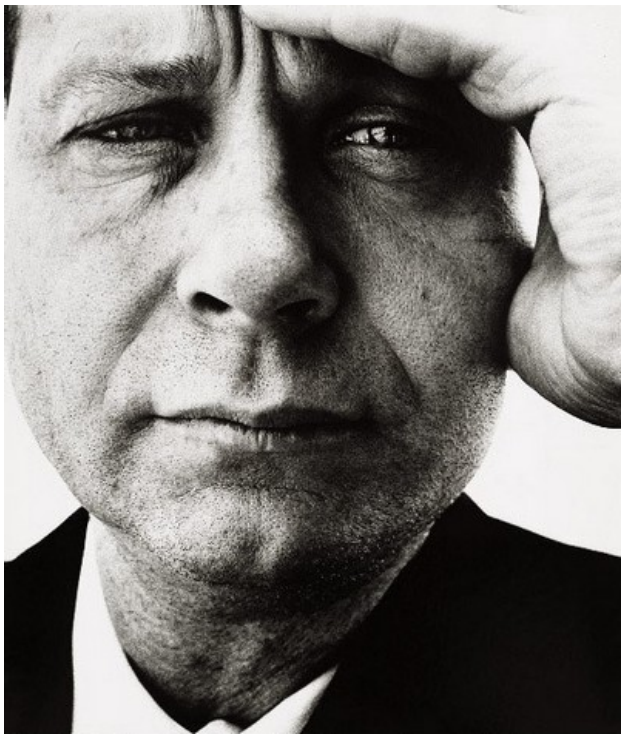
and begging their forgiveness. He received a very warm reply from 30 "girls of Hiroshima," many of whom were part of the original delegation of Hiroshima Maidens. Their sympathy for his suffering seemed to give him a measure of relief. In August, he wrote to philosopher Gunther Anders, conveying his newfound sense of purpose: "My only desire is to lend influence toward peace, to end nuclear buildup, to safeguard the rights of all people regardless of race, color or creed."[165] Eatherly complained of recurring nightmares as a result of the bombing and in 1960 claimed, "I haven't had any sleep in fifteen years."[166] He told Parade Magazine in the early 1960s, "Every night for 15 years, I have dreamed about it. I see great fires, boiling fires, crimson fires, closing in on me. Buildings fall, children run—living torches with their clothes aflame. 'Why did you do it?' they scream. I wake up paralyzed with fear, screaming, sweating because I have no answer."[167] In August 1960, he wrote from the VA hospital to Senator Ralph Yarborough (D-TX), urging him to act forcefully to eliminate the nuclear threat. Having seen three of the first four atomic bombs exploded and recognizing the enormously heightened destructive capabilities that had subsequently been achieved, a nuclear war, he warned, "would be the end of this people's earth." Therefore, he concluded, "The prevention of war has become necessary if civilized life is to continue, or perhaps if any kind of life is to continue."[168] He was judged insane and confined to the Waco Veterans Hospital by court order in 1961. At the trial, four psychiatrists testified that, though intelligent and likable, he suffered from schizophrenia and had delusions of leading a great disarmament-oriented peace movement that stemmed from guilt over his Hiroshima role.[169] Following release and rearrest, a judge in Galveston committed him to Rusk State Hospital in 1964.[170]



Claude Eatherly on April 3, 1963

Was Eatherly mad? By that point, he had spoken out repeatedly against the Hiroshima bombing and in favor of nuclear abolition. Eatherly had become an international symbol of the crime of Hiroshima and the danger of nuclear weapons, even more in Europe than in the United States. Books, plays, and poems were written about him on both continents. Renowned British philosopher-mathematician Bertrand Russell argued that his case was "symbolic of the suicidal madness of our time." "The world," Russell charged, "was prepared to honour him for his part in the massacre, but, when he repented, it turned against him, seeing in his act of repentance its own condemnation."[171] Gunther Anders published a book of his correspondence with Eatherly, letters highlighting Eatherly's views on the Hiroshima bombing and the nuclear threat. In 1962, on the 17th anniversary of the bombing, organizers of a New York City march led by A. J. Muste and Norman Thomas announced that they were giving Hiroshima Awards to four persons who had made "outstanding

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contributions to world peace." The recipients included renowned cellist Pablo Casals and Eatherly.[172]

Eatherly died in 1978 of cancer at the age of 57, having been diagnosed three years earlier. Some speculated that his flying through radiation during the 1946 U.S. atomic bomb tests at the Bikini atoll in the Marshall Islands may have contributed to his condition. His brother Joe conjectured that he suffered radiation damage, noting, "For a moment he got lost in that cloud. He said it was the most horrible moment of his life. One of the navigators came down with radiation sickness. We didn't know what it was then. I doubt we really know what it is now." Despite his having become persona non grata with many veterans, a Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) color guard stood at attention at his funeral and a VFW bugler played taps during his burial at the federal military cemetery in Houston. Fellow VFW Post 490 member Paul Guidry told reporters that he did not know if his friend "ever came to peace with himself. But he was 100 percent for America, and if you print anything, print that he was the most loving human being I have ever known." After the funeral, his brother James said, "I can remember him waking up night after night. He said his brain was on fire. He said he could feel those people burning. He never forgot the thousands of people dying in those flames." Another relative added, "He never got over the bomb."[173]

Because of Eatherly, rumors abounded that members of the Enola Gay crew suffered emotional anguish resulting in mental breakdowns. These rumors sometimes specifically targeted Tibbets, who, at times, expressed bitterness about Eatherly's sullying his and others' reputations.[174] Tibbets resented reports that he was in prison or had committed suicide. He complained, "They said I was crazy, said I was a drunkard, in and out of institutions."[175] During a visit to Atlanta in 1990, Tibbets dismissed the rumors as "Soviet-inspired propaganda."[176] One newspaper inaccurately reported that Ferebee had been institutionalized because of his profound remorse.[177] In 1985, Ferebee bemoaned the fact that "There have been articles written about me being in a mental institution."[178]

Although his wartime activities may not have caused Tibbets to feel remorse, they may, indirectly, have cost him his marriage. Tibbets served as a paid consultant to the 1952 MGM film Above and Beyond, which purported to depict his personal travail and the marital difficulties that resulted from the enormous pressure he was under in preparing for the atomic bombings. The film was suggested by a close associate of Gen. Curtis LeMay when he was head of the Strategic Air Command. Robert Taylor played Tibbets and Eleanor Parker played his wife Lucy. In the film, Lucy was forced to endure the hardship of living with a distracted, driven, increasingly distant husband, who was forced to hide from her the true nature of his undertaking, while she raised two young children almost entirely on her own. Tibbets took special umbrage not at the unflattering depiction of his inattention as husband and father or of his heavy-handed efforts to maintain tight security, even if that meant turning in friends for seemingly minor breaches, but at one scene, which he insisted was not in the original script that he reviewed. In that scene, designed to show the basic decency of Tibbets and the other Americans and their appreciation of the gravity of what they had just done, his character, having just witnessed the destruction of Hiroshima, radios the results back to headquarters. "Results good," he says. Then he repeats the line with what Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell aptly describe as "grim irony." When the movie was released, Tibbets criticized that scene insisting that he had no such reservations about what he had done.[179]

He apparently had no issue with another scene

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that some would consider more damning. In that scene, Paul returning late one night, as was often the case, carries his sleeping son into the bedroom and puts him in bed. He and Lucy look at their two sleeping children and tenderly agree how wonderful they are. But Lucy then expresses misgivings about the war, confessing, "They are wonderful, but you know every time I look at them sleep I get sad. Terribly sad." Paul asks why and Lucy explains, "Oh I keep thinking of this war and how somewhere at this very moment bombs are being dropped and children like that are being killed." Paul's mood suddenly changes and he snaps, "Lucy, don't ever say that again! Not to me." Then he storms out of the room. Lucy follows him pleading for an explanation of what she said that was so wrong, at which point Paul lectures her angrily: "Look. Look. Let's clear up one little piece of morality right now. It's not bombs alone that are horrible. It's war. War is what's wrong not just its weapons. Sure we're in a war and innocent people are dying and that's horrible. But to lose this war to the gang we're fighting would be the most immoral thing we could do to those kids in there. And don't you ever forget it!"[180]

At the end of the film, when Lucy learns, along with the rest of the war-weary nation, that her husband was a hero--not the joyless, self-centered, security-obsessed lout he had increasingly appeared to be—they passionately embrace and look forward to years of marital bliss. But, in reality, they divorced after the war.

In 1965, Tibbets moved to India with his second wife to serve as deputy chief of the U.S. Military Supply Mission to that country. Tibbets may not have been the best choice for the position. In India, which under Nehru had been in the forefront of international antinuclear efforts, Tibbets was subjected to sharply hostile attacks by the press. The campaign was led by the tabloid weekly Blitz, which, according to New York Times reporter J. Anthony Lukas, "generally speaks for the pro-Soviet wing of the Indian Communist party." For six weeks, the paper inveighed against the man it called "the world's greatest killer" and demanded he be expelled from the country. It expressed surprise that the general who "represents the cult of the Western warmongers, the Pentagon, the atom bomb and mass destruction" should be allowed to "stride freely in India's capital, enjoying free Indian air and desecrating India's sacred soil." It excoriated his "pretty trick" of naming the plane Enola Gay, thereby "drag[ging] his mother into the sordid history of the Second World War and the first bomb." The paper charged that U.S. officials tried to hide Tibbets's identity from his Indian hosts, to which U.S. officials responded, "we didn't go out of our way to point it out." "I don't go around advertising the role I played in Hiroshima," Tibbets told the Times. "I'd rather forget it and let sleeping dogs lie. But that seems like wishful thinking. Wherever I go it always comes out sooner or later."[181]

Because Tibbets was still in India, he missed the 20th anniversary reunion of the 393rd Bomb Squadron. Twenty years later, Van Kirk would observe that he, Tibbets, and Ferebee rarely attended reunions of the 509th, of which the 393rd was a part, preferring to get together privately or at reunions with their European buddies.[182] Jacob Beser of Baltimore, the reunion chairman, announced that he planned to tell his former comrades, "We do not gather in a spirit of rejoicing for what was done, but rather rejoicing in the significance of the events in which we participated." "The mass destruction of cities and civil populations is alien to our American way of thinking…" Beser, the radar mar who monitored the electronics equipment and sought to make sure that signals from the ground did not trigger the bomb's fuse, was the only man to serve on both the Enola Gay and Bock's Car. His observations about the atomic bombing of Japan and the world it created reveal both his deep humanity and the extent to which even the most well-

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meaning and thoughtful of the participants bore the detritus of decades of mythology about casualty figures, prospects for an invasion, motives for dropping the bombs, and effectiveness of deterrence. He explained, "We rejoice for the significance of our being the first to obtain a nuclear capability—for no other reason than this has helped make the past 20 years free of a third world war." When asked about the morality of what they had done, Beser responded, "there was no moral issue involved in using the bomb. The moral issue is war itself. It's academic how you get killed in a war…The question now is not are we going to use this again, but what are we going to do to insure that we never have to use it again."[183]

Beser dropped out of Johns Hopkins to enlist the day after the U.S. entered the war. His hatred of Nazi Germany had been building for years. In 1939, he had visited Hamburg in a futile attempt to persuade relatives to leave. His mother, who directed the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society of Baltimore, brought home rescued foster children to live with the family. He regretted not having had the opportunity to drop atomic bombs on Germany, proclaiming, ""I wish we'd had it earlier so we could have dropped it on Berlin."[184] Like almost all the others, he always defended the atomic bombings against Japan on the grounds that they saved more lives than they took: "In November of 1945 there was an invasion of Japan planned. Three million men were gonna be thrown against Japan. There were about 3 million Japanese, digging in for the defense of their homeland, and there was a casualty potential of over a million people. That's what was avoided. If you take the highest figures of casualties of both cities, say 300,000 combined casualties in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, versus a million, I'm sorry to say, it's a good tradeoff. It's a very cold way to look at it, but it's the only way to look at it."[185] Beser often noted the frequency with which veterans thanked him for saving their lives. But he also confronted frequent face-to-face challenges and late-night phone calls from those who deplored what he had done. When accused of being a murderer, he would shoot back, "Don't you read any history? Don't you know about the lives that were saved, and not just the ones that were lost?"[186]

In 1985, Beser, having retired after working 27 years as an engineer for Westinghouse, returned to Japan with an ABC film crew to attend commemorative events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He was particularly moved by one woman who had been in Hiroshima 40 years earlier when Beser and his crewmates dropped the bomb. She said simply, "You had a job to do, and you did it." He reflected, "I don't know if I could be so forgiving."[187] He described Hiroshima as "the place where we opened a new era of man's inhumanity to his fellow man."[188]

Beser was annoyed by American peace activists who went to Hiroshima and criticized their own country. Like almost all his colleagues, he felt, "These people are of a later generation and do not comprehend what was going on in 1945." He specifically cited "the Bataan Death March, the Rape of Nanking, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the Sacking of Manila, and all of the other more sordid Japanese deeds…" As a result, his generation "thought in terms of total defeat of the enemy, and unconditional surrender." They were not racists, he insisted, feeling the same way about Germany. He contended the Japanese, even the hibakusha he met, understood the situation better than many Americans. Japanese repeatedly told him that the Americans "did what you had to do to win the war"—a war that only the militarists in Tokyo wanted. But, "To hear American school children say they are ashamed of their country, without any understanding as to why these events took place is a bigger source of embarrassment to me than I can ever describe. We are teaching our children the wrong lesson. The moral of the story is 'make war no more'. Find a way to settle our differences peacefully

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or surely we will all perish."

Jacob Beser

Beser urged the Japanese he met to petition their government to press the UN to hold a special nuclear disarmament conference in Hiroshima and let the world see up close what the citizens had suffered.[189] After attending the ceremonies in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Beser summarized the answer he repeatedly gave to questioners: "I can sympathize with those who were made to suffer because of them and appreciate their desire to see that these weapons are never used again, but I have said over and over again that in view of the events that led up to Hiroshima and Nagasaki I have no sense of guilt nor do I feel any remorse."[190]

Beser told another interviewer in 1985, "You can't look at it through today's eyes. We were out there to do a job. I don't know anybody you could have gotten off that airplane with a team of mules. They told us from the beginning that if this thing worked it was going to bring the war to a hasty conclusion. Everybody wanted to be in on that."[191]

Beser concluded his 1988 memoir Hiroshima and Nagaski Revisited with the following words: "I repeat, being sorry is crazy. What we need to do is examine ourselves as human beings and look at how far we have come along the road to potential self destruction and how inhumane we are one to the other and analyze why we have allowed this to develop over the millennia. The solution to the problem is not being sorry for what has already happened, but individually and collectively dedicate ourselves to the eradication of the causes of wars and of war itself. Work together as human beings to achieve the kind of world that we all idealistically seek." "Deterrence, up until now, has worked. It cannot continue forever. Let's unite our hearts and minds with those people of the world who long for peace." "This is what I learned in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in this fortieth year of the Atomic Era."[192]

Over the years, others also returned to the cities they had bombed. Bock's Car copilot Don Albury, who became a pilot with Eastern Airlines, returned to Japan on two separate occasions. His first visit, in the 1970s, proved rather uneventful. "People were nice to us," he recalled, adding, "Of course, they didn't know who we were." He returned with four other veterans of the 509th to film a BBC documentary in Tinian and Hiroshima. Walking out of the Hiroshima Peace Museum, he found it "too grotesque," focusing "too much on the damage and suffering." Their visit to the hospital for radiation victims brought out different emotions. At first they didn't disclose their identities. Fred Bock, who got his Ph.D. in zoology after the war, remarked that, when they finally did reveal who they were, the

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hibakusha "broke down in tears. It was pretty emotional for all of us." Afterwards, he and Sweeney visited Nagasaki, touring the peace museum and having their picture taken in front of the hypocenter monument. They never once, however, let on who they were.[193]

Not all the visits went smoothly. In 2005, a Tokyo television station flew Harold Agnew, one of three scientific observers on board the accompanying Great Artiste, to Hiroshima. Agnew, a lifelong nuclear weapons developer who rose to head the Los Alamos National Laboratory, never expressed the slightest doubt about the justice of his actions. In 1985, he revealed, "Every Aug. 6, I call a lot of my colleagues, and we tell each other, "They sure as hell deserved it."[194] In Hiroshima, 20 years later, he spoke with survivors who demanded he apologize. Agnew stood up, shouted "Remember Pearl Harbor!" and walked out. He later said, "There is nothing to apologize for. This is exactly why the Chinese are still upset with them. Many Japanese still refuse to take responsibility for what they did, for starting that war. They can point at us. But believe me, they did some awful bad things. We saved Japanese lives with those bombs—an invasion would have been worse."[195]

Beser offered an intriguing response to a protester who accosted him, asking, "Didn't you have any feeling for all those Japanese youth?" Beser replied, "What do you think we were? We were children, too."[196] Readers might recall that Kurt Vonnegut, in Slaughterhouse Five, his brilliant novel about the firebombing of Dresden, spoke of the entire war as the "children's crusade" and in his powerful introduction to the novel recounts visiting his war buddy Bernard V. O'Hare, whose wife was very cold toward the author. Finally she turned on Vonnegut and said angrily, "You were just babies then!" "What?" Vonnegut asked. She continued, "You were just babies in the war—like the ones upstairs!" Vonnegut writes, "I nodded that this was true. We had been foolish virgins in the war, right at the end of childhood." She continued, "But you're not going to write it that way, are you." "This wasn't a question," Vonnegut realized. "It was an accusation." "I—I don't know," Vonnegut replied. "Well, I know," she said. "You'll pretend you were men instead of babies, and you'll be played in the movies by Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-loving, dirty old men. And war will look just wonderful, so we'll have a lot more of them. And they'll be fought by babies like the babies upstairs." Finally Vonnegut understood: "It was war that made her so angry. She didn't want her babies or anybody else's babies killed in wars. And she thought wars were partly encouraged by books and movies." Vonnegut promised her that there would be no part in his book for Frank Sinatra or John Wayne and that he would call it "The Children's Crusade." He went even further, dedicating the book to her.[197]

Molly Jeppson, whose husband Dick was only 23 in August 1945, said revealingly, "They always write that they took this airplane and went over there and killed all these people. People just don't seem to get it, or they don't want to get it." "(The military men aboard) were so young, they were just doing their job. They were told to do this. Of course (after the bombing Jeppson) heard what happened and he was horrified and that's why he kind of withdrew because he's kind of a shy guy anyway, and it hurt his feelings that he had to do this." Like her husband, Molly took comfort in her belief that "it also saved a lot of lives."[198]

Tibbets, who at 29 was older than the overwhelming majority of troops under his command, also referred to the crew members' youth. He said, "There was no way that I was going to get into an airplane without Ferebee and Van Kirk. They did exactly what they were supposed to do when they were supposed to do it. We were all young kids…but they were as

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professional as anybody you could possibly find."[199]

In 1966, Tibbets retired from the military as a brigadier general and went into business, later becoming president of Executive Jet Aviation, a Columbus-based international air taxi service. He could not, however, escape the controversy that continued to swirl around him.

Maj. General Tibbets

Tibbets's insensitivity to the suffering he inflicted was perhaps most clearly manifest in his flying a B-29 in a reenactment of the bombing before a crowd of 40,000, each of whom paid $5 to attend a 1976 Harlingen, Texas air show sponsored by the Confederate Air Force (CAF), a "patriotic" organization that restored and flew WWII aircraft. As Tibbets flew over, U.S. Army demolition experts set off a smoke bomb that simulated a mushroom-shaped cloud. Hiroshima Mayor Araki Takeshi, informed by a reporter of the event, called the show "grotesque." He sent a letter of protest to the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo and charged that the show "trampled on the spirit of Hiroshima and was a blasphemy against the many people still suffering from the aftereffects of the blast." He also sent one to Tibbets. Araki released a press statement declaring that he would tell the show's organizers, "What you have done insults the Japanese people who suffered from the bomb. I feel real rage and we shall protest to the U.S. government and all concerned." Japanese foreign minister Kosaka Zentaro lodged a protest, stating, "A bomb and a mushroom-shaped cloud is a real nightmare for the Japanese. Although it was a civilian air show, I cannot refrain from feeling badly. They lacked consideration for the feelings of others." The Washington Post reported that ordinary Japanese shared this sense of outrage. The Asahi Shimbun called the incident "insensitive and callous," and wondered how Tibbets "could…do such a stupid thing." The Washington Post reported that embassy officials were "appalled" by the episode, especially the involvement of the Army. One unnamed official commented, "It's unbelievable." A U.S. diplomat compared it to Japanese veterans reenacting the Bataan Death March. Tibbets insisted that the stunt "was not intended to insult anybody." The U.S. government formally apologized for the tasteless incident. Air Force Maj. Gen. Travis McNeil, director of the CAF, defended their actions in the name of accurately "portraying history," arguing, "Bombing Hiroshima was a terrible thing but in the final outcome, it saved a lot of lives by bringing World War II to an end." Almost a year after the incident, the CAF buckled under pressure from Congress and the Carter Administration and announced that it was canceling a planned follow-up reenactment. The CAF announced that Tibbets, though deprived of the opportunity to reenact his moment of glory, would again fly the B-29 in the show. Unlike government officials, Tibbets offered no apologies, telling reporters in Texas, "I was not emotionally involved in the dropping of the first atomic bomb. To me it was a military mission and I was relieved after it was over that it was a success."[200]

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But despite Tibbets's callousness on this and other occasions, some measure of sympathy for the bomb's victims occasionally slipped out. A few years ago in Hiroshima, Takahashi Akihiro, who, at age 14, had been badly injured by the bomb, told me of his 1980 meeting with Tibbets in Washington, DC. The bomb disfigured Takahashi, a lifelong antinuclear activist who served as director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, burning much of his body and leaving shards of glass permanently embedded. When introduced, Tibbets asked Takahashi if the injury to his deformed right hand had occurred during the bombing and Takahashi told him it had. In their discussion, Takahashi told Tibbets of his initial hatred toward President Truman and the American war leaders responsible for the atomic bombings and how he had transcended such feelings in his quest for nuclear abolition. During the course of the conversation, Takahashi asked Tibbets what he would do if given the same orders again and Tibbets said that, as a soldier, he would have no choice but to act in the same way. He added that that was why it was so important to make sure that no more wars ever occurred. Takahashi was heartened by those words and deeply moved by the fact that, throughout their half hour long conversation, Tibbets continued to hold Takahashi's damaged hand.[201] Takahashi later said, "There was no apology, but he seemed to be feeling pain."[202] At the time, Takahashi even believed he saw a tear in the corner of Tibbets's eye. However, five years later, when Greg Mitchell asked Tibbets about the incident, Tibbets insisted that the story about tears was "bullshit."[203]

Tibbets played a prominent role among critics of the ill-fated 1995 Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum. When historians and curators at the museum attempted to present a balanced history of the atomic bombings on the 50th anniversary, the American Legion and the Air Force Association led a movement to pressure the museum to eliminate the human story of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and offer the orthodox celebratory defense of the bombings mounted. Republicans in Congress took up the fight. Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS) admonished, "This is a national museum and it shouldn't be used by revisionist historians to try to change the facts of World War II." Eighty-one members of Congress demanded museum director Martin Harwit's resignation. Leading the charge was Rep. Peter Blute (R-MA) who accused the curators of planning "a politically correct diatribe on the nuclear age."[204]

Tibbets added his voice to those of the critics. In June 1994, he publicly dismissed the original exhibit script as "a package of insults…[that] will engender the aura of evil in which the plane is being cast." He called on historians to stop second-guessing President Truman and his advisors. And he deplored those who "have labeled the atomic missions as war crimes in an effort to force their politics and their opinions on the American public and to damn military history."[205]

Undeterred, Harwit sought to secure Tibbets's involvement and support, as the Museum believed it had successfully done with Tibbets's friends Ferebee and Van Kirk. Harwit was convinced that Tibbets had not actually read the script and offered to send him the latest draft, which had been revised following criticisms by military historians, veterans, and others who objected that the proposed exhibit was too sympathetic to the Japanese and too critical of the U.S. Harwit wrote in June and then in July soliciting Tibbets's input and explaining, "The Museum has been keenly aware that the public has many questions about the use of the atomic bomb. These should not be ignored or swept under the rug. That would only give the appearance that the United States is unable to face the issues squarely. As a national museum I think we have both an opportunity and an obligation to show that the questions under debate can be discussed

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openly and without apology; but we also realize that this is only possible if we are willing to touch on all the issues that have been raised from time to time, and not just those that are unanimously accepted as uncontroversial."[206] Tibbets never responded to Harwit. He later said that, when he first read the script, "I got sick to my stomach." He charged, "History has been denigrated, the Enola Gay has been miscast and a group of valiant Americans…(has) been denied a historically correct representation to the public."[207] In a November 1994 meeting, Tibbets urged Smithsonian Secretary I. Michael Heyman to fire Harwit and two curators. Later, even though exhibit planners made the changes demanded by Tibbets and other critics, Tibbets still asserted, "I'd vote 100 percent to have the whole thing canceled."[208]

The Enola Gay at the Smithsonian

After talking with Tibbets's "people" and discovering how "mad" American Legion officials were, Ferebee also denounced the proposed Smithsonian exhibit. In August, curator Joanne Gernstein spoke with him and discovered that he viewed the exhibit as saying, in her paraphrase, "1) the bomb should not have been dropped and that 2) Americans were vindictive, cruel, and racist."[209] In an October interview, Ferebee went further. "It seemed like that exhibit was going to be an apology that we dropped the atomic bomb," he said. He objected that the planned exhibit made American combatants "seem biased and racist, like we were being cruel and vindictive. What we did brought the war to an end and saved lives."[210] Van Kirk became equally dismissive, calling the original script "a bunch of rubbish." He proposed a stripped down exhibit that avoided raising unsettling questions: "As far as I'm concerned, all they need to do is put the airplane on exhibit with a sign on it saying this is what it did."[211] A few months earlier, Van Kirk had assured an interviewer, "If [Harwit] wanted an exhibit on the horrors of nuclear war, I'd support it." He cautioned, however, that such an exhibit "wouldn't draw."[212] Charles Sweeney too weighed in, criticizing "overeducated armchair patriots." He found the planned exhibit "abominable and un-American."[213]

In his analysis of the final bare-bones, minimalist, exculpatory exhibit, New York Times correspondent David Sanger called it "the most diminished display in Smithsonian history…" Sanger described it as "a strikingly incomplete exhibition that leaves visitors totally in the dark about how a decision was reached to use the bomb, and the aftermath of the most militarily decisive and horrific mission in the history of the war."[214] In the exhibit that ensued, all visitors learned about the decision and its human costs was contained on a placard placed alongside the fuselage. It stated: "Tibbets piloted the aircraft on its mission to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. That bomb and the one dropped on Nagasaki three days later destroyed much of the two cities and caused tens of thousands of deaths. However, the use of the bombs led to the immediate surrender of Japan and made unnecessary the planned invasion of the Japanese home islands. Such an invasion, especially if undertaken for both main islands, would have led to very heavy casualties among American and Allied troops and Japanese civilians and military. It was thought highly unlikely that Japan, while in a weakened military condition, would have surrendered

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unconditionally without such an invasion."[215] Tibbets received a private viewing the week before the exhibit officially opened on June 28, 1995. Unlike Sanger, Tibbets thought the exhibit got it just right. He wrote to Heyman, "I am pleased and proud of the exhibit. As for the exhibit content, I firmly believe that you have gotten to the basic facts. There is no attempt to persuade anyone about anything. Thank you for that." "And through the video [that accompanied the exhibit] we have had an opportunity to say our little piece. Many of us will go to our graves much happier for that."[216]

In October 1994, when Takahashi learned that Tibbets and other veterans had demanded the exhibit be changed to reflect their interpretation of events, he wrote Tibbets a letter in which he objected to their attempts to whitewash history. He instructed Tibbets that the U.S. could no more evade responsibility for dropping atomic bombs than Japan could for the atrocities it committed against other Asian peoples. He dismissed the argument that the bomb had actually saved U.S. and Japanese lives. "The exhibit," he wrote, "must depict the reality of the war so that it will be able to teach visitors that nuclear weapons themselves are absolutely evil."[217] Takahashi welcomed inclusion of information about Japanese aggression, but took particular umbrage at exhibit opponents' effort to remove items showing Japanese suffering. "I totally accept the addition [of materials about Japan's aggression]," he announced. "But why delete those items and try to shield the American people from the terrible realities of the atomic bombing?"[218]

Tibbets visited the fully restored Enola Gay when it was displayed at the Air and Space Museum annex in 2003, following another heated controversy about the Smithsonian's refusal to look meaningfully at the most significant event in 20th century American history. "I wanted to climb in and fly it," he said.[219]

Tibbets told the Palm Beach Post in 2001 that the Hiroshima controversy "got me roused up." While stubbornly sticking to his story and refusing to consider the evidence that the bomb wasn't necessary to end the war or to reflect on the deeper moral implications of killing hundreds of thousands of people and ushering in the nuclear age, he charged, "Our young people don't know anything about what happened because nobody taught them and now their minds are being filled up with things that aren't true."[220]

Tibbets was correct in one respect. He and others, in their efforts to block public airing of this critical history, have allowed ignorance to run rampant. This was no more on display than when Soldier of Fortune magazine gave Tibbets its first Humanitarian Award in 1998. Publisher Robert Brown, who was presenting the award, exemplified how far the distortion of history had progressed. He told the Las Vegas Sun, "Gen. Tibbets was responsible for saving at least a million American lives, as well as the lives of several scores of millions of Japanese, and preventing the total destruction of their country."[221]

Tibbets often said he hoped nuclear weapons would never be used again. In 1978, he told listeners at a National Veterans Day Award dinner, "We must strive by every means to prevent warfare by these means."[222] In 1985, Tibbets appeared on the Charlie Rose show and stated, "Please understand. I'm not for nuclear war. I'm not even in favor of warfare, if you want to know the truth."[223] But he also had no fondness for those who protested the atomic bombings. On the eve of planned demonstrations around the 37th anniversary in August 1982, he told an interviewer, "I really think these people don't know what they're demonstrating for. They're demonstrating just to be demonstrating. The exciting thing to do is join. I've talked to some demonstrators and

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they say they don't know what they're doing, only that they're being paid to do it." Tibbets consistently dismissed those who clung to utopian dreams about peace and disarmament. He stated in 1982, "Some would like to see an end to warfare and that I would support. But it's not practical and it won't be done."[224]

In 1985 he told an interviewer that, if asked to drop a nuclear weapon on Hanoi during the Vietnam War, "I would've without any question."[225] And he also said he would have done so against Muslim extremists. He told Studs Terkel in 2002 that he supported using nuclear weapons against current U.S. enemies: "Oh, I wouldn't hesitate if I had the choice. I'd wipe 'em out. You're gonna kill innocent people at the same time, but we've never fought a damn war anywhere in the world where they didn't kill innocent people. If the newspapers would just cut out the shit: 'You've killed so many civilians.' That's their tough luck for being there."[226]

Such insensitivity to the death and suffering of innocent victims permeated Tibbets's comments over the years. Oliver Kamm has argued that Tibbets was a humane man. However, in contrast to many others who participated in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he never reflected publicly and thoughtfully about the atomic bombings, the lives cost and saved, or the deeper and more enduring legacy of the nuclear age he helped usher in. Perhaps he rejected the numerous opportunities provided to show his humanity because he felt so much guilt or perhaps, as he always claimed, it was because he felt none. Like most of the other participants, he stubbornly clung to a truncated, partial, and increasingly discredited version of events, refusing to even consider the mounting evidence that the atomic bombs neither ended the war nor were necessary to avoid an invasion. This helps explain why, with the exception of Eatherly, none were able to fully make the crucial leap from regret to remorse.

Tibbets continued to defend the atomic bombings in his final years. In 2005, he said of the controversy, "It's kind of getting old, but then so am I. The guys who appreciated that I saved their asses are mostly dead now." He recognized that he would soon be joining them, a prospect he didn't fear. "I don't fear a goddamn thing," he insisted. "I'm not afraid of dying. As soon as the death certificate is signed, I want to be cremated. I don't want a funeral. I don't want to be eulogized. I don't want any monuments or plaques." "I want my ashes scattered over where I loved to fly."[227]

Paul Tibbets requested that his ashes be scattered over the English Channel, where he spent many hours flying during the war. His granddaughter Kia Tibbets explained, "He didn't want a funeral because he didn't want to take the chance of protesters or anyone defacing a headstone."[228] The Columbus Dispatch identified Tibbets's grandson, Lt. Col. Paul Tibbets IV, an Air Force B-2 mission command pilot whose nickname was "nuke," as a likely candidate to do the job.[229]

Tibbets was survived by Andrea Quattrehomme Tibbets, the French woman he married in 1956, along with two sons from his first marriage, one from his second, and six grandchildren. He maintained his gruff, unyielding, and unapologetic exterior until the very end. But his granddaughter Kia Tibbets, who grew up in his home, remembered him very differently. "He always told me that he loved me," she said. "It's not a side of him that other people saw."[230]

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Notes

[1] Oliver Kamm, "Paul Tibbets and Enola Gay…About those Obits," History News Network.
[2] In July 2007, the International People's Tribunal on the Dropping of Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki found Tibbets guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Charges were also brought against 14 other Americans who bore responsibility for the atomic bombings.
[3] Michael Killian, "Two Pilots Log Their Memoirs," Chicago Tribune, 5 November 1978, G11.
[4] Mike Hardin, "Just 'Doing His Job' at Hiroshima, Globe and Mail (Canada, online), 6 August 1985.
[5] Mike Harden, "Still No Regrets for Frail Enola Gay Pilot," Columbus Dispatch, 6 August 2005, 1.
[6] Greg Mitchell, "On the Death of 'Hiroshima Bomb' Pilot Paul Tibbets," Editor and Publisher, 1 November 2007. (on line)
[7] According to Tibbets, the incident occurred in early 1943. At a planning meeting for a bombing raid, Tibbets objected that, if his men followed instructions Norstadt's instructions to send the planes in at 6,000 feet, "it would be pure suicide." Norstadt responded that perhaps Tibbets had flown too many missions and was scared to do it. Tibbets recalled, "In front of the assembly I immediately glared right straight back at him and told him I wasn't afraid to fly the mission—that I'd be glad to take and lead the whole mission if he'd fly as my co-pilot." After that, Tibbets was quickly shipped out of the unit. "Tibbets, Top B-17 Pilot, Chosen to Get B-29s Started," Chicago Tribune, 13 March 1968, 2.
[8] Wayne Thomis, "Tibbets Keeps Busy with B-29s—But Biggest Surprise is Ahead," Chicago Tribune, 14 March 1968, 10. Other accounts indicate that the meeting in Colorado Springs occurred in September.
[9] Wayne Thomis, "U.S. Dropped A-Bomb Delivery on Target in My Lap: Tibbets," Chicago Tribune, 15 March 1968, B1.
[10] Studs Terkel, Hope Dies Last: Keeping the Faith in Difficult Times (New York: The New Press, 2003), 49.
[11] Eric Malnic, "Paul Tibbets, Pilot Who Bombed Hiroshima, Dies at 92," Los Angeles Times, 2 November 2007, 1.
[12] Malnic, 1.
[10] Kay Bartlett, "The Man Who Dropped the Bomb: Thirty Years Later," Dallas Morning Star, 3 August 1975, 1.
[13] Bartlett, 1.
[14] Andrea Stone, "For Air Crews, A-Bombings a Matter of Duty, USA Today, 17 April 1995, 6.
[15] Jacob Beser, Hiroshima and Nagasaki Revisited, (Memphis: Global Press, 1988), 32.
[16] Stone, 6.
[17] "The Outlook Interview: Jacob Beser Talks to Bruce Goldfarb," Washington Post, 19 May 1985, D3.
[18] Daniel Yee, "Navigator Says 'Easy Mission' of Enola Gay Led to End of WWII," Associated Press (online), 6 August 2005.
[19] Beser, 38.
[20] Glen Martin, "Dropping the Bomb," San Francisco Chronicle (online), 6 August 1995. Ten years later, Van Kirk told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, "If you had any brains, you knew it was an atomic bomb. We weren't a bunch of mushrooms flying in the dark." Bill Torpy, "'Our Objective Was to Shorten the War': 60 Years Later, No Regrets over Hiroshima," Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 6 August 2005, E1.

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[21] Some accounts say Ferebee also learned that they would be carrying an atomic bomb. See, for example, "B-29 Reunion: Fliers Proud of Job but Regret Need," Los Angeles Times, 7 August 1965, 1. Ferebee said he was asleep when Tibbets announced what kind of bomb they were carrying and recalled, oddly, that he never heard the words "atom bomb" until he returned to Tinian where a brigadier general approached him and reported, "The President has announced that you just dropped the first atom bomb." Brad Manning, "Enola Gay Bombardier Was Quite Cool; Man Slept on Way to Drop A-Bomb," Charlotte Observer, 5 August 1990, 1; Sharon Churcher and Bill Lowther, "'I never lost a moment's sleep after dropping the atom bomb on Hiroshima…I saved millions of lives with a single press of a button on the Enola Gay'; On the 50th Anniversary of the Nuclear Attack on Japan, the Airmen Who Released the Bomb Break their Silence," Mail (London), 16 July 1995, 49. In 1995, he explained, that all Tibbets "was allowed to tell me was that I was to develop the ballistics for a bomb that would destroy everything for miles. I had no idea what was to cause the explosion…" Churcher and Lowther, 48. Jeppson, who spent time in Los Alamos may also have known. See Ferguson, "Enola Gay Crew Member Jeppson Remembers Famed Flight," Las Vegas Sun (online edition), 25 May 2000.

[22] Thomas Turner, "Only Texas Crew Member Recalls Hiroshima Bombing," Dallas Morning News, 6 August, 1956, 7.

[23] Merle Miller and Abe Spitzer, We Dropped the A-Bomb (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, Company, 1946, v.

[24] He told an interviewer, "I wanted to do everything that I could to subdue Japan. I wanted to kill the bastards." It is not clear whether his change of heart about civilian casualties reflected a hatred for the Japanese, fueled by pervasive stories of their wartime atrocities, that was shared by many Americans, or whether it was simply a reflection of the devaluation of life that often occurs in wartime. He did claim to have "classmates who were beheaded by some Japanese practicing their swordsmanship."Richard Goldstein, "Paul W. Tibbets Jr., Pilot of Enola Gay, Dies at 92," New York Times, 2 November 2007, C11; Kay Bartlett, "Pilot of 1st A-Bomb Plane: Quiet Man with No Regrets," Chicago Tribune, 3 August 1975, 14.

[25] Copilot Cptn. Robert Lewis was furious when he saw Tibbets's mother's name on the plane. Already unhappy that Tibbets would be flying Lewis's plane with Lewis's crew, he reportedly yelled, "What the hell is that doing on my plane?" when he saw the name Tibbets had chosen. Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan Witts, Enola Gay (New York: Stein and Day, 1977), 233. Tibbets's mother at lease initially got a kick out of having the plane named after her. When asked how she felt about it, Tibbets responded, "Well, I can only tell you what my dad said. My mother never changed her expression very much about anything, whether it was serious or light, but when she'd get tickled, her stomach would jiggle. My dad said to me that when the telephone in Miami rang, my mother was quiet first. Then, when it was announced on the radio, he said, 'You should have seen the old gal's belly jiggle on that one.'" Terkel, 54-55.

[26] Miller and Spitzer, 11, 15.

[27] Miller and Spitzer, 26. Other accounts attribute that information to Parsons.

[28] Beser, 102.

[29] Richard Rhodes, The Making of the Atomic Bomb (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 701. Bombardier Tom Ferebee reacted more skeptically: "They did say it was the mission that should end the war, but they'd said that about every mission I'd ever flown." Churcher and Lowther, 48.

[31] Gustav Niebuhr, "Enola Gay's Crew Recalls the Flight into a New Era," New York Times, 6 August 1995, 10.

[32] Turner, 7.

[33] Beser, 96.

[34] Infield, 1.

[35] Ferguson, "Enola Gay Crew Member Jeppson Remembers Famed Flight," Las Vegas

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Sun (online edition), 25 May 2000.
[36] David Remnick, "Hiroshima, With No Regrets," Washington Post, 31 July 1985, D1; Gordon Thomas, "The Man Who Gazed into Hell…; Review," Sunday Express, 31 July 1005, 55. Tension ran high between Tibbets and Lewis at this point. Lewis objected to the fact that not only was Tibbets flying Lewis's plane with Lewis's crew on this flight but Tibbets had named the plane after his own mother.
[37] Wayne Thomis, "Fateful Moment Arrives; Atom Bomb Dropped," Chicago Tribune, 20 March 1968, 2; Douglas Martin, "Thomas Ferebee Dies at 81; Dropped First Atomic Bomb," New York Times, 18 March 2000, 11; "B-29 Reunion: Fliers Proud of Job but Regret Need," 1; Richard Goldstein, "G.W. Marquardt, War Pilot, Dies at 84," New York Times, 25 August 2003, B6; Mullener, "Pearl Attack Led to Mushroom Cloud for Paul Tibbets," Times-Picayune (New Orleans, online edition), 6 December 2000; Manning, 1. The Little Boy bomb was also occasionally referred to as "Lean Boy" or "Thin Man." While some still measure the bomb's force at 15 kilotons, experts with the Radiation Effects Research Foundation in Hiroshima have alerted me that they will soon be raising the official estimate to 16 kilotons. Some estimates place the bomb's weight at 9700 pounds. See, for example, this.
[38] Mullener, "Pearl Attack Led to Mushroom Cloud for Paul Tibbets," Times-Picayune (New Orleans, online edition), 6 December 2000.
[39] Stephen Walker, Shockwave: Countdown to Hiroshima (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 260; Van Kirk later downplayed the impact of the shock wave, recalling, it "wasn't bad—about six Gs. But of course, it gets bigger and bigger with the passing of the years, like all war stories." Martin, "Dropping the Bomb," San Francisco Chronicle (online), 6 August 1995.
[40] Sam Heys, "A Fateful Dozen 40 Years Later," Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution, 5 August 1985, B1.
[41] Torpy, E1.
[42] W. H. Lawrence, "5 Plants Vanished," New York Times, 8 August 1945, 1.
[43] Richard Goldstein, "Paul W. Tibbets Jr., Pilot of Enola Gay, Dies at 92," New York Times, 2 November 2007, C11; Malnic, 1.
[44] Adam Bernstein, "Paul Tibbets Jr.; Piloted Plane that Dropped First Atom Bomb," Washington Post, 2 November 2007, B7.
[45] In declining an interview in 2005, Tibbets explained, "I haven't got anything else to add. I've only got one story to tell." Christina Almeida, "Navigator Says 'Easy Mission' of Enola Gay Led to End of WWII," Associated Press (online), 6 August 2005.
[46] Malnic, 1.
[47] Rodney Chester, "Result Excellent: Mission Over," Courier Mail (Queensland, Australia), 6 August 2005, 27; Jacquin Sanders, "The Day the Bomb Dropped on Hiroshima," St. Petersburg Times, 6 August 1995, 1; Beser, 111.
[48] John Platero, "Retired Colonel Looks Back at Dropping of A-Bomb on Hiroshima," Los Angeles Times, 1 August 1982, 2.
[49] Manning, 1.
[50] Churcher and Lowther, 48.
[51] Burt A. Folkart, "Co-Pilot on First Atomic Bomb Run Dies," Los Angeles Times, 21 June 1983, E17.
[52] Niebuhr, 10.
[53] Walker, 262.
[54] Goldstein, "G.W. Marquardt, War Pilot, Dies at 84," B6.
[55] Miller and Spitzer, 42-45.
[56] Nigel Fountain, "Obituary: Richard Nelson: The Man Who Told the President about Hiroshima," Guardian, 7 February 2003, 24.
[57] Paula Kerr, "08:15, Aug 6, 1945: Hiroshima 60 Years On: I Dropped the Bomb; We Vaporised 50,000 People in 43 Seconds Enola Gay Navigator's Ist," Sunday Mirror, 31 July 2005, 41.
[58] For the higher estimate, see Walker, 272; Van Kirk wrote "Cloud Gone" in his navigator's log when they were more than 250 miles away. Jesse Hamlin, "Frozen in Time: Enola Gay's Navigator Takes Atomic Artifacts to Auction Block," San Francisco Chronicle (online), 27

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May 2002.
[59] Turner, 7.
[60] Miller and Spitzer, 47.
[61] Miller and Spitzer, 48.
[62] Kerr, 41; Sanders, 1.
[63] Hamlin, "Frozen in Time: Enola Gay's Navigator Takes Atomic Artifacts to Auction Block," San Francisco Chronicle (online), 27 May 2002.
[64] Miller and Spitzer, 50.
[65] Henry Allen, "Reunion of the Enola Gay," Washington Post, 11 August 1980, B2; Michael Olesker, "Jacob Beser Remembered Lives Lost—and Saved," Baltimore Sun (online edition), 28 June 1992.
[66] Miller and Spitzer, 50.
[67] Thomis, "Fateful Moment Arrives; Atom Bomb Dropped," 2.
[68] Miller and Spitzer, 57-59.
[69] The best source on this is Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Harvard, 2005).
[70] Robert H. Ferrell, ed. Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1980), 53.
[71] Gar Alperovitz, The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb: And the Architecture of an American Myth (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 124.
[72] Beser, 98, note 7.
[73] "Copilot: God Forgive Us," Dallas Morning News, 10 August 1975, 2.
[74] Cindy Horswell, "Regrets? Yes—But No Guilt," Houston Chronicle, 10 August 1985, 1.
[75] Frederick Olivi, "Pilot on Plane Which Bombed Nagasaki Recalls Necessity for Using A-Weapon," Dallas Morning News, 8 August 1960, 10.
[76] John Powers, "A Rain of Ruin," (Part 2), Boston Globe Magazine, 6 August 1995, 16; Peter Goldman, "Forty Years On," Newsweek, 29 July 1985, p. 40 ff.
[77] Bartlett, 1.
[78] Heys, B1.
[79] Terkel, 53.
[80] Mira Oberman, "Pilot of Hiroshima Bomber Dies," Agence France Press, 1 November 2007.
[81] Chester, 27.
[82] Kamm, "Paul Tibbets and Enola Gay…About those Obits," History News Network.
[83] Bartlett, "Pilot of 1st A-Bomb Plane: Quiet Man with No Regrets," 14.
[84] Niebuhr, 10.
[85] Bernstein, B7.
[86] Infield, 1.
[87] Eugene L. Meyer, "Target: Smithsonian; The Man Who Dropped the Bomb on Hiroshima Wants Exhibit Scuttled," Washington Post, 30 January 1995, D1.
[88] "Nazis, Japan both A-Bomb Targets: Pilot," Japan Times (on line), 8 August 2002.
[89] Chester, 27.
[90] Bartlett, "Pilot of 1st A-Bomb Plane: Quiet Man with No Regrets," 14.
[91] Robert S. McNamara, "International Court Could Help Clarify the Rules for War," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 10 August 2003, 11.
[92] William Lowther, "It Was the Only Choice," Herald (Glasgow), 3 August 1995, 13.
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