

## **From an article by Yang Jing, a History Professor at Shenyang University**

When the B-29s came to bomb the Mukden area, the men in the camp had never seen anything like them, since they were put in service while the men were held captive. This is the story of 14 men, who survived capture during those 2 raids, and their connection to the Mukden Camp.

### **B-29's in Mukden Area**

As we mark the sixtieth anniversary of V-J Day, ending World War II, it is fitting to pay special tribute to all of the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for justice and world peace. However, the story of a group of young American fliers who battled over Shenyang (known as Mukden, Manchuria) is not well known in China. Because these silent heroes truly deserve our unforgettable commemoration, this writer conducted a seven-month-long field search of the crash sites of the B-29s that fell near Shenyang. It is hoped that this refreshed memory will help enhance the traditional Sino-American friendship and mutual interest, as well as a harmonious coexistence of the whole world.

### **Air Raid over Shenyang**

On December 7, 1944, 108 B-29s operating from Chengdu, China, were dispatched to bomb the Manchuria Airplane Manufacturing Company and an adjacent arsenal at Mukden. Eighty aircraft hit the primary target and ten others hit a rail yard short of the primary target; several additional strikes were made on alternate targets. Seven B-29s were lost on that day. Two weeks later, on December 21st, 19 of 49 58th Bombardment Wing B-29s, dispatched from Chengdu, attacked an aircraft factory and arsenal at Shenyang; eight B-29s attacked several alternates and targets of opportunity around Mukden. Two B-29s were lost on that day. During these two missions, 85 crewmembers of U.S. Army Air Forces (AAF) were killed, while another 14 survived from their bailout, but were captured by the Japanese military in that area. The American airmen were kept prisoners of war until August 15, 1945, when they were liberated.

Approaching the winter of 1944, anti-aircraft alarms were sounded all over Shenyang, while the Japanese military practiced the tactic of setting fires to envelop the arsenal area to obscure the target against aerial bombardment. SSgt. Wult Huss, a B-29 survivor and POW (prisoner of war) at Shenyang, observed that this tactic was not really effective, because the smoke made it even easier for B-29s to locate their targets. On December 7, formations of American B-29s poured in from Southwest Shenyang, causing panic among the residents of the city. The radio broadcasters, who reported the attack, were shrill in their announcements. As dense smoke filled the arsenal area, Japanese ground anti-aircraft forces fired back but could not reach the B-29's altitude. Local eyewitness recalled that the ground fire sounded like firecrackers exploding far below the B-29s. Meanwhile, about fifty Japanese Tojo fighters took off from several military airfields around Shenyang, including Fengji and Yuhong airports to block the B-29s. The B-29 gunners gave the fighters a sharp response. Nevertheless, the Japanese fighters still managed to ram a couple of B-29s. According to the latest research, the Japanese fighters

rammed six B-29s and another three crashed due to unknown reasons in these two missions. Today, surviving local witnesses in the surrounding villages Yongle, Yong'an, Yangshi, and Yujia Wopu, still clearly recall and identify those crash sites (which is the most updated result of my field search). The bombardment severely damaged Japanese facilities. However, two missed targeted bombs hit a nearby prisoner of war camp where Allied forces were kept POWs, and killed 19 Americans and wounded 54.

## **Gone with the Wind**

According to historical records, B-29 #42-6390 named "Gallop in' Goose," is believed to have been the first plane rammed over Mukden. SSgt. William Wootten, a crewman aboard B-29 #42-24486 "Windy City II," witnessed the ramming of "Gallop in' Goose." In his account of the Japanese fighter that rammed #42-6390, SSgt. Wootten described the scene: "The fighter came in at us low and I gave him 50 rounds when he was 400 yards away. The fighter's right engine started smoking and burning." Sgt. Wootten saw pieces of the canopy fly off. Going down out of control and smoking profusely, the fighter then pulled up and slipped under #42-6390, hitting the left horizontal and vertical stabilizer and tearing them off. "I saw one parachute come out of #42-6390 before it hit the ground."

"Old Campaigner," B-29 #42-24175, was rammed on December 21, 1944. The pilot, Capt. Benedict was a West Point Military Academy graduate (1943). His father-in-law was Maj. Gen. O. P. Smith, USMC. Benedict had a daughter born in 1944, but he never made it home to see her. His father, also killed in a plane crash, had graduated from West Point with Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower. The bombardier, Lt. Dailey, also had a daughter born in 1944, but never made it home to see her. Daily was studying to be a minister. Both daughters of the pilot and bombardier became American history teachers and had never meet each other until early 2003. The navigator, Lt. Evans, and Lt. Dailey were married to twin sisters. Lt. Dailey didn't have any children. The flight engineer, Lt. Mahoney, was also a Pearl Harbor survivor. The right gunner, SSgt. Elmer Jelgerhuis had a twin brother, Alvin, who was also a gunner on B-29s in the same bomb group. When Elmer went down, Alvin was offered a trip back to the States, but he declined. He later went down over Japan, was made a POW, and was liberated at war's end. SSgt. Edwards flew aboard "Old Campaigner" and passed out immediately after bailing out of the plane. He awoke when he reached the ground. His B-29 only went a short distance before its wing broke off, causing the plane to spin in. At the time he jumped, he had not realized how badly the plane was damaged. He never saw the plane crash and never saw the rest of the crew. According to eyewitnesses, soon after he landed on the northern bank of the Hunhe River, Japanese soldiers came up, blindfolded him, and then took him away in a motor-tricycle to prison. He went through prison camp thinking that the crew recovered the plane and managed to go on and that he had jumped needlessly. He didn't learn what actually happened until the end of the war. The radio operator, SSgt. Edwards, named his only daughter "Pamela" after the daughter of the bombardier. The women also never met until early in 2003. The Flight Engineer, 1st Lt. Charles Krueger on board "Humpin' Honey" was killed in action. He had twin sons born after he went overseas. Both of them become physicians.

According to a declassified document from headquarters, American Graves Registration Service China Zone, APO 917, July 18, 1947:

- A. On 7 December 1944, B-29 #42-6299 (Humpin Honey) collided with a Japanese Aircraft in midair and crashed in an open field outside of Mukden, Manchuria. Two (2) men, S/Sgt. K.A. Beckwith 31134891 and Sgt. W.E. Huss, 35538620, were thrown clear and parachuted down. These men were captured and put in a prisoner of war camp by the Japanese. Later they returned to the United States.
- B. Two (2) other men, T/ Sgt. K.A. Gwaltney, 13003838 and Sgt. H.H. Roth, 15353855, were thrown clear but in an unconscious state. Their chutes did not open and they were killed in falling to earth.
- C. Of the remainder of the crew, only a few pieces of charred bones remain. The plane, upon crashing, burned with an intense heat and witnesses state no one survived.

### **Still MIA's?**

Another crew that was lost on the Mukden mission was Aircraft #42-6359, the "Missouri Queen." However the missing aircrew report lists it as "Vixen," 770th Bomb Squadron.

7 December 1944--Mission 19 to Mukden, Manchuria: #42-6359 was low on fuel and was going to try and land at a friendly airfield to refuel. 42-6359 was never heard from again. Statement from Capt. Harold R. Ebbeler: "Captain Johnson and crew in ship # 359 and designated as H-3 was flying in the same formation and same element as I was on 7 December 1944. For a while he was flying as lead ship of "C" element with my ship on his left wing and # 362 on his right wing. Shortly thereafter he took the right wing position and # 362 took lead at # 362 ship commander's request. I heard Captain Johnson call the lead ship and tell him that he was going to have to land at one of the fields on the route and refuel, as he was getting low on gasoline. He stayed with the formation, however, and when the formation started to penetrate the overcast, ship # 359 was still flying # 2 position of "C" element. As we proceeded into the overcast he was still in position and when our plane became lost from the formation at 0432 the ship # 359 was still with us flying in the same element. We proceeded on individual navigation from this time on and had no further contact with Captain Johnson."

Aircraft #42-6359 was believed to have crashed into a mountain at 36.07' North and 112.39' East on December 7, 1944. The above mentioned is identified as the mountain near Qinyuan Prefecture, southern Shanxi Province, which had been occupied by the Japanese. The entire crews are still listed as MIA but were declared dead by USAAF [Army Air Forces] in 1946.

On December 7, 1944, aircraft #42-6262, named "Roundtrip Ticket," crashed between China and Mukden, Manchuria. This plane was seen in trouble but the plane was known to have reached the China Coast. A B-29 with solid red band around the fuselage was seen at between 2,000 and 5,000 feet, at 39 degrees 35' N-120 degree 00'E in trouble. Two aircraft went to help. Five chutes were seen in the water at 39 degrees 36'N-120 degrees 03"E at 0324Z and the ditched aircraft at 39 degrees 55'N-120 degrees 40'E. This aircraft was known to have reached

the China Coast with all four engines running and no visible signs of battle damage. It was not seen again after the formation crossed the coast and continued inland. At the time of crash, the Japanese soldiers in the area took all of the remnants of the plane with them, but left the bodies. Friendly Chinese villagers dug a common grave and placed the entire crew within. After war's end, the grave was opened and the remains were recovered. Six men were positively identified, while the remaining five members of the crew have been identified as a group.

### **About Professor Yang:**

Yang Jing was born on September 26, 1960, in Shenyang, China. He is the Vice Chairman of the September 18th War Studies of Liaoning Province. He devoted more than ten years to the study of Mukden (now Shenyang), site of an Allied World War II prisoner of war camp run by the Japanese. He is an internationally recognized historian and a leading researcher in this field of study.

A graduate of Chao Yang Teacher's College and Shenyang Normal University, he also taught English and American literature. In the early 1990s, after devoting ten years to teaching, Yang Jing chose a career in the field of history. In 2003, Yang Jing wrote a book about the POW camp, entitled Mukden Nirvana, the first book published on the subject in China. Mukden Nirvana contributed a great deal in increasing the public's awareness of the Mukden POW camp, which had been unknown to the Chinese for the past sixty years. Yang Jing's wife, Professor Wen Chengwei, teaches at Shenyang University. Their teenage daughter attends the senior high school.

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Yang Jing "The unforgettable B-29s: a tribute". Air Power History. FindArticles.com. 23 Dec. 2008.

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