

= Paul Tibbets =

Paul Warfield Tibbets Jr. (23 February 1915 ? 1 November 2007) was a brigadier general in the United States Air Force . He is best known as the pilot who flew the Enola Gay (named after his mother) when it dropped Little Boy , the first of two atomic bombs used in warfare , on the Japanese city of Hiroshima .

Tibbets enlisted in the United States Army in 1937 and qualified as a pilot in 1938 . After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor , he flew anti - submarine patrols over the Atlantic . In February 1942 , he became the commanding officer of the 340th Bombardment Squadron of the 97th Bombardment Group , which was equipped with the Boeing B - 17 . In July 1942 the 97th became the first heavy bombardment group to be deployed as part of the Eighth Air Force , and Tibbets became deputy group commander . He flew the lead plane in the first American daylight heavy bomber mission against Occupied Europe on 17 August 1942 , and the first American raid of more than 100 bombers in Europe on 9 October 1942 . Tibbets was chosen to fly Major General Mark W. Clark and Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower to Gibraltar . After flying 43 combat missions , he became the assistant for bomber operations on the staff of the Twelfth Air Force .

Tibbets returned to the United States in February 1943 to help with the development of the Boeing B - 29 Superfortress . In September 1944 , he was appointed the commander of the 509th Composite Group , which would conduct the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki . After the war , he participated in the Operation Crossroads nuclear weapon tests at Bikini Atoll in mid - 1946 , and was involved in the development of the Boeing B - 47 Stratojet in the early 1950s . He commanded the 308th Bombardment Wing and 6th Air Division in the late 1950s , and was military attaché in India from 1964 to 1966 . After leaving the Air Force in 1966 , he worked for Executive Jet Aviation , serving as its president from 1976 until his retirement in 1987 .

= = Early life = =

Paul Warfield Tibbets Jr. was born in Quincy , Illinois , on 23 February 1915 , the son of Paul Warfield Tibbets Sr. and his wife , Enola Gay Tibbets . When he was five years old the family moved to Davenport , Iowa , and then to Iowa 's capital , Des Moines , where he was raised , and where his father became a confections wholesaler . When he was eight , his family moved to Miami , Florida , to escape from harsh midwestern winters . As a boy he was very interested in flying . One day his mother agreed to pay one dollar to get him into an airplane at the local carnival . In 1927 , when he was 12 years old , he flew in a plane piloted by barnstormer Doug Davis , dropping candy bars with tiny parachutes to the crowd of people attending the races at the Hialeah Park Race Track .

In the late 1920s , business issues forced Tibbets 's family to return to Alton , Illinois , where he graduated from Western Military Academy in 1933 . He then attended the University of Florida in Gainesville , and became an initiated member of the Epsilon Zeta Chapter of Sigma Nu fraternity in 1934 . During that time , Tibbets took private flying lessons at Miami 's Opa - Locka Airport with Rusty Heard , who later became a captain at Eastern Airlines . After his undergraduate work , Tibbets had planned on becoming an abdominal surgeon . He transferred to the University of Cincinnati after his second year to complete his pre - medical studies there , because the University of Florida had no medical school at the time . However , he only attended for a year and a half as he changed his mind about wanting to become a doctor . Instead , he decided to enlist in the United States Army and become a pilot in the United States Army Air Corps .

= = Early military career = =

Because he went to a military school , attended some college , and had some flight experience , Tibbets qualified for the Aviation Cadet Training Program . On 25 February 1937 , he enlisted in the army at Fort Thomas , Kentucky , and was sent to Randolph Field in San Antonio , Texas , for primary and basic flight instruction . During his training , he showed himself to be an above - average pilot . He was commissioned as a second lieutenant and received his pilot rating in 1938 at

Kelly Field , Texas .

After graduation , Tibbets was assigned to the 16th Observation Squadron , which was based at Lawson Field , Georgia , with a flight supporting the Infantry School at nearby Fort Benning . It was here that he met Lucy Wingate , a clerk at a department store in Columbus , Georgia . The two quietly married in a Catholic seminary in Holy Trinity , Alabama , on 19 June 1938 . Tibbets did not inform his family or his commanding officer , and the couple arranged for the notice to be kept out of the local paper . They had two sons , Paul III and Gene . While stationed at Fort Benning , Tibbets was promoted to first lieutenant , and served as a personal pilot for Brigadier General George S. Patton Jr. in 1940 and 1941 .

In June 1941 , Tibbets transferred to the 9th Bombardment Squadron of the 3d Bombardment Group at Hunter Field , Savannah , Georgia , as the engineering officer , and flew the A @-@ 20 Havoc . While there he was promoted to captain . In December 1941 , he received orders to join the 29th Bombardment Group at MacDill Field , Florida , for training on the Boeing B @-@ 17 Flying Fortress . On 7 December 1941 , Tibbets heard about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor while listening to the radio during a routine flight . Due to fears that German U @-@ Boats might enter Tampa Bay and bombard MacDill Field , the 29th Bombardment Group moved to Savannah . Tibbets remained on temporary duty with the 3d Bombardment Group , forming an anti @-@ submarine patrol at Pope Army Airfield , North Carolina , with 21 B @-@ 18 Bolo medium bombers . The B @-@ 18s were used as an intermediate trainer , which pilots flew after basic flight training in a Cessna UC @-@ 78 and before qualifying in the B @-@ 17 . Listen to Paul Tibbets own story of the development of the bomb

= = War against Germany = =

In February 1942 , Tibbets reported for duty with the 29th Bombardment Group as its engineering officer . Three weeks later he was named the commanding officer of the 340th Bombardment Squadron of the 97th Bombardment Group , equipped with the B @-@ 17D . It was initially based at MacDill , and then Sarasota Army Airfield , Florida , before moving to Godfrey Army Airfield in Bangor , Maine .

In July 1942 the 97th became the first heavy bombardment group of the Eighth Air Force to be deployed to England , where it was based at RAF Polebrook . It had been hastily assembled to meet demands for an early deployment , and arrived without any training in the basics of high altitude daylight bombing . In the first weeks of August 1942 , under the tutelage of Royal Air Force veterans , the group received intensive training for its first mission . The group commander , Lieutenant Colonel Cornelius W. Cousland , was replaced by Colonel Frank A. Armstrong Jr . , who appointed Tibbets as his deputy .

Tibbets flew the lead bomber Butcher Shop for the first American daylight heavy bomber mission on 17 August 1942 , a shallow penetration raid against a marshalling yard in Rouen in Occupied France , with Armstrong as his co @-@ pilot . This was not Tibbets 's regular aircraft , Red Gremlin , nor his regular crew , which included bombardier Thomas Ferebee and navigator Theodore Van Kirk , who later flew with him in Enola Gay . On October 9 , Tibbets led the first American raid of more than 100 bombers in Europe , attacking industrial targets in the French city of Lille . Poor bombing accuracy resulted in numerous civilian casualties and less damage to the rail installations than hoped , but the mission was hailed an overall success because it reached its target against heavy and constant fighter attack . Of the 108 aircraft in the raid , 33 were shot down or had to turn back due to mechanical problems .

In the leadup to Operation Torch , the Allied invasion of North Africa , the commander of the Eighth Air Force , Major General Carl Spaatz was ordered to provide his best two pilots for a secret mission . He chose Tibbets and Major Wayne Connors . Tibbets flew Major General Mark W. Clark from Polebrook to Gibraltar while Connors flew Clark 's chief of staff , Brigadier General Lyman Lemnitzer . A few weeks later Tibbets flew the Supreme Allied Commander , Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower , there . " By reputation " , historian Stephen Ambrose wrote , Tibbets was " the best flier in the Army Air Force [sic] . "

After Tibbets had flown 25 combat missions against targets in France , the 97th Bomb Group was transferred to North Africa as part of Major General Jimmy Doolittle 's Twelfth Air Force . For Tibbets , the war in North Africa introduced him to the realities of aerial warfare . He claimed that he saw the real effects of bombing civilians and the trauma of losing his brothers in arms . In January 1943 , Tibbets , who had now flown 43 combat missions , was assigned as the assistant for bomber operations to Colonel Lauris Norstad , Assistant Chief of Staff of Operations (A @-@ 3) of the Twelfth Air Force . Tibbets had recently been given a battlefield promotion to colonel , but did not receive it , as such promotions had to be confirmed by a panel of officers . He was told that Norstad had vetoed the promotion , saying " there 's only going to be one colonel in operations . "

Tibbets did not get along well with Norstad , or with Doolittle 's chief of staff , Brigadier General Hoyt Vandenberg . In one planning meeting , Norstad wanted an all @-@ out raid on Bizerte to be flown at 6 @,@ 000 feet (1 @,@ 800 m) . Tibbets protested that flak would be most effective at that altitude . When challenged by Norstad , Tibbets said he would lead the mission himself at 6 @,@ 000 feet if Norstad would fly as his co @-@ pilot . Norstad backed down , and the mission was successfully flown at 20 @,@ 000 feet (6 @,@ 100 m) .

= = War against Japan = =

When General Henry H. Arnold , the Chief of United States Army Air Forces , requested an experienced bombardment pilot to help with the development of the Boeing B @-@ 29 Superfortress bomber , Doolittle recommended Tibbets . Tibbets returned to the United States in February 1943 . At the time , the B @-@ 29 program was beset by a host of technical problems , and the chief test pilot , Edmund T. Allen , had been killed in a crash of the prototype aircraft .

Working with the Boeing plant in Wichita , Kansas , Tibbets test flew the B @-@ 29 , and soon accumulated more flight time in it than any other pilot . He found that without defensive armament and armor plating , the aircraft was 7 @,@ 000 pounds (3 @,@ 200 kg) lighter , and its performance was much improved . In simulated combat engagements against a P @-@ 47 fighter at the B @-@ 29 's cruising altitude of 30 @,@ 000 feet (9 @,@ 100 m) , he discovered that the B @-@ 29 had a smaller turning radius than the P @-@ 47 , and could avoid it by turning away .

After a year of developmental testing of the B @-@ 29 , Tibbets was assigned in March 1944 as director of operations of the 17th Bombardment Operational Training Wing (Very Heavy) , a B @-@ 29 training unit based at Grand Island Army Air Field , Nebraska , and commanded by Armstrong . Its role was to transition pilots to the B @-@ 29 . Tibbets taught two Women Airforce Service Pilots , Dora Dougherty and Dorothea (Didi) Moorman , to fly the B @-@ 29 as demonstration pilots .

On 1 September 1944 , Tibbets reported to Colorado Springs Army Airfield , the headquarters of the Second Air Force , where he met with its commander , Major General Uzal Ent , and three representatives of the Manhattan Project , Lieutenant Colonel John Lansdale Jr . , Captain William S. Parsons , and Norman F. Ramsey Jr . , who briefed him on the project . Tibbets was told that he would be in charge of the 509th Composite Group , a fully self @-@ contained organization of about 1 @,@ 800 men , which would have 15 B @-@ 29s and a high priority for all kinds of military stores . Ent gave Tibbets a choice of three possible bases : Great Bend Army Airfield , Kansas ; Mountain Home Army Airfield , Idaho ; or Wendover Army Air Field , Utah . Tibbets selected Wendover for its remoteness .

When the operation was still in the development stage the leading candidates to command the group designated to drop the atomic bomb had been Armstrong and Colonel Roscoe C. Wilson , the Army Air Force project officer providing liaison support to the Manhattan Project . Although an experienced combat veteran against German targets , Armstrong was in his forties and had been severely injured in a fire in the summer of 1943 , while Wilson had no combat experience and was qualified primarily by his engineering background and association with the project . Tibbets was considerably younger than both and had experience in both staff and command duties in heavy bomber combat operations , and was already an experienced B @-@ 29 pilot , thus making him an ideal candidate .

Tibbets , who received promotion to colonel in January 1945 , brought his wife and family along with him to Wendover . He felt that allowing married men in the group to bring their families would improve morale , although it put a strain on his own marriage . To explain all the civilian engineers on base who were working on the Manhattan Project , he had to lie to his wife , telling her that the engineers were " sanitary workers . " At one point Tibbets found that Lucy had co @-@ opted a scientist to unplug a drain .

On 6 March 1945 , concurrent with the activation of Project Alberta , the 1st Ordnance Squadron , Special (Aviation) was activated at Wendover , again using Army Air Forces personnel on hand or already at Los Alamos . Its purpose was to provide " skilled machinists , welders and munitions workers " and special equipment to the group to enable it to assemble atomic weapons at its operating base , thereby allowing the weapons to be transported more safely in their component parts . A rigorous candidate selection process was used to recruit personnel , reportedly with an 80 % rejection rate . The 509th Composite Group reached full strength in May 1945 .

With the addition of the 1st Ordnance Squadron to its roster in March 1945 , the 509th Composite Group had an authorized strength of 225 officers and 1 @,@ 542 enlisted men , almost all of whom deployed to Tinian , an island in the northern Marianas within striking distance of Japan , in May and June 1945 . The 320th Troop Carrier Squadron kept its base of operations at Wendover . In addition to its authorized strength , the 509th had attached to it on Tinian all 51 civilian and military personnel of Project Alberta . Furthermore , two representatives from Washington , D.C. were present on the island : the deputy director of the Manhattan Project , Brigadier General Thomas Farrell , and Rear Admiral William R. Purnell of the Military Policy Committee .

The ground support echelon of the 509th Composite Group received movement orders and moved by rail on 26 April 1945 , to its port of embarkation at Seattle , Washington . On May 6 the support elements sailed on the SS Cape Victory for the Marianas , while the group 's materiel was shipped on the SS Emile Berliner . An advance party of the air echelon flew by C @-@ 54 to North Field , Tinian , between May 15 and 22 , where it was joined by the ground echelon on 29 May 1945 . Project Alberta 's " Destination Team " also sent most of its members to Tinian to supervise the assembly , loading , and dropping of the bombs under the administrative title of 1st Technical Services Detachment , Miscellaneous War Department Group .

On 5 August 1945 , Tibbets formally named his B @-@ 29 Enola Gay after his mother . Enola Gay had been personally selected by him while it was still on the assembly line at the Glenn L. Martin Company plant in Bellevue , Nebraska . The regularly assigned aircraft commander , Robert A. Lewis , was unhappy to be displaced by Tibbets for this important mission , and became furious when he arrived at the aircraft on the morning of August 6 to see the aircraft he considered his painted with the now @-@ famous nose art . Lewis would fly the mission as Tibbets 's co @-@ pilot .

At 02 : 45 the next day ? in accordance with the terms of Operations Order No. 35 ? the Enola Gay departed North Field for Hiroshima , Japan , with Tibbets at the controls . Tinian was approximately 2 @,@ 000 miles (3 @,@ 200 km) away from Japan , so it took six hours to reach Hiroshima . The atomic bomb , code @-@ named " Little Boy " , was dropped over Hiroshima at 08 : 15 local time . Tibbets recalled that the city was covered with a tall mushroom cloud after the bomb was dropped .

Tibbets was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross by Spaatz immediately after landing on Tinian . He became a celebrity , with pictures and interviews of his wife and children in the major American newspapers . He was seen as a national hero who had ended the war with Japan . Tibbets later received an invitation from President Harry S. Truman to visit the White House . The 509th Composite Group was awarded an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award in 1999 .

Tibbets was interviewed extensively by Mike Harden of the Columbus Dispatch , and profiles appeared in the newspaper on anniversaries of the first dropping of an atomic bomb . In a 1975 interview he said : " I 'm proud that I was able to start with nothing , plan it and have it work as perfectly as it did ... I sleep clearly every night . " " I knew when I got the assignment , " he told a reporter in 2005 , " it was going to be an emotional thing . We had feelings , but we had to put them in the background . We knew it was going to kill people right and left . But my one driving interest was to do the best job I could so that we could end the killing as quickly as possible . "

= = Post @-@ war military career = =

The 509th Composite Group returned to the United States on 6 November 1945 , and was stationed at Roswell Army Airfield , New Mexico . Colonel William H. Blanchard replaced Tibbets as group commander on 22 January 1946 , and also became the first commander of the 509th Bombardment Wing , the successor to the 509th Composite Group . Tibbets was a technical advisor to the 1946 Operation Crossroads nuclear tests at Bikini Atoll in the Pacific , but he and his Enola Gay crew were not chosen to drop another atomic bomb .

Tibbets then attended the Air Command and Staff School at Maxwell Air Force Base , Alabama . On graduating in 1947 he was posted to the Directorate of Requirements at Air Force Headquarters at the Pentagon . When the head of the directorate , Brigadier General Thomas S. Power , was posted to London as air attaché , he was replaced by Brigadier General Carl Brandt . Brandt appointed Tibbets as director of Directorate of Requirements 's Strategic Air Division , which was responsible for drawing up requirements for future bombers . Tibbets was convinced that the bombers of the future would be jet aircraft and thus became involved in the Boeing B @-@ 47 Stratojet program . He subsequently served as B @-@ 47 project officer at Boeing in Wichita from July 1950 until February 1952 . He then became commander of the Proof Test Division at Eglin Air Force Base in Valparaiso , Florida , where flight testing of the B @-@ 47 was conducted .

Tibbets returned to Maxwell Air Force Base , where he attended the Air War College . After he graduated in June 1955 , he became Director of War Plans at the Allied Air Forces in Central Europe Headquarters at Fontainebleau , France . He left Lucy and his sons behind in Alabama , and he and Lucy divorced that year . During his posting to France , he met a French divorcee named Andrea Quattrehomme , who became his second wife . He returned to the United States in February 1956 to command the 308th Bombardment Wing at Hunter Air Force Base , Georgia , and married her in the base chapel on 4 May 1956 . They had a son , James Tibbets .

In January 1958 , Tibbets became commander of the 6th Air Division at MacDill Air Force Base , Florida. and was promoted to brigadier general in 1959 . This was followed by another tour of duty at the Pentagon as director of Management Analysis . In July 1962 , he was assigned to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as deputy director for operations , and then , in June 1963 , as deputy director for the National Military Command System . In 1964 , Tibbets was named military attaché in India . He spent 22 months there on this posting , which ended in June 1966 . He retired from the United States Air Force (USAF) on 31 August 1966 .

= = Later life and death = =

After his retirement from the Air Force , Tibbets worked for Executive Jet Aviation (EJA) , an air taxi company based in Columbus , Ohio , and now called NetJets . He attempted to extend the company 's operations to Europe , but was unsuccessful . He retired from the company in 1968 , and returned to Miami , Florida , where he had spent part of his childhood . The banks foreclosed on EJA in 1970 , and Bruce Sundlun became president . Sundlun lured Tibbets back to EJA that year . Tibbets succeeded Sundlun as president on 21 April 1976 , and remained in the role until 1986 . He served for a year as a consultant before his second and final retirement from EJA in 1987 .

Barry Nelson played Tibbets in the film *The Beginning or the End* (1947) . *Above and Beyond* (1952) depicted the World War II events involving Tibbets , with Robert Taylor starring as Tibbets and Eleanor Parker as his first wife Lucy . Tibbets was also the model for screenwriter Sy Bartlett 's fictional character " Major Joe Cobb " in the film *Twelve O 'Clock High* , and for a brief period in February 1949 was slated to be the film 's technical advisor until his replacement at the last minute by Colonel John H. deRussy . *Enola Gay : The Men , the Mission , the Atomic Bomb* , a 1980 made @-@ for @-@ television movie , somewhat fictionalized , told the story of Tibbets crew . Patrick Duffy played Tibbets and Kim Darby played Lucy .

In other fictional portrayals , Nicholas Kilbertus was Tibbets in the film *Day One* , David Gow played him in the 1995 TV movie *Hiroshima* , and Ian Shaw played the part in the BBC 's 2005 TV

docudrama Hiroshima , for which Tibbets was also interviewed on camera . An interview with Tibbets also appeared in the 1982 movie Atomic Cafe , as well as was in the 1970s British documentary series The World at War , and the " Men Who Brought the Dawn " episode of the Smithsonian Networks ' War Stories (1995) . Tibbets figured largely in the 2000 book Duty : A Father , His Son and the Man Who Won the War by Bob Greene of the Chicago Tribune .

The United States government apologized to Japan in 1976 after Tibbets re @-@ enacted the bombing in a restored B @-@ 29 at an air show in Texas , complete with a mushroom cloud . He said that he had not meant for the re @-@ enactment to have been an insult to the Japanese . In 1995 , he denounced the 50th anniversary exhibition of the Enola Gay at the Smithsonian Institution , which attempted to present the bombing in context with the destruction it caused , as a " damn big insult " , due to its focus on the Japanese casualties rather than the brutality of the Japanese government . He was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 1996 .

Tibbets 's grandson Paul W. Tibbets IV graduated from the United States Air Force Academy in 1989 , and in April 2006 became commander of the 393d Bomb Squadron , flying the B @-@ 2 Spirit at Whiteman AFB , Missouri . The squadron was one of the two operational squadrons that had formed part of the 509th Composite Group when Tibbets commanded it . Paul Tibbets IV was promoted to brigadier general in 2014 , and became Deputy Director for Nuclear Operations at the Global Operations Directorate of the United States Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska . As such , he was responsible for America 's strategic nuclear forces . On 5 June 2015 , he assumed command of the 509th Bomb Wing .

Tibbets died in his Columbus , Ohio , home on 1 November 2007 , at the age of 92 . He had suffered small strokes and heart failure during his final years and had been in hospice care . He was survived by his French @-@ born wife , Andrea , and two sons from his first marriage , Paul III and Gene as well as his son , James , from his second marriage . Tibbets had asked for no funeral nor headstone as he feared opponents of the bombing might use it as a place of protest . In accordance with his wishes , his body was cremated , and his ashes were scattered over the English Channel , which he had flown over many times during the war .

= = Awards and decorations = =

Command pilot

Source : Ohio History Central .