



*Note from Dr. Yates C. Smith:*

*This is a story written by Eugene Rutherford. I believe it is typical of just how things were with the early B-29 program.*

*Gene Rutherford is a very dear friend of mine. He is retired and lives in Southern California. Gene went through Pilot training, and received his wings in the Army Air Corps. He then went to Flight Engineer's school, and was the Flight Engineer on Capt. Wes Price's crew. So, Gene was a dual rated Pilot/Flight Engineer.*

**A WES PRICE CREW STORY**  
By Gene Rutherford

Salina, Kansas was really the pits. The temperature on most days was below zero. The one B-29 (serial 42-6242) we had in our squadron would hardly run. The engines would not start in the cold weather. If you got airborne, something else went wrong. 1st Lt. Arnold Noyes, the head engineer for the 468<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, checked me out, and said I was "qualified". Qualified my ass, I had only seen a picture of a B-29 up to that time. Before we were to go overseas in a month or so, we needed about twenty-five B-29's. We had only one in our Squadron, so the twenty-five or so crews were fighting to get some flying time. Our Command Pilot, Captain Wes Price, had maybe 10 hours in a B-29. I had three or four hours in the Flight Engineer's seat. We did have the makings of an excellent crew. Master Sgt. Larkin had been in the 19<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group in the South Pacific when the War started, and had several medals. The Silver Star was one of them. He was tremendous in training the other gunners. He was also a good mechanic. Lt. Eddie Morrison was a great guy, and seemed to be a great Bombardier. Lt. Melvin Scherer was our Navigator. A very cheerful fellow whom I liked very much as he always laughed at my lousy jokes. When flying, he was dead serious, and he always seemed to know exactly how long it would take to get to where we were going.



Arnold Noyes

B-29 42-6242

Photos from the collection of Dr. Yates C. Smith  
42-6242 picture supplied by A. D. Coan, Mountain Lake, NJ



Captain Price had been an instructor pilot in B-24's, our largest bombers up to that time. He was just an outstanding pilot. Our Crew was picked to fly up to the Boeing plant at Renton, Washington outside of Seattle, and pick up the third B-29 the Renton plant had built. We were to ferry the plane to a new modification plant at Denver, Colorado. Major Akins and his Crew flew us to Seattle in a B-17. If there was going to be a delay at Renton, Major Akins' crew was to fly us back to Salina, Kansas. There were rumors we were leaving Salina for overseas soon.

The flight engineer on Major Akins' crew was a young fellow named Timothy James Barrett. He had a great personality, and everyone who knew him really liked him. Major Akins' Co-Pilot was Floyd Lund. I really never got to know Floyd, but it turned out his parents and my parents were neighbors and friends in Lincoln, Nebraska. About six months later up in Pengshan, China, Major Akins' crew had taken off on a midnight bombing mission to Japan (June 15<sup>th</sup> 1944 mission to Yawata). We followed them on takeoff. To get to Japan and return, we had to take off overloaded with 130,000 pounds gross weight instead of the 120,000 pounds Boeing had recommended for a safe take off. Well, just after we were airborne, we saw a brilliant flash as a B-29 had crashed into the mountains. When we returned, we found it had been Major Akins and his crew. They had lost an engine on take-off, and could not hold their altitude. It was either our first or second bombing mission to Japan. Just one of the many casualties we were to suffer in the coming months.

### *Parents of 2 Lincoln fliers' anxiously awaiting details of daring Tokyo raid*

Mr. and Mrs. M. E. Lund have lived at 1629 C for the past five years—and Mr. and Mrs. John A. Rutherford have spent the past two years at 1600 C—just across the street. But they didn't know each other until less than a week ago, when the Lunds received a letter from their son Floyd, saying that he and the Rutherford's son are at the same bomber base in India.

With Thursday's announcement of the bombing of Japan from a base in the India-China-Burma theater they have a further bond. Both couples are wondering if their sons were on the ships which hit Tokyo.

Lt. Floyd Lund, 27, is co-pilot and Lt. Eugene Rutherford, 25, is engineer—both left the states in April of this year. Both entered the air corps for pilot training in 1942—Lund in February and Rutherford in September, and were commissioned pilots. Both were stationed for further training in Salina, Kas.

The boys knew each other during training, and have met again overseas. But not until this week did they mention the acquaintance to their parents.

The Lunds have another son in service—Pfc. Keith M. Lund of the marines, who saw action at Tarawa. Their son-in-law, Sgt. Russell Garl (son of Mrs. Carrie Garl, Lincoln), is in England.

The Rutherfords have only the one son.



## THE RENTON B-29

When we got to Seattle, the Boeing Company met us with a couple of vans to take us to a downtown Seattle hotel. To our surprise, it was bitter cold and there was snow on the ground. We had thought coastal cities escaped a lot of that weather. Maybe it was unusual. Well, it meant we would not see a lot of Seattle, and getting those engines started would be a problem.

Seattle in January does not have a lot of daylight hours. So it was about 9 am before we were notified that the plane was ready, and they were sending a car for us. Since it was only the third B-29 they had built at the plant, and they had a fatality with one of them, there were some Boeing bigwigs there to wish us well and see us off.

We preflighted the plane, which looked OK. We climbed in, and the engines started with very little trouble. We looked out and there seemed to be unusual amount of smoke and throwing of oil.

Captain Price said, “Shut her down, Gene”. We all climbed out, and three of the four engines had thrown oil all over the plane and tarmac. Well, that certainly would not do! The Boeing people admitted the plane was not in flyable condition. So, we were driven back to the hotel.

The Boeing people worked on the plane for a couple of days while we cooled our heels. Finally they called us, and said the plane was ready. Well, it was better, but still not acceptable in our eyes. They argued some, but I could tell their hearts were not in the argument. So, back to the hotel we go.



Renton Assembly Line



The next morning, it was the same thing, but things were a lot better. That afternoon, they called us again, and said to come get the plane. Well, it was a lot better, even though it was getting late in the afternoon. A BIG mistake on our part.

We got airborne, and took off right over the city. The city lights were all on by that time. As we gained altitude and speed, Price was pulling back on the throttles, I was getting the cowl flaps to approximately 15 degrees for engine cooling in flight. All at once, the Klaxon horn started blowing like the world was coming to an end. The Klaxon horn is supposed to sound if the gear is not down and locked, and for a few other things that I have long forgotten. Well, the horn was driving us all crazy as it told us we had a problem no one could find. Finally I remembered I had been setting the cowl flaps at 15 degrees by eye when the horn started blowing. Well, I readjusted the cowl flaps a little, and the horn stopped. We had never heard the horn before as the planes built in the Wichita, Kansas Boeing Plant did not have the horn hooked to the cowl flaps.

By this time it was pitch dark, we were flying south, and we must have been close to Portland, Oregon. I was concerned about one engine. So, I asked Wes Price if he minded if I turned on the dome light to get a better look at my gauges. I did not want to blind him with the bright lights. I turned on the dome light, and every light in the plane went off. No instrument lights, nothing. Well, luckily there was one flash light in the plane. Our Co-Pilot, John Flanigan held the flash light so Wes Price could fly the plane by needle and ball, and airspeed. This is a real trick when you are flying at night. Again I felt bad. It seemed as if everything I touched turned to crap. I figured I was off that Crew.

We called the Portland tower, and declared an emergency. The tower operator told us we could not land at Portland as the runway was too short for a B-29. I don't know where he got his information. Wes told him to screw it, he was coming in anyway and to get the fire trucks and meat wagon out beside the runway.

Well, we landed OK, and spent the night in a barracks. I worried all night, and at the crack of dawn, I was out at the plane. Some civilian electricians from the night shift were trying to get the lights on, and having no luck at all. I told them it must have something to do with the dome light, as every light went out when I turned the dome light on.

Well, they found the factory had routed the main trunk line that should have gone to the circuit breaker panel to the dome light. Since no one had ever turned on the dome light, somehow everything had worked OK until the dome light was turned on. Then all of the amperage had tried to go through the filament of the dome light.

Sometime that day, they had it fixed, and we were off to Denver for a week or so. That seemed to be about the norm for those early days in the B-29 program. A year and a half later, they had thousands of B-29's flying off to the Marianas Islands, and burning Japanese cities to the ground.

The Story of The "Billy Mitchell Group"  
468 H-Bomb Group – From the C.B.I. to the Marianas



Left to right: Mel Scherer, Gene Rutherford, Ed Morrison, John Flanigan  
Photo from the collection of Dr. Yates C. Smith



**The Story of The “Billy Mitchell Group”  
468 H-Bomb Group – From the C.B.I. to the Marianas**



**Captain Weston Price and his Crew:**

**Left to right, back row:**

**Wes Price, Pilot, John Flanigan, Co-Pilot, Eugene Rutherford, Flight Engineer, Ed Morrison, Bombardier**

**Left to right, middle row:**

**Mel Scherer, Navigator, David Pletter, Radio Operator, Ed Stavinski, Radar Operator, D. J. Larkin, Left Gunner**

**Left to right, front row:**

**Millard Cook, Tail Gunner. John Bardunias, Right Gunner, Frank A. Weed, Central Fire Control**