

Lt. Col. Livingston Crowell—Pilot, Crew 704



Retired Lt. Col. Livingston Crowell was recently featured—on the front page, no less—of the September 2, 2009 edition of a Litchfield County (CT) newspaper. The article focused on Livy's participation in the Show of Force during the Japanese Surrender on the USS Missouri.

What follows is a summary of Mr. Crowell's service and post-war activities, which he provided per my request:

"After joining the Army Air Corp in January 1943, I spent 14 months at 14 bases stateside, received my commission and became a B-29 pilot. With a crew of 11 we found ourselves over the Golden Gate Bridge at 1 A.M. on April 21, 1945. After stops at Hawaii, Kwajalein and Saipan, we flew on to Guam, which was to be our home for the next six months.

We did practice missions and then on May 5th went on our first mission to the Japanese empire where we dropped bombs on Shiroku Air Field. On May 12th we dropped 20 general-purpose bombs on the Kawaniski aircraft factory in Kobe. We saw no enemy aircraft and no flak on these two missions. What an easy job! We spoke too soon. On May 23rd we had briefing at 9 p.m. We took off at 11 o'clock, carrying 35 firebombs to southern Tokyo.

We passed the Iwo Jima checkpoint and entered the permanent weather front that existed between Iwo and the Japanese mainland. We were lost. At about 50 miles out we were hit and lost an engine. We decided to continue the mission. As we neared the target we could see the fires, started by the bombs that were dropped by the nearly 500 planes that had gone in before us.

Being young and perhaps foolish, we continued to the target on three engines.

We saw a huge 20,000-foot high smoke cloud, the results of the previous strike, and intense flack was exploding between us and the cloud, as the Japs anticipated that we would turn into the cloud for cover. Then the flack came right at the plane. We made an abrupt turn to the right into the cloud and then made a 45' turn to the left. As we left the cloud the Japs were unable to pick us up in their searchlights.

We headed for Iwo Jima, which was fogged in so we flew on to Saipan. We took all the appropriate measures for ditching the plane because we were getting so low on fuel. We landed safely on Saipan, with little fuel left. We flew a total of 23 missions over Japan, most of them uneventful.

After two atomic bombs had been dropped the Japanese finally gave up. As the treaty was being signed on September 2, 1945, we were flying one of the over 800 B-29s that flew over the battleship Missouri in Tokyo harbor in a display of power.

I left Guam on November 1, 1945, spent a night in Hawaii and then on to Camp Stoneman, San Francisco, CA. On a troop train heading east I arrived at Fort Devens, MA., the base that I had left almost three years before. I was sure that our country would eventually go to war against Russia so I joined the Air Force Reserve Unit in CT in 1949. I spent 33 years as a reservist and was promoted to, Captain, Major and finally to Lieutenant Colonel. Fortunately, there was no war with Russia and I retired from the military on October 26, 1982.

On the GI Bill I graduated from Central CT State University and I received my Master's and 6th year certificates from UConn. I taught in Watertown, was a teaching principal in Colebrook and then a supervising principal at the Fletcher Judson School in Watertown for 28 years until I retired in 1982. Since that time my wife and I did income tax for the elderly for 12 years and have traveled extensively. For ten years we wintered in FL. We have four children, nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

