

Col William J Grossmiller III—Bombardier, Crew 705

I enlisted out of High School in 1943 while living in Philadelphia, PA. I qualified in testing to be a Bombardier, Navigator or Pilot. I was hoping to be a Pilot, but there were enough Pilot trainees at the time. I had qualified to be a Pilot, Navigator, or Bombardier; I chose Bombardier. Classification occurred in Nashville, TN. I then spent about 9 weeks in Pre-flight training in Santa Ana, CA, and went on to Albuquerque, NM for Bombardier training. We were stationed on Guam and flew 7 missions before return to the Muroc Army Airfield in California for Lead Crew training. During my Lead Crew training I flew Radar Operator and Bombardier runs (to targets in California).

While sitting in the rounded nose of the B-29, the Bombardier, with his vaunted Norden bombsight, was responsible for hitting the target. The Radar Operator would cross-hair the target and the Bombardier would set the Bombsight on degree and depending upon speed would adjust left/right based on wind/drift. As long as the plane was on autopilot my bottom control would turn the airplane and my right hand control would set the speed of the bombsight. The bombsight would automatically release the bombs once locked in. Author Robert F Dorr states: The Bombardier “also had the secondary duty of operating the upper and lower turrets of 0.50-cal. (12.7-mm) remote-controlled guns. His command of the turrets could be overridden by the central fire control operator.” (Dorr, Robert F. *B-29 Superfortress Units of World War 2*. Osprey Publishing, 2002).

Our first raid was on 12-APR-1945 to Koriyama, the Hodogaya Chemical Plant. This was our longest mission at 18 hours, 5 minutes. Our fifth flight was on 19-APR-1945; we were flying a Dumbo/ weather reconnaissance ship and carried 10 bombs to offset the fuel's weight. Our check point was 300 miles south of Japan. We were trying to hit a weather station on Japan Island. Releasing bombs right above the station, 5 fell short due to offset bombing (no bombsight information; manual release); 5 bombs went right through the roof of the weather station.

During one of our missions the bombs hung up after target drop, the bombs were dropped manually after I went into the Bombay with a screwdriver (and no parachute since there wasn't enough room in the Bombay to wear one); that was a little scary.

I think it was on the 20-JULY-1945 Okazaki mission that we bypassed Iwo but did not have enough gas to get back to Guam, so we tried to land on Isley Field, Saipan. We ended up landing west of Isley on Kobler Naval Airfield. Our flight engineer, Johnny Walker, suggested we drop gear after the landing was assured. When we landed all engines shut down and we coasted off the runway onto a Taxi way where a fuel truck awaited.

Back on base we entertained ourselves - I participated in volleyball games, and played cards. Another memorable mission was on 31-AUG-1945 as we parachuted supplies to a prisoner of war camp (Mission of Mercy). I flew a similar mission to Okinawa in 1946 after a Typhoon hit there - we flew a B-29 loaded with food.

Once the war ended I stayed on Guam and assisted with return the B-29s to Pyote, TX. I was a “lay around officer”. I was stationed on Hawaii for two months; I spent three of those days with Dolores, a USO singer I had seen on Guam, Saipan, and in the Philippines. We married in 1948 and now have four children. Upon returning to the mainland, I attended night colleges in both Sacramento and Omaha. I went through Pilot training in 1948 using B-25s. Now a major, I was also a B-29 Pilot with the 509th BW and B-50s at Roswell; Waiting for a B-47 (6 engine jet), which I flew for 10 years at Davis-Monthan AFB and March AFB. In 1958 I trained as a Jupiter MCCC. I was assigned to the 15th Air Force as Chief Missile Standardization, in 1959. I (along with a plans officer) delivered the ELC checklists and codes to Malmstrom so that two crews could be the first Minuteman on alert in 1961 during the Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1963, I was the Chief Control Division in Minot, ND. After graduating from the USAWC in 1966, I was assigned to the DCS, Programs and Resources, USAF as special assistant for JCS and Congressional Matters. I obtained two Masters Degrees at George Washington University and the University of Maryland. From 1971-1972, I was the 351 SMW Commander at Whiteman AFB, which won the Blanchard and operations trophies in successive years. After 30 years service I retired in 1973. In 1981, I retired from the Public Service Satellite Consortium as Finance VP.



