



B-29A Superfortress

B-29A-60-BN

S/N: 44-62060

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In 1942, the Village of Freeport raised \$700,450 in war bonds. This was enough money to build four airplanes - two heavy bombers, a light bomber and a fighter. The "Spirit of Freeport, Long Island" was one of the heavy bombers, a B-29 Superfortress (*Utica Daily Press*, Nov. 4, 1950). Each plane was outfitted with a commemorative plaque from the citizens of the Village of Freeport.

According to the Air Force Historical Research Agency, the "Spirit of Freeport" was manufactured by Boeing Aircraft Company in Renton, West Virginia and was delivered to the United States Air Force on July 31, 1945. It initially operated for crew training until it was assigned to the 7th and 22nd Bombardment Groups and finally, the 307th Bombardment Wing. In 1955, the "Spirit of Freeport" was retired and removed from inventory.

During its service in two wars, the "Spirit of Freeport" earned eleven campaign starts and two Presidential citations for "extraordinary achievements in the face of determined enemy opposition" (*Newsday*, Nov. 10, 1950). Since deployment to the Korean theatre on July 11, 1950, the "Spirit" had thirty bombing missions over North Korea destroying chemical plants, marshalling yards, airfields, bridges, iron works, military barracks and explosive plants (*Newsday*, Nov. 1, 1950). The most important mission was with "other B-29s in the famous saturation raid against Red troops massing in the bend section of the Naktong River for an all-out assault on the Pusan pocket" (*Newsday*, Nov. 1, 1950).

Fate of the Freeport's planes

No one knew what happened to the four Freeport planes until the crew of the "Spirit of Freeport" conducted repairs from flak damage in Okinawa, Japan. The crew discovered a dust covered plaque that provided a bit of the plane's history. First Lieut. Joseph R. Taylor, a bombardier and the radar operator R. P. Bennett wrote to Mr. Augustus B. Weller the President of the Meadow Brook National Bank about the "Spirit of Freeport".

"Except for a few flak holes, picked up on our eighth mission, the old gal is as good as new. We have come to develop a grand affection for the old crate and thought we would bring you up to date with her activities. As they say in the Air Force, 'She's a goer.'" (*The Knickerbocker News*, Nov. 1, 1950).

The "Freeport Kids"

The crew of the B-29 called themselves the 'Freeport Kids' and came from eleven different states with one coming from the United Kingdom. The following 'Kids' have been identified:

First Lieut. Joseph R. Taylor (54 Parrets Place, Brooklyn, NY) - bombardier
First Lieut. Duane F. Chenann (Virginia, MN)
M/Sgt. Lloyd M. Pyles (Parkersburg, WV) - crew chief and mechanic
S/Sgt. Jerome P. Stephenson (541 E. 5th St, New York, NY) - radio operator
S/Sgt. Philip W. Mantor (London, England) - central fire controller and gunner
S/Sgt. Melvin L. Golden (Utica, NY) - ground crew, engine specialist
S/Sgt. George R. Tyler (Quincy, MA)
S/Sgt. Durrely Lee (Lakeland, FL)
(Rank unknown) R. P. Bennett (home unknown) - radar operator

Armistice Day 1950

It was raining on the morning of November 11th, the "Spirit of Freeport" was due to land at Mitchel Air Force Base around 9:00am. After buzzing the field, the B-29 bomber touched down and taxied to the Flight Operations Building where the Base Commander

Col. Melvin S. Hollidge, County Executive J. Russel Sprague and Freeport Mayor Robert Doxsee were on hand to welcome the sixteen crew members.

Since receiving the letter from the 'Freeport Kids', the Village of Freeport expeditiously arranged festivities for a four day gala event that was to rival that of the Air Force "Memphis Belle" during World War II (*Newsday*, Nov. 1, 1950). During the four days, the crew dined at the Freeport Elks Club, Guy Lombardo's East Point House, the Savoy Inn and Sardis. While in Freeport, the crew stayed at the Shorecrest Hotel on Grove Street and attended the Armistice Day parade down Main Street with ceremonies at the Freeport stadium (*Newsday*, Nov. 10, 1950). A part of the ceremonies included children from the Archer Street school who sang and invocation and benediction was delivered by Rev. R. G. Harris of the Second Baptist Church.

Other scheduled activities during the four days included:

- a football game at the stadium (Red Devils vs. Westbury),
- Armistice Day Ball at the William Clinton Story Legion Post,
- Lunch with Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and appearance on her television show on WNBT (www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-URjo9JUBI),
- Multiple television and radio show appearances - Sardi's, WOR and WOR-TV, Ted Steele's television show, WPIX, and the Tex and Jinx show on WNBT, and
- The "Spirit of Freeport" was open for public inspection at Mitchel Field.

B-29A, s/n 44-62060

Manufactured by Boeing Aircraft, Renton WA and delivered to the USAAF on 31 Jul 1945.

Aug 1945	To 248 th AAF Base Unit (Second Air Force), Walker AAF NM
Sep 1945	To 233 rd AAF Base Unit (2 nd AF), Dalhart AAF TX
Nov 1945	To 247 th AAF Base Unit (Continental Air Force), Smoky Hill AAF KS
Nov 1946	To 7 th Bombardment (Heavy) Group (Strategic Air Command), Carswell AFB TX)
Oct 1948	To 22 nd Bombardment (Medium) Group (SAC), Smoky Hill AFB (deployments to RAF Lakenheath UK)
May 1949	To 22 nd Bombardment (M) Wing (SAC), March AFB CA
Jul 1950	Deployments to Kadena AB Japan and Yokota AB Japan
Oct 1950	Return to March AFB
May 1951	To Sacramento Air Materiel Area, McClellan AFB CA
Jan 1952	To 307 th Bombardment (M) Wing (Far East Air Forces), Kadena AB
Apr 1954	To Sacramento Air Materiel Area, McClellan AFB (storage)
Aug 1955	Dropped from inventory as surplus

44-62060 Service Record, Air Force Historical Research Agency/RSA, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL.



The "Spirit of Freeport, Long Island," a B-29 of the 22d Bombardment Group, Kadena AB, Long Island, lands at the end of its 28th mission, ready to return to the continental United States.

Photo: Air Force History and Museums Program (2000).

Photo below courtesy of the B-36 Peacemaker Museum



photo courtesy of Nolan Strange



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Photo Source
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Photographs received from: Earl J. McGill, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret).



Photo: Flying Magazine, May 1951.



Nose art (www.kits-world.com)

Sources:

- Adopted 'Fpt. Kid' dies in Korea. (1951, November 9). *Newsday*, p. 4.
- Air Force History and Museums Program. (2000). [Photograph- "Spirit of Freeport, Long Island"]. *Steadfast and Courageous: FEAF Bomber Command and the Air War in Korea, 1950-1953* (p. 22).
- Armistice Day turns spotlight on Freeport. (1950, November 8). *Newsday*, p. 17.
- B-29s that flew in the Korean War. (<http://home.comcast.net/~b29sinthekoreanwar/0-b29MasterList.htm>)
- Freeport kids' in Korea. (1950, November 1). *Newsday*, p. 48.
- Gallant old girl shows her new medals. (1950, November 1). *The Knickerbocker News*, p. A-3.
- Golden is member of B-29 crew flying home to Freeport welcome. (1950, November 4). *Utica Daily Press*, p. 17.
- Hollingsworth, B. (1950, November 1) B-29 'Spirit of Freeport' to fly 'home'. *Newsday*, p. 5.
- [Photograph 'Bombing up a SAC B-29 named 'Spirit of Freeport']'. (1951, May) *Flying Magazine*, 48(5), 38.
- [Photographs of nose art of the Spirit of Freeport]. (ca. 1950). McGill, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret). Earl J.
- [Service record for the B-29A, s/n 44-62060]. Air Force Historical Research Agency/RSA, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL.
- Spirit of Freeport crewman is killed. (1951, November 8). *The Leader*, p. 1.
- Spirit of Freeport Crew on TV, Combat Camera Unit, www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-URjo9JUBI
- Spirit of Freeport here from Korea. (1950, November 12). *The New York Times*, p. 21.
- Utican on crew of B-29 due for a gala welcome. (1950, November 6). *Utica NY Observer*, p. 3-A.
- Village plans gala time for crew of Spirit of Freeport. (1950, November 10). *Newsday*, p. 3.