

August 10, 1993

MEMO TO: Monroe Hatch

SUBJECT: Info Letter to McCoy

FROM: John Correll

Mr. Burr Bennett, in his letter to me, enclosed this copy and asked that it be passed to Jim McCoy. The photo of the *Enola Gay* on our cover prompted him to write, asking that AFA join the campaign to make sure the Smithsonian does right by the airplane.

I am aware -- as you are -- of the controversy about the Air & Space Museum. I've been carrying background material on the situation in my briefcase for some time, but it hasn't risen above more pressing priorities, so I haven't really studied it yet. My quick take is that the Air & Space Museum isn't quite as guilty as it's said to be, but I'll have a more informed opinion later.

In the meantime, why don't I reply to Mr. Bennett, telling him that McCoy has the copy of his letter, and that we're thinking about it? I'll also point out that our putting a dramatic shot of the *Enola Gay* on our cover should be ample proof that we regard it as an important part of Air Force heritage.



As shown by this memo, written at the beginning of the Air Force Association's and *Air Force Magazine's* involvement in the *Enola Gay* controversy, we did not have an initial bias against the National Air and Space Museum. In fact, the very opposite of that was true.

August 6, 1993

Mr. John T. Correll, Editor in Chief
Air Force Magazine
1501 Lee Highway
Arlington, VA 22209-1198

Dear Mr. Correll:

I am one of a small group of B-29 veterans of World War II engaged in a struggle with the Smithsonian Institution to display the Enola Gay proudly.

With the Enola Gay on my mind, I instantly recognized the B-29 head-on photo on the cover of the August issue of the magazine.

As you noted in the center spread piece the Smithsonian will display the restored front portion of the Enola Gay in their exhibit on the *Legacy of Strategic Bombing* in 1995, the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

You may not be aware of the Smithsonian's treatment of the Enola Gay since it was turned over to them on July 3, 1949 at Chicago. Stored for a time in the Douglas Aircraft Plant, it was flown to Andrews Air Force Base in the early fifties in tip-top condition. The need for the current "intense restoration" started when the Smithsonian parked the Enola Gay in the grass at Andrews, unlocked and unguarded for many years. Airmen flying into Andrews noted the broken windows, birds nesting inside, and the missing "souvenirs" taken from the open plane. Could the Smithsonian be ashamed of the Enola Gay and its mission?

A small group of veterans who served in B-29's has become a *Committee for the Restoration and Proud Display of the Enola Gay*. We want it displayed for its part in starting a sequence of events that ended the war with Japan swiftly without no need for an invasion.

The Smithsonian's early neglect of the plane and their statements over the years about strategic bombing lead us to believe that they will not display the Enola Gay proudly.

One example is, *At this point it is impossible to say what form an exhibition of the airplane (Enola Gay) might take. However, I can assure you that we would not attack the decision to drop the bomb. Nor, on the other hand, would we celebrate the event.*

I just received a summary of the current plans for the exhibit (enclosed). Please note the lack of any reference to Pearl Harbor and the savings of six million lives anticipated

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by the Japanese to be lost in an invasion. Also note, the exhibit's planned conclusion about the *debatable character of the atomic bombings*. Finally, the Smithsonian states that the bomb's employment against Nagasaki and Hiroshima may not have influenced the ultimate outcome of the war, **but it set in motion events that have had consequences of unparalleled proportions in our times.**

I am quite sure that they do not mean the almost half century of nuclear peace that the Enola Gay started. The Wall Street Journal calls the Smithsonian the *Woodstock Nostalgia Society*. That may be a bit rough, but it may also be right.

The statute under which military equipment given to the Smithsonian is to be exhibited includes the statement, "The valor and sacrificial service of the men and women of the Armed Forces shall be portrayed as an inspiration to the present and future generations of America". Somehow the enclosed plans for the exhibit do not reflect that purpose.

Our Committee has collected over 5,000 signatures from around the world asking the Smithsonian to display the plane proudly, or give it to a museum that will. A copy of the petition is enclosed. That five old men can collect this many signatures is an indication that we represent a much more substantial constituency than our size would indicate. At some point we will stop gathering signatures and present copies to the Smithsonian and pertinent others.

In the meantime, if there is any way in which you could lend your support towards the proud display of the Enola Gay, our small group would be most grateful.

Warmest regards.



W. Burr Bennett, Jr.
2820 Weller Lane, Northbrook, IL 60062

CC: Carol Mosely-Braun
James M. McCoy (*Please forward the enclosed copy to President Mr. McCoy*)
John Edward Porter
Paul Simon

Enclosure: Enola Gay Petition & "Fifty Years On"

NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20560

Dept. of Aeronautics
February 3, 1994

Paul Metro
78 Dalton Pl.
Edison, NJ 08817

Sample of Smithsonian Correspondence

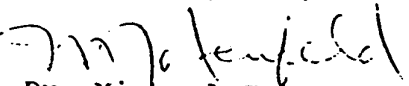
Dear Mr. Metro:

Thank you for your letter to Dr. Harwit. He asked me to reply. Since Dr. Harwit came to the Museum in 1987, it has been one of our highest priorities to find a way to display this historic aircraft for the fiftieth anniversary. The restoration of the "Enola Gay" began even before the Director's arrival, in 1984, and we are approaching completion of that tremendous job--the largest restoration ever done in our shops--in 1995. (The job may have gone on longer than expected because of its complexity, but the Garber Facility is indeed in the last stages of finishing the remaining components.) Unfortunately, we have found that it is infeasible to assemble the restored sections of the aircraft in 1995, because it is too large to fit within the Museum downtown. Now that we have finally received approval from Congress for our Extension at Washington Dulles Airport, we will assemble the aircraft there. However, we will have to raise large sums of money to build the Extension, so this will not happen before the year 2000 at the earliest.

In the meantime, we plan to open an exhibit on the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombings in May 1995, using the forward fuselage of the "Enola Gay," along with other artifacts. This exhibit will give due weight to the viewpoint of American veterans, along with other viewpoints. Its aim will be to provide an historically accurate account of the background of the Pacific war, the decision to drop the bomb, and the bombings themselves. Honoring the service of Allied soldiers, sailor and airmen will of course be a part of this exhibit, as will an unflattering account of Japanese aggression in the Pacific.

Thank you again for your interest in the National Air and Space Museum.

Sincerely yours,


Dr. Michael J. Neufeld
Curator