



THE FIRST COMPOSITE GROUP ASSOCIATION

March 8, 1995

Dear Sir;

Enclosed you will find our press release regarding the restoration of the ENOLA GAY hanger at Wendover Field, Utah.

We ask that you include an article in your next publication to your members regarding this historic event and we wish that all veterans will join with us in censoring the Smithsonian Institute for the disgraceful way that they are portraying the Enola Gay and her rightful place in history.

We will be meeting with Senator Orrin Hatch and the other Utah representatives to have congress intervene to help us bring the Enola Gay back to Wendover, Utah where she was originally based.

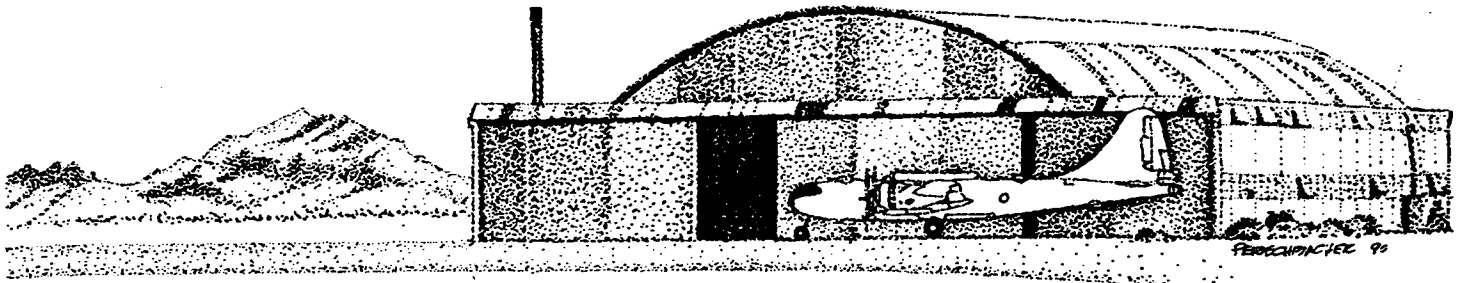
Your help and support for this great cause will be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to write or give us a call at P.O. Box 533, Victorville, California, 92392. (619) 947-5320 or (619) 243-5194.

Thank you again.

SINCERELY,

COL. PAUL KIENER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



WENDOVER FIELD

Home of the 509th
Composite Group

**A World War II Living History
Attraction**

Presented by The First Composite Group Association

Wendover Field, Utah

PRESS RELEASE

Colonel Paul Kiener, Executive Director of the First Composite Group Association of Victorville, California announced Wednesday that a Joint Venture Agreement has been signed with the City of Wendover, Utah, to establish a permanent museum for the top secret atomic air base that was located there during World War II.

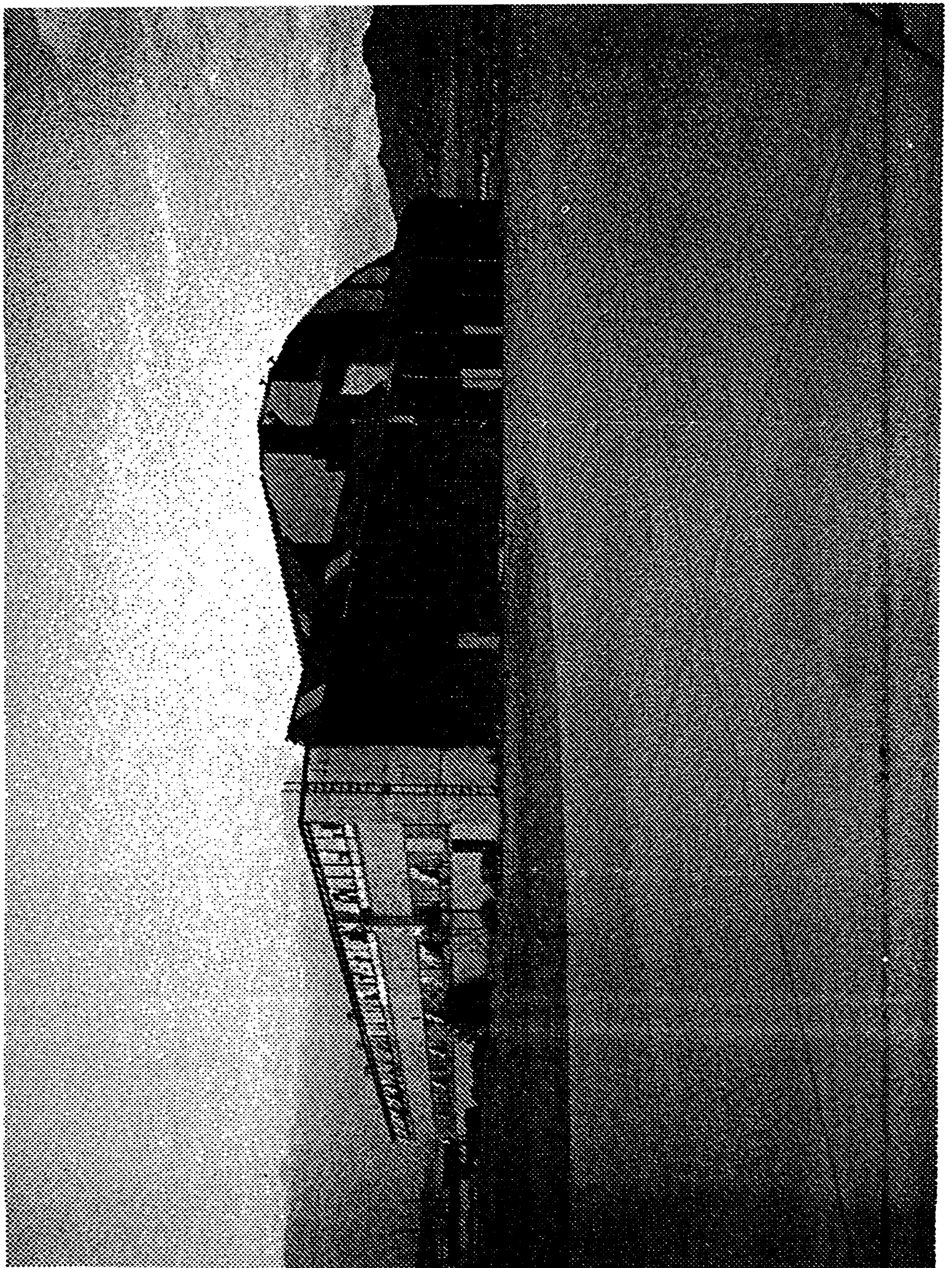
Wendover field Army Airbase was created as a bombing training site that later would become part of the "Manhattan Project." Virtually unknown to our enemies and the rest of the world, Wendover Field was the largest U.S. Army Field in operation during the war. Even the soldiers of the 509th Composite Group based at Wendover Field did not know the true purpose of the base, believing its purpose was instead to test the German "Buzz Bomb." Its true purpose, to train the aircrews and build the atomic bombs that would ultimately be dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan; ushering in the nuclear age, changing forever the way war would be conducted and leading to the dramatic end of World War II.

The First Composite Group plans to start the Wendover Field project by restoring the original Enola Gay hangar according to Colonel Charles Tiemeyer, Director and Curator of the new museum. "Our first order of business is to replace the old corrugated tin roof and doors on the hangar. If this is accomplished by early summer, we hope to open a limited attraction in time for the 50th Commemoration of the victory over Japan in September of this year." Upon completion the 65,000 square foot hangar will become a permanent home for several B-29 bombers and other aircraft related to the 509th Composite Group and the Pacific Theater. Restoration will also include, uniform, weapon and memorabilia displays, an art gallery, theater, mess hall, gift shop and business offices.

The group plans to work in conjunction with the City of Wendover and the Congressional Representatives of the State of Utah to acquire the original Enola Gay from the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. The recent outcry of many Veterans Groups over the Smithsonian plans for the display of the Enola Gay has caused the Smithsonian to scrap its original plans to portray the Japanese as innocent victims of an aggressive United States by presenting 84 pages of text and 97 photographs of Japanese suffering, but only 1 page and 8 photographs depicting Japanese aggression toward Americans from 1930 to 1945, opting instead for a limited display of the plane and a sign describing the plane and its mission. This sparse treatment of what is perhaps the most

famous piece of World War II memorabilia is sure to trigger a new round of criticism for the Smithsonian. The First Composite Group feels the only solution is to bring the Enola Gay home to Wendover Field where the Group plans to present it in an historically correct manner.

The nonprofit group is now soliciting grants and donations for the restoration of Wendover Field, which will take the next five years to complete. Interested parties may contact the First Composite Group Association at P.O. Box 533, Victorville, Ca. 92392, or by phone at (619) 947-5320 or (619) 243-5194.



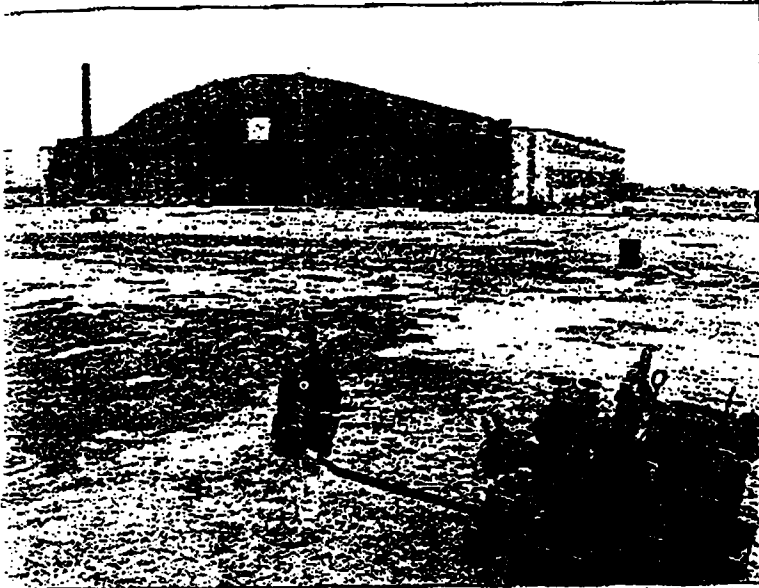
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Wendover Hangs Its Hope on Bringing Enola Gay to Old Hangar



Christopher Smith/The Salt Lake Tribune

Enola Gay's original hangar will be restored, says Wendover's Chris Melville.

By Christopher Smith
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

WENDOVER — When Air Force Capt. George Marquardt left his bride of one week in their honeymoon room at the StateLine Hotel, he wouldn't say where he was going or when he would return.

"He just told me they were going to end the war," Bernice Marquardt of Murray recalls of the goodbye 50 years ago. "I said for him to hurry back."

Within a year, her new husband was back home and World War II was over. Japan surrendered Aug. 11, 1945, days after Capt. Marquardt and other members of the 509th Composite Wing stationed at Wendover had conducted the aerial atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Now, in the 50th anniversary year of the bombing that changed modern civilization, Wendover is poised to reclaim its past as a historic landmark.

On Tuesday, the City Council is scheduled to sign an agreement with the First Composite Group Association to restore the B-29 hangar — a 50,000-square-foot corrugated tin garage that was home to the Enola Gay and other atomic bombers — at the old air base.

"We want to make this an international destination site, the 'Wendover Army Airfield World War II Living History Attraction,'" says First Composite Group co-director Paul Kiener, a Salt Lake native who now lives in Victorville, Calif. "We're going to give Wendover the recognition it deserves."

The private, nonprofit group formed in 1985 is preparing to open a similar "living museum" this spring in Victorville. Work is under way for a naval history attraction in San Diego.

But the Wendover six-base restoration "is the biggest thing we've done," says Kiener, a documentary-film producer for the Discovery Channel. "It will be a cross between Universal Studios and Williamsburg, Va."

Plans call for restoring the hangar to display exhibits of World War II aircraft including some of the original B-29s that flew practice missions from Wendover dropping dummy atom bombs in the Salton Sea of Southern California. The association is negotiating with the U.S. Air Force to relocate Becksar, the B-29 that dropped the Nagasaki bomb, from Wright-Patterson museum in Ohio to the

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Christopher Smith/The Salt Lake Tribune

Retired Capt. George Marquardt piloted B-29 that accompanied Enola Gay over Hiroshima.

Wendover Hangs Hope on Old Hangar

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Wendover hangar.

Targeted to begin this fall, financed by fund raising, the hangar project will include a restaurant, gift shop, movie theater, art gallery and a PX, with tour guides dressed in period uniforms.

The Federal Aviation Administration has given Wendover a \$150,000 historical mitigation grant to hire engineering consultants to study restoration of the hangar. While the structure is sound, tin walls were coated with asbestos for insulation and sound deadening. The carcinogenic material must be removed before the building is open to the public.

For a Utah community that has languished economically while neighboring West Wendover, Nev., is booming, thanks to legalized gaming, the prospects of such a tourist attraction at the old rusty hangar has boosted civic pride.

"We've been working on this for more than two years, and now that it's really coming around, everyone is excited," says Chris J. Melville, Wendover airport manager and the city's historic-properties manager. "You can only gamble for so long, and this will give Wendover, Utah, something to offer visitors."

Creating a museum out of the old hangar has been a topic of idle conversation here almost since the military pulled out in 1969 and deeded the air base to the city in 1977. But it wasn't until the Smithsonian Institution embarked on a controversial Enola Gay exhibit last year that the Wendover campaign gained momentum.

"Because the Smithsonian muffed it so bad, we're encouraging veteran groups to cause so much fury that we have a shot at getting the Enola Gay away from the Smithsonian and bringing it back home," says Klener.

Melville, who conducts informal tours of the air base for visitors, agrees. "There's a lot of disappointment among veterans that people are losing consciousness of the war and what it meant to Americans," he says.

A Smithsonian exhibit — centered around a section of the restored B-29 that dropped the first atomic-weapon payload over Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945 — attempted to commemorate American heroism in ending the war while at the same time interpreting the effects of nuclear warfare.

"It was impossible to do both," says Bill Schulz, a spokesman at the Smithsonian.

Schulz says the early scripts of the Enola Gay exhibit never were meant for public release when the Smithsonian sent them out to surviving members of the mission for review. Marquardt, pilot of the B-29 "Necessary Evil" that accompanied Enola Gay over Hiroshima to take photographs, couldn't fathom what the Smithsonian was thinking when he read the script.

The original exhibit called for graphic photos of Hiroshima after the bombing, portraying the Japanese as innocent victims of an aggressive United States. There were to be 84 pages of text and 97 photographs of Japanese suffering, but only one page and eight photographs depicting Japanese aggression toward Americans from 1930 to 1945.

Marquardt's advance copy of the Enola Gay exhibit script was riddled with red correction marks, and he refused the Smithsonian's request for loaning any memorabilia he had from the historic mission.

"I was surprised and mad that they were going to do it like that," says Marquardt.

Now 75 years old and coping with a speech impairment caused by Parkinson's disease, Marquardt would like nothing better than to see the Enola Gay returned to Wendover. His recollections of the events 50 years past are more vivid today than ever before, says his wife.

"He keeps remembering things he's never talked about before," says Bernice Marquardt, who is helping compile her husband's memoirs. "It's almost as if his mind is clearer now that he's incapacitated."

George Marquardt recalls the morning of Aug. 6, 1945, over Hiroshima as "the most beautiful day I've ever seen," as his B-29 lumbered at 30,000 feet, a few miles off the wing of Col. Paul Tibbets, the captain of the Enola Gay. Marquardt's crew was to film the bombing of Hiroshima, and a scientist — Bernard Waldeman from the super-secret Manhattan Project — was operating a camera loaded with six seconds of high-speed film.

The payload exploded in midair above central Hiroshima, and Marquardt says the atomic flash was "as if the sun came out of the Earth and just exploded." It was perhaps one of the most defining moments in Western civilization, but Waldeman had forgotten to open the camera's shutter. No official photograph of the blast was made.

Against orders, however, one of Marquardt's crew members had sneaked his own camera on board. Peering out a tailgunner's window, navigator Russell Gackenbach snapped a grainy black-and-white still photograph of the Hiroshima mushroom cloud. Marquardt has kept quiet about the never-published photograph, but plans to donate it to the 500th when the group convenes in August for their 50th reunion in Albuquerque, N.M.

While modern-day historians may debate the right and wrong of killing 130,000 civilians with nuclear bombardment, Marquardt is convinced the mission of the 509th saved Japanese and American lives. His sentiments are echoed by other veterans, many of whom are disillusioned by the Smithsonian's plans.

In response to massive public outcry about the slant of the Enola Gay exhibit, the Smithsonian announced in January it had scrapped the interpretive portion of the display, scheduled to open in May.

While the entire plane has been restored, only 60 feet of the 90-foot fuselage will be on display in the museum for the next year. After the Enola Gay exhibit closes, the Smithsonian plans to reassemble the B-29 and display it whole in a new annex under construction at Dulles Airport in Virginia.

Museum officials, stung by the controversy, plan only a sign describing the plane and its mission.

"It will be explanatory, not interpretive," says Schulz. "We'll leave the historical interpretation for another time. Or generation."

But the sparse treatment of what is perhaps the most famous piece of World War II memorabilia probably will trigger a new round of criticism for the Smithsonian. And Kiener believes the time is ripe to reclaim the Enola Gay for Wendover.

"I just see this whole thing exploding, especially now that Americans know we're serious about restoring the Wendover hangar," he says. "We're going to begin contacting veterans' groups Tuesday, encouraging them to make a stir to their congressmen, dump a little av [aviation] gas on this. If the Smithsonian gets so much crap, they may just say fine, get it outta here, send it back to Utah and let them deal with the controversy. And we'll be glad to."

For now, controversy or not, the Smithsonian has no intention of turning over the big B-29 to a community of 3,227 people.

"The Smithsonian has spent 10 years and over \$1 million restoring the Enola Gay," says Schulz. "Maybe that does not give us any proprietary rights over the aircraft, but it represents a considerable investment that we plan on retaining."