

Brig Gen. Paul W. Tibbets Jr. K4ZVZ *1915-2007* Born in Quincy IL to Enola Gay Haggard Tibbets and Paul Warfield Tibbets. Our subject, the son of a prosperous business man. The family moving to Florida early in his life. This aviator, lecturer and business man carried out probably one the most important duties during the entire Pacific World War Two, directed by our Commander in Chief. Officer Tibbets knew the personal terror and torture of war with his 25 missions over the European Theater in the B-17 Flying Fortress., then into Algeria leading the first bombardment missions in support of the North African invasion. March of 1943 he returned to the USA to test the combat capability of Boeing's new Super Fortress B-29.



Many are unaware that General Tibbets was one of us, a ham operator. Licensed in the period of the 1950s - Paul in recent years was not able to operate radio because of his hearing deficiencies, yet he was very proficient with the Morse code. He allowed his General Class ticket to expire with a Florida address and was not renewed in 1998.

Most of us older types are familiar with the Enola Gay, named after Paul's mother - This era was forth coming in September of 1944, Paul was briefed on the Manhattan Project. If he was denied anything needed for the Manhattan project, he would be instructed to use the code word

“Silverplate” and his request would be honored without question. Paul requisitioned 15 new B-29s and specified they be stripped of turrets and armor plating except for the tail gunner position. Then use fuel-injected engines and new technology reversible pitch propellers be installed and the bomb bay re-configured to suspend, from a single point, ten thousand pounds. The aircraft would fly higher, faster and above the effective range of anti-aircraft fire.

General Tibbets retired from the U.S.A.F. in 1966, he had completed more than 29 and one half years of service, but he was not through flying. Initially he resided in Geneva, Switzerland, operating three Lear jets throughout central Europe. There, he helped to educate the air ministries about the jet's uses. He also advised the air ministries about the aviation controls and guidelines they later instituted within their countries. Paul joined Executive Jet Aviation at Columbus Ohio in 1970. Then rose up the ladder to become chairman of the board in 1982. During his 15 years Paul Tibbets acquired almost 400 hours in Lear Jets, flying with an Air Transport Pilot rating.

Paul W. Tibbets, Jr. Is enshrined with honor into the National Aviation hall of Fame. With his passing last week, CBS caster Bob Schieffer, “Paul Tibbets’ age 92 drew little comment.” His obituary was buried deep inside the tabloids and newspapers and TV gave his passing less coverage than the death of singer Robert Goulet. At a time when the mean age is now age 35 years, the name Paul Tibbets and his recent passing meant nothing to many.

One of the things I learned was in a 2002 interview with Studs Terkel, In 1945 the Japanese were very slow to respond to the tragic bombings and Tibbets was contacted by General LeMay and asked “Do we have anymore of those dammed things available?” Tibbets answered in the affirmative that they were stored in Utah. Tibbets was ordered to get ready. This does not end... Partially scripted by www.theenolagay.com W8SU 2007