



- Date of event:** 26 September 1944
- Date written:** February, 1989 and various other dates as indicated.
- Written by:** Fountain L. Brown (copilot of crew that bombed Dairen) with contributions from Harry Changnon, Robert L. Hall, Jerry W. Noble, Frank W. McKinney, and John Z. Topolski.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: A yellowed newspaper clipping triggered the search for this story. John Topolski saved the clip for these 45 years. It tells a lot more than any post-strike photos could tell about the success achieved by a single plane on this one mission.

## THE DAY HUNTER'S CREW CONFOUNDED THE JAPANESE

Harry M. Changnon sets the stage: The primary target for this mission was the coke ovens at Anshan, Manchuria. Secondary target was the harbor facilities at Dairen, Manchuria. Target of last resort was the railroad yards at Sinsiang, China. Twenty-seven planes staged from Chakulia together with a photo recon B-29. Twenty-two planes were airborne for the mission from Hsinching on the 26th of September. Four aborted on the ground. Bob Haley, in #407, aborted 400 miles out. Fifteen planes were in formation at the Initial Point. Weather from the IP to the target was 10/10 undercast. Numerous cloud layers existed to 24,000 ft., making formation flying to the target extremely difficult and hazardous. Bombs from one aircraft were accidentally salvoed short of the target which caused the bombardiers of two other planes to drop their bombs prematurely. The 40th dropped 162 500-pound General Purpose bombs on Anshan. One aircraft was unable to drop its bombs due to a rack malfunction and its crew later manually released the bombs one at a time while returning to Hsinching. All aircraft landed safely at A-1. Average flying time was 12:20 for the 2,800 mile trip. Shortly after interrogation, a three ball alert caused everyone to head for the trenches. Twin engine Jap bombers overhead sounded like a cluster of washing machines.

## THE SIDESHOW--DAIREN, MANCHURIA

Recollections of Robert L. Hall, Central Fire Control Gunner. Written on 25 November 1988.

I remember the mission against Anshan when we (meaning William A. Hunter's crew) bombed the alternate target at Dairen. That mission was one of the things that helped to make Frank McKinney something of a legend as a bombardier. There was quite a lot of cloud cover as we flew across China. The formation managed to assemble, and our crew was at the extreme left side of the formation, in the high element.

As the formation flew on its briefed course towards the target at Anshan, there was some discussion on intercom about the bad weather--lots of clouds up ahead. After a while the formation entered the clouds, and immediately Hunter, following SOP, banked sharply to the left and flew a timed period before returning to our briefed course. We could not see anything at that point. Eventually we broke into the clear again, but there were still lots of clouds around, and we could not see the other planes from the formation anywhere. We searched for awhile without success.

The orders were to approach the primary target only in formation, and to hit the secondary target if we were not in formation. So Hunter, sounding annoyed and disappointed, asked our navigator, Leonard Jellis, for a heading to the secondary target, which was a big, square, warehouse-like building on the waterfront at Dairen. As we neared it, it appeared that we would have to bomb by radar because there were still lots of clouds, about 8/10ths, I believe. We opened bomb-bay doors and started in on radar, but I believe that the radar operator was having trouble getting clear indications of the target location.

Suddenly Frank McKinney, the bombardier, announced on intercom that he had the target in sight and would take the run. As he started to sight on the target, however, the very cold air at our high altitude, together with all the cloud moisture, apparently caused the glass panel in front of his bombsight to frost over completely before he could finish the bomb run. Thinking fast, Frank leaned over to look around the bombsight at the target, made some quick judgments of angles, and when the target's position looked about right to him, he salvoed the bombs and called "bombs away." We stayed on course long enough for the side gunners to see the bombs strike the target building directly. I do not remember if we got bomb-strike pictures. Without even using the bombsight, Frank got a "shack."

It was about six weeks later that Frank McKinney got another "shack" at Singapore, managing to place all three of his bombs right on the control shack and sliding steel caisson of the dry dock there. I remember hearing at the time that Hunter had recommended McKinney for a decoration for his high-altitude precision bombing at Singapore. The rumor was that the high brass said that one success was not proof of anything, and that Hunter came back with some comment like, "Well, of course he hit the bullseye from high altitude at Dairen, too, but there he didn't use the bombsight."

Jerry W. Noble, Flight Engineer wrote this entry in his diary on Tuesday, 26 September 1944.

Got off at daybreak this morning for our third mission. Flying our new ship for the first mission in her and our third mission, also her third mission. Got out to the rendezvous point to pick up our formation. It sure was a mess. About 50 to 60 B-29's milling around trying to pick up their formations. We finally found ours and took off on course for the target. Got a little flak at one point, but it didn't hit anyone. Just about an hour out of the target, we ran into some weather. Since we were flying #3 position, and on the outside, we turned to the left and started climbing. Guess that's where we made a big mistake. Broke out of the weather at 24,000 ft. and not another airplane in sight. I kinda hated that too, because we were on the extreme left of the 12 ship formation and I could see the whole formation. It was really beautiful. Nothing for us to do but go to the second rendezvous point and try to pick up at least two more ships, because we had instructions not to go in on the primary target with less than a three ship formation. We circled that island for about three quarters of an hour and didn't pick up anything, so we headed for the secondary target, Dairen. Looked as though we were going to have to drop on radar so we notified the radar operator to warm up the set. We were still about 22,000 ft. and the bombardier's window was all iced over. The radar set was frozen up also so we started descending. Got down to 18,000 and everything was still frozen up so we had to level off. Wouldn't have been safe to go much lower. We could see the docks and warehouses at Dairen, but the bombardier's window and the radar set were still frozen. Mac finally dropped our 10 five hundred pounders by guess. The gunners said they saw the bombs hit in the target area. Later we found out Tokyo Rose claimed more damage was done at Dairen than Anshan. Our trip back was fairly uneventful except we were jumped by a couple of TOJO's about half way back. They didn't fire a shot at us though. Our gunners didn't let them get close enough. We landed back at A-1 a little after five, the first ones back. Got interrogated and headed for the barracks. I wasn't hungry so I started getting ready to hit the sack. About the time I was ready to recline and rest my weary bones after that 11 hours and 50 minutes flight, a one-ball alert sounded. Nothing to do but put all my clothes back on and head for the nearest foxhole. Hunter, Brown, Mac, Walters and I all stopped at the first one we came to. There were Chinese soldiers all around the place and a few other Americans. About 30 minutes after the one ball sounded, the two ball cut loose, and about 10 minutes later the three ball. Little after that we could hear a plane approaching. Sounded like a Piper Cub but he was moving a

little faster. He circled and circled. Seemed like every circle he made he split our revetment. Later, everyone else claimed the same thing. Rather funny there in that revetment. Everyone talking in whispers and every time that plane came over, we would all duck involuntarily. After this one guy circled for what seemed hours, we could hear the distant drone of the bombers. Sounded like there must have been a hundred of them, but it turned out that there were only two. Later on two more came over. They dropped bombs all over the place. Most of them down around the "line." Lots of anti-personnel bombs. We were all standing around seeing what we could see. When that first bomb hit, we didn't stand very long. Dirt never tasted so good in my life. Sounded like they must have gotten about every plane on the line. One train of eight bombs sounded like they had come through our barracks area, and me without any socks on. Guess they finally got tired of messing around because they left in the same direction they came. We got in the truck and started to go back. No sooner had we gotten in the truck than another of these little single engine fighters came over. He dropped a few anti-personnels and left, so we started for the barracks again. Got about half way back when a guy jumps out from the side of the road and hollers to turn those damned lights out because the fighters were back. We all jumped out of the truck and headed for the ditches. About that time the C.O. came along in his jeep. Everyone hollering to turn out the damned lights. He told us the plane now overhead was a P-47 and we could all go on back to bed. Only about the first two or three crews had been interrogated, and no one had had anything to eat. I had the strangest feeling there in that revetment. It all seemed like a dream. This was definitely the closest the war had been brought to me, and I don't care if it never gets that close again. There was also a feeling of helplessness. To watch that fighter up there about 400 ft., and there wasn't a damned thing you could do about it.

We all came through it OK, so guess we have the Lord to thank for that. This was our first daylight mission.

Frank W. McKinney, Bombardier. Frank volunteered for bombardier training while he was in preflight. On 16 December 1988, Frank wrote this account of his efforts at Dairen.

I felt a great disappointment for not being able to bomb Anshan, but when we made the decision to go for the secondary target at Dairen, my enthusiasm returned and the adrenaline started to flow. But this wasn't to be a good day for bombing the targets we were ordered to hit.

As we approached Dairen, further disappointment was in store because the area was also cloudy, but the clouds were not as dense as at Anshan. As we approached the target area, I had a sinking feeling that we would have to bomb by radar. Then we had another disappointment when our radar equipment malfunctioned and the radar operator couldn't identify the target. I was frustrated, and even though we had to get rid of the bombs, I was determined to do something with them other than dropping them at random.

Apparently, the radar had effectively lined us up with the target. I kept searching ahead, hoping for a break in the cloud cover while keeping the bombsight at ready in case the target did become visible. Operating the Norden bombsight required a lengthy sighting in order for the mechanism to adjust for ground speed, trajectory, etc. As I anxiously kept looking ahead and hoping the clouds would open up, time was getting short to the point where the bombs would have to be released because we were nearing the target itself.

Suddenly, as I was peering down, the target appeared and I had a few seconds to make the decision to drop the bombs manually by salvo. Since part of the nose was iced up, I used the cross brace in the Plexiglas nose for an aiming device, and made a guess as to the moment to salvo the bombs. Miracle of miracles, the side gunners reported that the target had been hit. I think later photos by a reconnaissance plane confirmed that the target had indeed been hit.

We had no idea of the importance of this target to the Japanese, but I suppose our intelligence must have known. What a great satisfaction it was to me, luckily hitting the target and not having to just dump the bombs somewhere to get them off the plane. Just a series of weather and mechanical problems, but the end results were a success.

Recollections of John Z. Topolski, Radar Operator. Written on 9 February 1989. John explains how the anticlimax to the sideshow occurred in Hawaii one year after the miraculous "shack" at Dairen.

Since radar operators were in short supply in the CBI, we had to fly with many different crews. The radar equipment had to be proven and SOP's had to be written, so we flew on every mission--even cargo missions over the Hump.

As I remember the Anshan/Dairen mission, we lost our formation near Anshan, and had to go to the secondary target at Dairen, Manchuria. I remember that I couldn't identify Dairen by radar because there wasn't a town showing on the screen. At the last moment, the bombardier said he saw some buildings through a hole in the clouds, and that he would take over. I distinctly remember looking at a big, square building when the bombs made a direct hit on it.

After Japan surrendered, we left Tinian and proceeded to Hawaii. While I was in Hawaii, I picked up a local newspaper and read an article that almost floored me. Here is what the newspaper column said:

#### "Accidental" Raid Still Puzzles Dairen Japanese

By: John Grover

DAIREN, Manchuria, Sept. (AP).

A memo to my old China-based B-29 gang: Remember your two\* plane "accidental" raid on Dairen last September?

Well chums, the Japanese are still rocking on their heels over that one. They think you must have done it with mirrors.

Remember how the B-29's raided the Anshan steel works that day, and how two Superforts dumped their bombs on the Dairen waterfront and warehouse all because they were unable to reach the Anshan targets so many miles farther north?

Well, I found out when I landed here with 7th fleet units that the eight story head office building of the Anshan Steel Co., right in the heart of Dairen's modern business district, was sliced off in that half pint raid and not a single adjacent building was hit.

The Japanese are still going around talking to themselves. They think you did it on purpose but they can't figure out how a B-29 could pick off that single Anshan company building in Dairen with such "precision," while the main force wrecked the steel works so far away.

\*EDITOR'S NOTE: Later information indicates that only William A. Hunter's crew hit this target. Bombs from another plane were released on coordinates some distance from the Japanese headquarters building in Dairen.

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPTS: Please send us your memories--any story you believe worth telling. Send it to: William A. Rooney, 517½ Ridge Road, Wilmette, IL 60091.

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