



Date of event: 20-23 February, 1944

Date written: Fall, 1989

Written by: Walter Lucas, E.W. "Scoop" Martin, Don Lund, Homer Bates, P.D. Shepard, Bill Mackey. Additional contributions from Mrs. Eleanor R. Seagraves; Mr. William R. Emerson, Director, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

LUCAS & CREW SHOW A B-29 TO THE PRESIDENT

Editor's Introduction: On February 20, 1944, Col. Walter Lucas and his crew plus two crew chiefs were dispatched to Washington, D.C. in B-29 #42-6303. They were to land at Bolling Field. As far as can be determined, no reason was given to the crew for making the flight. Bolling AFB at that time had four runways, the longest being 6,000 feet. Lucas landed the plane and was met by Gen. H.H. "Hap" Arnold. It was learned then that the purpose of the flight was to show the B-29 to President Roosevelt. It is believed that his was the first --and possibly the only -- time the President saw a B-29. (Considering that the B-29 project cost more than the atomic bomb project -- \$3 billion to \$2 billion--this was a significant occasion.)

Arnold met each member of the crew and had each one brief him on his crew duties. The following day--February 21-- between 4:00 and 5:00 p.m. the President came to Bolling Field and visited the plane. His chauffeur drove the limousine to the front of the plane. The President did not leave his limo. Rather, he had the driver drive around the plane from the front to the sides and back.

General Arnold met the President at the plane. Although Arnold was meeting with the President at the White House immediately before they came to Bolling, it cannot be established that he accompanied the President in the presidential limo. The President's daughter, Anna, and her two children, Eleanor and Curtis, did accompany the President. They got out of the car and inspected the plane.

Six crew members who flew the mission have responded in the search to gather recollections of this event. Memories differ as to the details of that day. No editorial effort is made to reconcile these memories. Individual recollections should be allowed to be presented exactly as they are recalled. For example, not everyone remembers that the President's daughter and grandchildren came along (although nearly everyone recalls that the President's dog, "Fala," was there), nor can everyone remember shaking hands with the President.

When searching out this story, correspondence was exchanged with Mr. William Emerson, Director of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. He was of great help to us in pulling this story together. Through Mr. Emerson, we were able to reach the President's granddaughter, now Mrs. Eleanor R. Seagraves. Mrs. Seagraves was 16 at the time of this event. She has contributed her memories of the occasion.

Accounts of participants in this history-making day are given here. Additional supporting data follow these accounts.

Walter Lucas: The Group was called from the Pentagon, and I was told they wanted a B-29 to be flown to Washington. Col. Parker (then Group CO) wanted me to go, probably because I had been in combat earlier and had a lot of ribbons. The flight was not hush-hush, but on the quiet because they didn't know where Roosevelt would be. I didn't think much about having to fly to Bolling. I didn't realize how small Bolling was. We buzzed the field to look it over before coming in to land. We landed O.K. One thing we can be grateful for, "Boeing makes great brakes." General Arnold came out and briefed us on the visit. Arnold insisted we explain the plane to him so that he could brief the President. When the President came the next day, we met him and shook hands. He was very nice to us. His daughter, Anna, and the children climbed all over the plane. We had maintenance problems afterward that delayed our takeoff for Pratt. We learned later that the Pentagon was happy and that Roosevelt was happy and very interested in the plane.

E.W. "Scoop" Martin: I was the crew chief on the flight, and M/Sgt. Harry Henning was my assistant. It took a pilot with the skills of Col. Lucas to land a B-29 at Bolling. The field was built for WW I aircraft. While I was at Langley, Bolling was restricted for B-17s. We always flew into Bolling in B-18s.

When we landed at Bolling, our first duty was to service the plane. That created some difficulty. They had one fuel truck that carried only enough fuel to service peashooters. It took four trips to service our B-29. This almost caused Harry and me to miss the doings. After Col. Lucas landed the plane, we pulled it over to the west end of the apron. The crew left it in a hurry for the VIP billets and didn't write up anything. Everyone forgot about Henning and me, and no one made arrangements for our transportation or quarters. After we finished servicing the plane and pulling a daily inspection, we hailed an MP jeep, and they took us to the transit billets. There the difficulty started as we had no orders -- only our ID cards and dog tags. The Officer of the Day was called. The OD knew about the plane, the crew members were billeted in the VIP quarters, but they had failed to list Henning and me. The OD straightened things out and put a guard on the plane.

The next morning the place was swarming with troops. The OD provided us with badges so we could get to the plane. We hung around for the doings, and then Harry and I took off for our homes in nearby Maryland about 80 miles west of DC. Henning and I had been in the service for 13 years prior to the flight. When we returned the next day and pulled a preflight inspection, #3 engine cut out on both mags. We traced the trouble to the distributor and found two broken fingers. They wired Boeing in Wichita for a new distributor and got it in 24 hours. We installed the distributor, checked the timing, preflighted the engine and took off for Pratt about 06:30 the next morning. The flight was a great occasion, but I have no orders to show for it due to security.

Homer Bates: As we came in for landing and taxied to our assigned spot, an engine shut down. I never have seen so many people (civilian employees, military, etc.) lining the buildings on the outside, on roofs and in upper windows. General Arnold was there with his staff and after we off loaded and stood at attention in front of the nose section, they greeted each of us. After briefing Gen. Arnold, his group departed. We stayed overnight. As we went to the flight line the next morning, the security was so tight, they wouldn't let us near our own aircraft. Finally, after some thorough checking on their part, they believed us. Each of us did our walk around and preflight checks of our equipment. About this time the limo arrived up close with President Roosevelt, his daughter Anna, and her two children, Eleanor, 16 and Curtis, 13. They also had a black Scotty named Fala. Gen. Arnold was present along with some additional staff people. Yes, we did go to the limo and shake hands with the President -- a very heart-warming experience. I didn't talk with the President's daughter and children; however, our CFC man, Al Miller, showed them around along with Gen. Arnold and many Allied military officers. We were requested by the President and Arnold to take our stations and move everything that would move (except the landing gear). I don't recall that we fired up the engines. After starting the put-put, we ran the rudder, elevators, ailerons, wing flaps, cowl flaps, bomb bay doors, landing and taxi lights and all of the turrets through the full range of movement.

P.D. Shepard: We left Pratt in early afternoon. Flight time to Washington was a little over four hours. We landed at Bolling Field late, but had time to service the plane before dark. Early the next morning we were out to wash down the plane. Everything had to be spotless. Gen. Hap Arnold came out to the plane before 10:00 a.m., and Col. Lucas introduced the crew to him. After the introduction, he asked if anyone had any questions. I asked him if I could shake hands with the President. His answer was, "Hell, it would take an act of Congress for you to shake the President's hand. I know how you feel; you probably have never seen a President before." I answered, "No, sir." I'm sure the President shook Col. Lucas' hand. As far as I remember, there were no pictures taken. The President drove up where the crew was lined up beside the plane. He got out of the car and stood holding the door. General Arnold then introduced all the crew and told him the position of each man without missing a name or position. After the inspection, each person had to get into position. I remember the children for they made a run through the tunnel, but I didn't know who they were. There were lots of security everywhere.

Bill Mackey: I remember talking to the President's daughter and kids, and we did show them the inside of the plane. I remember one of the kids asking me "if that big plane would really fly." I shook hands with the President, and he asked me to show him how the tail turret worked so I went up in the tail section, and the power plant was started, and I operated the tail guns--two 50 cal. and a 20 mm. cannon. I still say I am the only person on earth who has had two 50 caliber machine guns and a 20 mm. cannon trained on the President and his limo. I made sure there was no ammo in that turret. There were four cars loaded with Secret Service men who came out with the President. They were on top of the buildings and along the road the President was going to come out to the plane on. I don't think a mouse could have gotten through to the President without them knowing it. The President was very jolly with everybody.

Don Lund: I recall that the flight to Washington was on a Sunday. When we arrived at Bolling Field, we were met by an entourage headed by Gen. Hap Arnold. When the President's limo came to the airplane, it stopped very close by our crew as we were lined up in front of the nose. The President was within a few feet of us and when the door opened, the first thing I saw was Fala. As to whether we shook hands with the President, others may have, but I personally did not. As I recall the scenario, we were to be at our individual stations. The individual that I recall very well was Anna Roosevelt Boettiger. She came up into the nose section and along with her was a British Commodore named Wood. As I recall, she asked several pointed questions about the aircraft. It was obvious that she was very well versed on the B-29 project, and she was very knowledgeable. I did not feel intimidated by her presence or by her tone. She was a friendly person and gracious. I do not recall the two children. I remember that the limo moved off to my right, which would be toward the right side of the aircraft, and I am assuming that it moved around the aircraft so that the President could view the plane from various quarters.

Mrs. Eleanor R. Seagraves: We could not have helped being thrilled at being allowed to climb into and around a huge B-29 for the first time in our lives. I wish I could remember it all more clearly and also the kind people who escorted us about. That disappoints me very much. I think it is wonderful that the 40th Bomb Group Association exists, and that the MEMORIES you publish help keep so many brave men in touch with each other and the great work you all engaged in so many years ago.

Editor's Postscript: Since the plane was the focus of this event, it is appropriate to follow what happened to it. Here is the record of #42-6303, January, 1944: Flown from manufacturing site to Omaha, NE, apparently for modification. Flown from Omaha to Tinker Field, OK, for further modification. Ferried to Pratt, KS, February, 1944. Assigned to the 395th Squadron, February, 1944. Flown from Pratt to Chakulia, India, March, 1944.

<u>Date</u> <u>1944</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Target Hit</u>	<u>Aircraft</u> <u>Commander</u>
June 5	Bangkok, Thailand*		Lucas
July 8	Omura, Japan		"
July 29	Anshan, Manchuria		"
Aug. 10	Nagasaki, Japan		"
Aug. 20	Yawara, Japan		Sanders
Sept. 27	Anshan, Manchuria		Lucas
Oct. 14	Formosa		"
Oct. 17	Formosa		"
Oct. 22	Transferred to 45 th Squadron, 40th Group		
Oct. 22	Non-combat flight		Woolsey
Nov. 11	Omura	Nanking	Ball
Nov. 21	Omura	Shanghai	"
Nov. 21-22	Damaged in air raid, Hsinching, China		
Dec. 9	Hsinching, China to Chakulia, India		Renfro
Dec. 14	To the Land of the Big PX (Shipping codes "Daub" and "Pact")		
	Assigned to 4121st Base Unit, Kelly Field, TX		
Mar. '45	To 3030 Base Unit, Roswell Field, NM		
Nov. '45	To 4105th Base Unit, Davis Monthan Field, AZ for storage		
June '48	Dropped from USAF inventory, authorized for reclamation		

*First B-29 combat mission

Members of the crew for the flight to Washington and their crew positions where known:

A/C	Walter Y. Lucas
Co-pilot	Donald J. Lund
Navigator	Harold B. Lecrone
Bombardier	Harold Driscoll (deceased)
Flight Eng.	John A. Bullington (deceased)
CFC	Aloysius Miller
TG	Bill Mackey
	Gabriel Sena
	P.D. Shepard
	Homer Bates
	Stephen F. Kosinski (deceased)
Crew Chief	B.W. "Scoop" Martin
Asst. C/C	Harry Hennning (deceased)

Memory, however good, has difficulty bridging the 46 years since this event took place. For instance, Mrs. Seagraves remembers the occasion, but is unclear as to the date. Don Lund remembers clearly that Col. Lewis R. Parker, Group CO as the time, was on board. Walter Lucas is equally sure that he was not. Col. Lucas's memory is used in this narrative. Some crew members remember shaking hands with the President; others are firm that they did not do so. Some crew members remember Anna Roosevelt Boettiger and her children visiting the plane; others do not. Curtis, Anna Roosevelt's son, was reached through the Roosevelt Library. He now lives in Spain. He has no recollection of the event. (He was 13 at the time.) Mr. William Emerson, Director of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde park, New York, was of inestimable help in providing details of the occasion from the White House perspective. The President's appointment diary for the day he saw the plane showed that he had a schedule that was filled with appointments with people of the highest rank during that time. Beginning at 10:30 a.m. he met with the Vice President and the Speaker of the House. They were with him again at 11:45 when he also met with Mr. Leon Fraser and Mr. G. Stewart Brown. At 12:00 he met with Congressman F. Edward Herbert; at 12:15 he met with Paul V. McNutt. At 12:45 he was visited by the Soviet Ambassador, Andrei A. Gromyko. He had lunch with the Secretary of the Navy at 1:00 p.m. From 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., he met with Generals Marshall and Arnold, Admirals William D. Leahy and Ernest J. King, and Capt. Forrest B. Royal. At 4:00 p.m. the Presidential diary notes "(Lv. for Airfield)."

The White House Police Log for that date shows that at "4.07 p.m. The President left for Bolling Field via S.W. Gate." It shows his return at 5:10 p.m.

Mr. Emerson also provided a Xerox copy of the U.S. Secret Service Inter-Office Communication authored by Acting Supervising Agent Harry D. Anheier in which individual assignments are given to each agent accompanying the President. Provision was made for them to cover the route in advance. In correspondence with Mr. Ernie S. Montagliani, historical officer at Bolling AFB, he says that in spite of "Scoop" Martin's recollections to the contrary, Bolling was open to four-engine aircraft throughout the war. Throughout its history, he reports four-engine aircraft were using the field. At the time the field was closed to air traffic on 1 July, 1962, the last plane to take off was a C-54. He reported that the Field's records indicate that on 21 or 22 December, 1943, an exhibition of 17 aircraft was held at Bolling "including the new heavy bomber, the B-29." Vice-President Wallace and Secretary of War Stimson saw the exhibit, but there is no record of the President having come to the field, although their records show his coming to the field a month earlier, for what reason is not known.

"Scoop" Martin remembers that in 1940, while the President was courting South and Central American and Caribbean dignitaries to secure air bases for the U.S., he ("Scoop") was at Langley AFB with the 12th Bomb Squadron. To impress the dignitaries then in Washington, the President requested that a B-17 be flown into Bolling. "Langley was in an uproar," "Scoop" reports. "Nobody wanted to try to land a B-17 there. It was next to suicide. Cool heads prevailed when they pointed out it would be better and safer to fly a review overhead for the dignitaries to see. That was approved by FDR."

Further to this point is word provided by Mr. Emerson of the Roosevelt Library. He writes, "I was myself an AAF pilot during WW II, although in fighters, not bombers. I can easily imagine 'side slipping' a P-47 into Bolling Field--but not a B-29! That would have been something to see."



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Address Correction Requested