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The Silverplate Bombers: A History and Registry of the Enola Gay and Other B-29s Configured to Carry

Richard H. Campbell

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In the year that World War II began, Albert Einstein sent his famous letter to President Roosevelt regarding the feasibility of a revolutionary uranium bomb. What was considered infeasible at the time was the development of aircraft sufficient to harbor and transport the atomic explosive. This book documents the development and delivery of the Silverplate B-29 bomber, the remarkable airplane with capabilities that surpassed those of known enemy fighters of the time and was employed to release the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945. The basic history of the Silverplate B-29, from conception to successful development, is set forth in the early chapters, which discuss the then secret work of the 509th Composite Group at Wendover Army Air Field, on the Marianas Island of Tinian, and at Roswell Army Air Field. Subsequent chapters discuss the Los Alamos test program, Silverplate B-29 combat operations, the Air Force bases from which the aircraft operated, accidents associated with operations and details of the various classes of atomic bombs carried. Concluding chapters give special attention to the members of the 509th, who were responsible for dropping the bombs and whose efforts brought an end to World War II, provided the backbone of America's nuclear deterrent force in the years after the war, and opened the Atomic Age. Information available in the seven appendices includes, among other things, a chronology of events surrounding the development of the Silverplate bomber and the atomic bomb, a Silverplate B-29 mission list, and individual Silverplate B-29 histories. The story of this special bomber is accompanied by many never before published photographs of Silverplate B-29's and the men who flew them and includes a foreword by Paul W. Tibbets, the pilot of the Enola Gay on the Hiroshima mission.

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