



LIEUTENANT GENERAL ROSCOE CHARLES WILSON

CLASS OF 1928

Born on July 11, 1905, in Centralia, Pennsylvania. At age 19 he received a Presidential appointment to West Point, and upon graduation he branched Field Artillery-Coast Artillery.

He began flight training at Brooks Field, Texas, in September and graduated in November 1929 from Kelly Field. Then he was assigned to the First Observation Squadron at Mitchell Field, New York, becoming one of many open-cockpit aviation pioneers engaged in improving the aircraft of that day. Inspired by his mentor, Jimmy Doolittle, he renewed his studies in aeronautical engineering and, in 1932, attended the Air Corps Engineering School at Wright Field, Ohio, and was assigned to the Aircraft Branch.

For nearly six years he engaged in airplane design, engineering and test flying, heading the "Buck Rogers" section as Chief of Experimental Design. He held patents on scores of airplanes, including the B-15, B-17, and B-19, and was called "The Father of the Flying Fortress." He patented the P-39 after sketching it on the back of an envelope.

In 1937 he was sent to West Point to teach thermodynamics, hydraulics, aerodynamics and mechanics. There he assembled a wind tunnel, authored a book, *Preliminary Airplane Design* (published in 1941), and attended the Air Corps Tactical School in the summer of 1939. In 1940 he was back at Wright Field for two more years in experimental engineering.

He was promoted to major when World War II broke out and 14 months later was a full colonel in Washington, DC, starting several years of varied engineering assignments. In June 1943, he became Army Air Corps project officer to the Manhattan Engineering District. While the scientists made plutonium and assembled bomb components, he selected the airplane for the job, adapted it for outsized weapons, trained crews, and modified the configuration of the weapon. He initiated the first test base at Muroc, California, and selected the site for the first detonation at White Sands, New Mexico, all while overtly engaged as Chief, Development Engineering Branch, at the Pentagon. In July 1944, Wilson became Chief of Staff of the 316th Bomb Wing at Colorado Springs and deployed to Okinawa in June 1945. Two months later, he was at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, assessing the effects of the atom bombs.

From August 1945 until October 1951, Bim served in a variety of Pentagon jobs related to R&D and atomic energy and was promoted to brigadier general in April 1948. A key role under Curtis LeMay, at Jimmy Doolittle's insistence, was consolidating all research problems under one USAF Deputy for R&D. They founded The Rand Corporation, the Scientific Advisory Board, and the mechanisms to handle the technological advances produced by World War II. In 1945, the National Geographic-Brazilian Solar Eclipse Expedition named Wilson Field, Boca Uva, Brazil, after Bim in gratitude for his assistance. Similarly, the National Geographic-Finn Ronne Expedition of 1946 named Wilson Glacier in Antarctica after him. Wilson then served as Commandant, Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, until 1954.

Atomic energy then called again. The Third Air Force had the only tactical atomic bombs in Western Europe, so Wilson went to London to command it. His collateral duty was Chief, Military Assistance Group, UK. Bim then headed to the Pentagon to serve as the USAF member on the SecDef's Weapons Systems Evaluation Group. In July 1958, Bim was promoted to three stars and became USAF Deputy Chief of Staff for Development (later Research and Technology) and served with distinction until his retirement in 1961.

During those years he presided over the advent of the Space Age and marveled that he had "outlived the Air Age." He promptly went to work as President and Chairman of Allied Research, Inc., in Concord, Massachusetts, but retired in 1963.

His son, Charles E. Wilson, was a graduate of the Class of 1954.

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By [Signature] NARA Date 10/1/88

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FORM NO. 64

~~SECRET~~

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : General Groves

DATE: 29 August 1944

FROM : Captain Derry

SUBJECT: Army Air Forces' Program for Operations.

~~TOP SECRET~~ *by authority of [Signature]*

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 11652, Sec. 3(E) and 5(D) or (E)
NND 830039
By ERC NARS, Date 2/20/85

1. Conversation with Colonel Wilson on 28 August developed the information that the Air Forces have moved at an extremely rapid pace in the last three days in advancing their phase of the program toward coordination with other phases of the Manhattan District work. Several points were brought out in conversation which are worthy of being noted and certainly bear coordination and investigation with our activities.

2. Colonel Wilson advised me that the conference of Saturday, 26 August, amounted to advising certain Air Force officers of their work necessary to further the Air Forces' interest in the project. General Giles, Assistant Chief of Air Staff, conducted the meeting and advised each one of the officers involved what his function in the program would be. At the conclusion of the meeting, General Giles advised that in the event of a leak in information, the officer concerned would stand court martial. Not all phases of the work were discussed with these officers at the Saturday meeting, but only sufficient information given so that their job could be performed in an efficient manner.

3. General Giles called in the Commanding General of the 2nd Air Force, General Ent, for conference on Monday 28 August, to advise him what his work would consist of in cooperating with operations to develop an operational squadron and make available certain of his facilities for the development of a combat group. General Ent recommended a certain Colonel Montgomery as the commanding officer for this squadron. It seems that Colonel Montgomery comes extremely highly recommended (recommendations had been made through channels for his promotion to Brigadier but this recommendation is being withdrawn in order to permit Colonel Montgomery to lead the squadron). Colonel Montgomery is existing Deputy A 3 for the 20th Bomber Command. It seems that he is extremely capable, combat wise and is a good leader for training an operational squadron. Colonel Wilson advised me that the squadron had been selected, which is the 393rd Squadron of the 504th Heavy Bombardment Group.

4. The base for operation has also been selected - this is to be Wendover Field, Utah. All other facilities will be moved away from the field, leaving this field for the exclusive use of the 393rd Squadron under Colonel Montgomery. The housekeeping detachment is the only existing group to be left at the field. The assignment of Colonel Montgomery as commanding officer of this group has not been definitely set yet, but it appears that he will be the man. Colonel Wilson will advise Colonel Lansdale when the assignment has been made definite.

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E.O. 11652, Sec. 20 and 5(b) of 29 August 1944
NND 730039

By *[Signature]* NARS, Date *6-4-74*

5. The Glenn L. Martin Modification Center at Omaha, Nebraska, has been selected as the site for modifying the B-29 airplanes. One airplane is already in the line undergoing modifications. The tentative schedule is in substance as follows:

- 3 delivered to Modification Center before 1 October 1944,
- 5 before November 15 and 6 before December 15. The first
- 3 should be out of the modification center before 15 November,
- the second group of 5 out by 15 December, and the final group
- of 6 by 1 January 1945.

Major W. H. Graham, the Army Air Forces representative at the plant, will be in charge of the modification work to the B-29s. Captain R. L. Roark, presently assigned at Wright Field, will in general supervise the operations at Omaha. Modifications to the airplane will not be considered confidential and will be done right in line with other airplanes in order to facilitate operations and obtain speed. However, the equipment to be installed in the airplane will be considered confidential and treated as such.

6. Colonel Wilson requested 300 blockbusters in order to permit the 393rd Squadron to train. He suggested that if Colonel Montgomery is the right man for the job, he ought to have a handful of ribbons for his part in it.

7. Muroc Army Air Base is to ^{be} abandoned from any consideration for operational training in connection with our work inasmuch as the 4th Air Force is restricting the field to heavy bombardment group training. It is not presumed that this will interfere with the projected test operations that Captain Parsons expects to run in the near future.

1186 - You please to take this up with Wilson - I think he wants to know Capt. Parsons to be to Wanda over - P only has about 2 more weeks to go so is planning to go ahead at Muroc right away, [Signature]

[Signature]
DERRY

POSTSCRIPT:

Colonel Wilson advised me at 4:30 p.m. 29 August that General Giles, Assistant Chief of Air Staff, had decided that Colonel Montgomery was not to be the Commanding Officer of this new bomber group. Colonel Wilson has received advice from General Giles that Colonel Tibbetts has now been nominated for the position. He will advise me when this assignment is confirmed. Colonel Montgomery was not aware of either his nomination or his cancellation thereof.

Colonel Lansdale has been acquainted in general with the above action.

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~~SECRET~~

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WILSON, ROSCOE CHARLES

BIRTH: Centralia, Pa., 11 June 1905.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: B. S., USMA, 1928; AC PFS, 1929; AC AFS, Pur. Course, 1929; AC Engr. Sch., 1933; AC Tactical Sch., 1939; student, George Washington Univ., 1948.

APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS: Cadet, USMA, 1 July 1924; 2 lt., FA, 9 June 1928; AC, 8 Sept. 1928; trfd. to AC, 21 Nov. 1929; 1 lt., 1 Feb. 1934; capt., 9 June 1938; maj., AUS, 31 Jan. 1941; maj. (temp.), 1 Feb. 1941; lt. col. (temp.), 5 Jan. 1942; lt. col., AUS, 1 Feb. 1942; col., AUS (AC), 1 Mar. 1942; col., AUS, 5 Aug. 1943; maj., 9 June 1945; col., 2 Apr. 1948; brig. gen. (temp.), 10 Apr. 1948; brig. gen., 14 Sept. 1949; maj. gen. (temp.), 29 July 1950.

PRINCIPAL ASSIGNMENTS: Chief, Airplane Design Sec., Air Lab., Wright Fld., O., 1 June 1933 to 31 May 1937; Instructor, Dept. of Natural and Experimental Philosophy, USMA, 1 June 1937 to 1 June 1939; Asst. Prof., same, 1 June 1939 to May 1940; Asst. Chief, Air Lab., Materiel Cmbd., Wright Fld., 1 June 1940 to Apr. 1942; Asst. Chief, Development Engrg. Br., Office of AC/AS, Materiel, Maintenance and Distribution, Hq. AAF, 1 May 1942 to 1 June 1943; Chief, same, 2 June 1943 to 1 Dec. 1944; TDY, United Kingdom, for exchange of views on aeronautical developments, 3 Mar. to 6 Apr. 1944; O/S, 316th Bomb. Wg. (VH), Colorado Springs, Colo., (moved to Tpeka, Kane., and to Okinawa), 9 Dec. 1944 to 25 Aug. 1945; TDY, Survey of Atomic Bomb Damage, 26 Aug. to 12 Oct. 1945; Scientific Advisor to CG, AAF, Washington, D. C., 25 Nov. to 15 Dec. 1945; Vice Dep., AC/AS, Research and Development, Hq. AAF, 16 Dec. 1945 to 25 July 1947; Dep. Chief, AF Special Weapons Project, same, 26 July to 9 Oct. 1947; same, Hq. USAF, 10 Oct. 1947 to 11 Aug. 1948;

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WILSON, ROSCOE C.

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Dep. Asst. for Atomic Energy, Office of DC/S, Opns., Hq. USAF, 12 Aug. 1948 to 31 Jan. 1950; Asst. DC/S, Opns., for Atomic Energy, same, 1 Feb. 1950 to Oct. 1951; Comdt., Air War Coll., Maxwell AFB, Ala., 14 Oct. 1951 to latest reporting date, 30 Apr. 1952.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS: LM, 8 Dec. 1944; OLC, 28 Dec. 1945; Amer. Def. Serv. Mdl., Amer. Thea. Mdl., WWII Victory Mdl., As.-Pac. Thea. Mdl., bronze campaign stars: New Guinea, Ryukyu a.

RATINGS: Comd. Plt., Sr. A, Ober.

SOURCES: USAF 201-files; Army and AF Regls., 1948, II, p. 1984; AF Regl., 1949 to 1952; Who's Who in America, 1950-51, p. 2987.

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