

## **A TRIBUTE TO ANOTHER AVIATION GREAT HARRY HINK**

**Submitted by Ruby and Dave Ross**

We made a trip up to the DC area recently to visit our dear friends Harry and Audrey Hink and realized a lot of readers may not know Harry and what an interesting life he has led. We decided Harry certainly would make a good story for SOAP. Most people out there knew or knew of Harry's big brother Lynn Hink, who we lost this past January, but some may not know Harry. Harry also retired from the FAA as a Division Manager in Airports, but there is more...

Growing up in Oklahoma, Harry Hink always wanted to fly airplanes. He achieved that goal as pilot of a B-29 during World War II and the Korean War. At that time the B-29 was the largest bomber there was and Harry wanted to fly the biggest thing available. He volunteered to join the Army Air Corps (which became the Air Force in 1948) and was called to active duty in February of 1943 at the age of 21. Before enlisting in the Army Air Corps, Harry attended Southwestern Institute of Technology in Oklahoma but withdrew to pursue a military career.

Harry received training in Phoenix, AZ (primary), Bakersfield, CA (basic) and Pecos, TX (advanced). He was one of three B-17 students chosen to attend B-29 school in New Mexico. In April 1944, Harry became a commissioned officer and received his wings. During World War II, Harry was stationed in Guam. As one of two pilots of a B-29, he was in charge of a crew of 10 and flew all of his 28 missions over Japan. According to Harry, 10 B-29s composed one squadron and the strategy was for 400 to 500 B-29s to bomb an area. During the missions, pilots alternated as mission leaders. One pilot would lead three squadrons, or 30 planes. Harry led four of the missions. Most of the targets were factories, rail yards and other war-making facilities. Harry estimated that one mission took about 24 hours. Three to four hours were used to brief pilots on the mission, 15 hours to fly to and from Japan and mechanics used the remainder of the day to check and repair the B-29. Harry usually had three days to rest between missions. When not on a mission, Harry liked to relax on the beach or study the results of previous missions and once a month, Harry would visit or be visited by his older brother Lynn who was in the Navy and stationed 150 miles away on Saipan.

Harry experienced a lot of adventures during his 28 missions. He also had some close calls with the kamikazes, Japanese pilots that committed suicide by crashing into American planes or ships. Harry saw a kamikaze rip off the wing of a B-29. The damaged plane broke up. According to Harry, the most dreaded things were the kamikazes. They would make diving passes at the formation and in the latter stages of the war they would hang above the formations and try to attack. The B-29 crew's only defense was to put the guns on them and the B-29 had a lot of guns. They were able to shoot them down before they got too close. When Harry was not engaging the kamikazes, he was concerned about having enough fuel for the missions. Because Iwo Jima was approximately halfway between Guam and Japan, pilots needing fuel or repair would land there. While some people questioned if Iwo Jima was worth the loss of thousands of American soldiers, Harry said the battle was worth it. More American lives were saved because of the planes that landed on the island than were lost during the battle. Out of 28 missions, Harry

landed on Iwo Jima four times. Harry's last two missions were performed shortly after the war ended. On his 27<sup>th</sup> mission, he dropped food and other supplies to American prisoners of war. According to Harry, that was exciting because they felt they were doing good for their fellow soldiers. The soldiers would wave their arms telling the pilots they received the supplies. On Harry's 28<sup>th</sup> mission, he piloted one of 500 planes that flew over the U.S.S. Missouri as a show of force to Japan when it surrendered to the United States in Tokyo Bay.

Harry was in the war from April to October of 1945 and had over 417 hours of combat flying time. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with six clusters. We have included a picture of Harry with the Crew 27, 61<sup>st</sup> Squadron – 39<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group and a picture of the planes in formation over Japan. You can find Harry standing (left to right) fifth in the row. Harry also flew 63 missions in the Korean War in a B-29 like the one he flew in World War II. During the Vietnam War, Harry was a staff officer inspecting airfields in Taiwan, Thailand and Saigon, South Vietnam. In 1960 Harry and his family moved to Annandale when he worked at the Pentagon. In 1965 Harry earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland in education with a minor in history. Harry retired from the Air Force in 1970 and worked for the Federal Aviation Administration until 1987.

After World War II, Harry married his first wife Cherry and they had four children. Cherry Hink died in 1980 and in 1992 Harry married Audrey Linehan. Ruby first met and worked with Audrey in Airports Service 39 years ago and then later, after we married and moved back to the DC area, Ruby worked with her again in Airports. Audrey spent her entire career in Airports and "trained" a lot of Service Directors over the years. Some had never even worked in the Federal government so were very grateful to have Audrey by their side.

Ruby feels honored to have worked with first Audrey and then later with Harry too. Ruby first worked with Harry's big brother Lynn in NASPO in the 1960's and then both of us worked with him in the Western Pacific Region. What an honor to have worked with these two great men. And, how great it was that Harry chose Ruby's long-time, dear friend Audrey to share his life. That only proves what we have always said about Harry - "Harry's a smart man!"

Harry never seems to "toot his own horn" so it seemed only right that we do this for him. He is truly an aviation great! He was interviewed almost ten years ago for the local Annandale paper so a lot of this information was from an interview done by one of their staff writers and from the Crew 27, 61<sup>st</sup> Squadron - 39<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group website. We have included a recent picture that was taken of Harry and Dave when we were up for his big birthday bash. He gave us a signed copy of a painting that was done by aviation artist John Shaw in 2006 from one of Harry's photos taken on Iwo Jima during the war. Of course we had to make a big production of this by having Harry sign the "signed" copy. John Shaw called his painting "Iwo Jima: A Hard-Won Haven" – Where Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue.

Note: For the identity of the other crew members and a summary of missions flew, you can go to the website at <http://39th.org/39th/aerial/61st/crew27.html>.