

1st Lt. Bill Schierholz
34 Squadron
Supply Officer

Bill was born 10/14/21 St. Louis, MO.

When it was time for college, Bill's father told him "if you take engineering I'll pay your tuition. If not you're on your own."

So Bill majored in engineering at Washington University.

After Pearl Harbor a history professor told them to expect to be gone for seven years.

When a Wash U senior, "My father had refused to sign to let me go in. When I turned 21 in October 1942, one of my fraternity brothers and I enlisted for air corps cadet flight training, then in January I got my notice and was activated so I wasn't able to finish my senior last semester." Bill's fraternity brother wasn't called until later and he got to finish school on time, "without taking final exams".

Bill had his basic training at Jefferson Barracks in Saint Louis and "since the flight was filled", he was sent to Michigan State University for several months. The program consisted of 10-12 hours of flying a piper cub each week and, otherwise, elementary courses. "Math was so easy that I got 100s".

Bill needed only one engineering course in order to receive his college degree at Wash U. He wrote the Dean of Engineering for permission to hire a Michigan State tutor to finish the curriculum. Having received permission he completed the course.

After being pre-flight for "a month, month and a half" he flunked the night vision test, causing him to leave flight training.

"At that point I asked for a transfer back to engineering cadet program in Goldsboro, NC."

At one point, on a troop train, Bill and a small group of soldiers were taken off a train in Chicago, and sent to a military hospital. "They kept us there for 17 days and I was allowed to go home to St. Louis." It was a wonderful surprise for Bill's family who didn't expect to see him for years.

He then went to San Antonio for "pre preflight", where, at the suggestion of a friend, Bill became a chaplain's assistant (and turned pages for the organist). One of the benefits was that he didn't need to pull guard duty or KP. For his chaplain's assistant training he was taken off "pre pre-flight" for two months.

Then it was on to Yale for 20 weeks of concentrated "aircraft engineer class training".

Bill recalled a rule at Yale that if you flunked 1 week you got a do over, if you flunked 2 weeks you washed out and got sent to the infantry.

As an engineering cadet at Yale, he was to have taken his flight cadet patch off and replaced it with an engineering cadet patch. The cadet class at Yale did an excellent job selling war bonds and as a reward they were awarded a weekend in NYC and Bill had a date with a gal from Wash U. Unfortunately, he was caught with the wrong patch, restricted to base and got guard duty. "But did not wash out". Bill graduated and received his 2nd lieutenant commission.

After Yale he was transferred to Orlando for "Personal Equipment Training", then to Richmond, VA air base, then Norfolk, VA airbase as a Personal Equipment Officer.

Finally on to Wilmington, NC to join the 413th and stage for overseas.

"I was assigned to the 34th squadron as the personal equipment and assistant engineering officer but I was interested in supply and was able to become the squadron's supply officer." He reported to the squadron commander.

Of the overseas voyage, "it was long and we were packed like sardines". Bill had been promoted to 1st Lieutenant, but his promotion didn't catch up with him until they arrived in Ie Shima, so he ended up in the bunks for 2nd Lieutenants which were 5 or 6 high.

"On the voyage I played a lot of bridge with a guy who played professionally. I knew it was going to cost me but I learned a lot"

Bill remembers the Dutch ship arriving on Ie Shima on a Saturday and unloading all day Sunday. After Sunday's unloading, and a late church service, they were waiting for dinner when the kamikaze attacked. Bill saw a plane coming and it was shot down about 30 yards away "with parts and fuel all over our deck". They went on unloading the next day. "It was an exciting experience"

The island was completely stripped of vegetation. Bill recalls that the 413th had one runway. "Our squadron was really blessed", losing only one pilot who drowned when his plane went over the edge of the runway after prop failure. Bill also remembers the crash of a flight officer from the 21st squadron and that "his locker had been distributed" when, after two months, he came back having been rescued by a naval vessel.

Bill remembers "a great relationship with 413th Group supply officer Parker Tyler who was responsible for my promotion and transfer to the 337th Service Group which served the 413th Fighter Group."

Of Parker; "He was a great guy", a "very influential guy." Bill recalls that when the Japanese surrender planes landed to refuel on Ie Shima on their way to the Philippines, Parker got his favorite officers a truck to stand on for a view.

Parker also got Bill on a plane to Japan after the war. "He told us to pack our parachute bags with candy bars and cigarettes to trade." We took rations for our meals. At some point we found a hotel serving meals and got on line to have something different, but they ran out of food when we were still in line." "We were in Japan for four or five days."

Bill had attended a Christian Science school for two years and since Parker's mother was a Christian Scientist, it helped them build a relationship.

Bill stayed on Okinawa until August of 1946. During this time he was promoted to Group Commander of the Service Group. Slowly his staff was drained as men went home. After three months he had 49 of the over 100 men he was supposed to have "on paper". "But my personnel was rebuilt. I recall a late night call to get planes

ready for flight observation over Russia on a 24hour, 7 day observation."

When Bill returned home, he found that the rules at Wash U had changed and he needed to complete two semesters to graduate. His plan had been to go on to Harvard to get an MBA, but a key employee at his father's business died and his father said "you gotta help me". As a result, Bill finished school while working for his dad's business, an oil and gas distributor.

After Bill's father sold the company in 1950 to Sinclair, Bill went on to start a series of businesses. While his principal business was a chemical company, his start ups included a leasing company which at one time leased trucks to Parker Tyler's business.