

# Our B-29 buzzes deck of Missouri

By Mike Lyons  
Journal writer

It had been a long and vicious war, littering the broad Pacific with a score of island graveyards — the wreckage of a entire generation of American youth.

But now it was well and truly over.

Admiral Halsey's flagship, the 45,000 ton battleship *Missouri*, lay at anchor in Tokyo Bay, her decks jammed with white-clad sailors and the admirals and generals of every allied nation.

A solemn moment, to be sure. A singular moment in the parade of historic events.

Suddenly the air filled with the roar of four powerful radial engines, approaching fast.

A silver Superfortress screamed past the solemn proceeding, well below the battleship's mast level and only scant yards abeam of the mammoth battlewagon.

On her tail, the unmistakable "Block K" of the 330th Bomb Group; on her nose, her name: *City of Kankakee*.

Kankakeean Vivian Lock, the pilot of that Superfort, recalled that farewell pass this week, a "buzz job" that might have earned him a court martial — or a medal — depending on the disposition of the commander in charge.

"I don't know why I did it," he says, searching for an explanation of the impulse that seized him on that Sept. 2, a half century ago.

"The war was over — and it was a time in my life when I just felt that way.

"I'd had enough of it. I'd been tail-end Charlie for so long, I just didn't give a damn. And besides, what were they going to do to me?"

The B-29s, which for months had pounded Imperial Japan from bases on Guam, Saipan and Tinian, had been ordered to fly in formation over the wreckage of Tokyo during the surrender ceremony — a final show of force, the punctuation mark on victory.

But a cloud deck separated the ceremonies from the circling aerial armada.

Lock had had enough.

Peeling the City of Kankakee out of the formation, he descended through the murk, emerging just over the burned out city just feet above the ground.

Last night, John Ryan, a former 19-year-old gunner on the Lock's Superfort, and now a Boston attorney, recalled the sight which greeted the crew.

"Viv took us down. We broke at an altitude of something 2,000 to 3,000 feet.

"We went over Tokyo, which was extremely interesting because there just wasn't anything there. It was an amazing sight.

"There were people riding bicycles on the street, but we were so low that they were looking up at us and losing their balance on their bicycles."

Lock pointed the B-29 out over Tokyo Bay, heading for a ship the crew at first took to be the *Missouri*. But as they closed, a crewman identified it as the *Tennessee*.

Another scan of the bay revealed the *Missouri*, heavy with military brass and diplomats — an inviting final "target" for the Lock's crew and the *City of Kankakee*.

The crew would later joke that Lock had to lift a wingtip to keep from scraping the *Missouri*. And though that's post war hyperbole, they were quite close indeed.

Lock was busy piloting the huge craft, on the lookout for other aircrews infected with the same enthusiasm.

But Ryan, looking from his waist gun position, saw history flash past his window.

"We were very low and the *Missouri* was on my side. I could see all the sailors all dressed up in their whites — long lines of them two or three ranks deep, a hundred or so in each line.

"I could see the table with men seated at the table apparently signing something, but I couldn't see who was doing the signing — American or Japanese."

"It was quite a sight, really."

LT Col KINARD  
457 59 C.O.

Lock kept the buzzing of the *Missouri* a secret for decades. It was, after all, a court martial offense and he was well on his way to a military flying career which would last until his 1968 retirement at the rank of Lt. Colonel.

When news did finally leak out during a bomb group reunion, one former commander averred that he'd have court martialed Lock had he found out about the buzzing.

But another, doubtless recalling the rush of emotion that followed war's end, noted "If I'd known, I'd have given you a medal for it!"

"I'm glad somebody reminded those damn Army and Navy guys that someone else was in that war!"

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