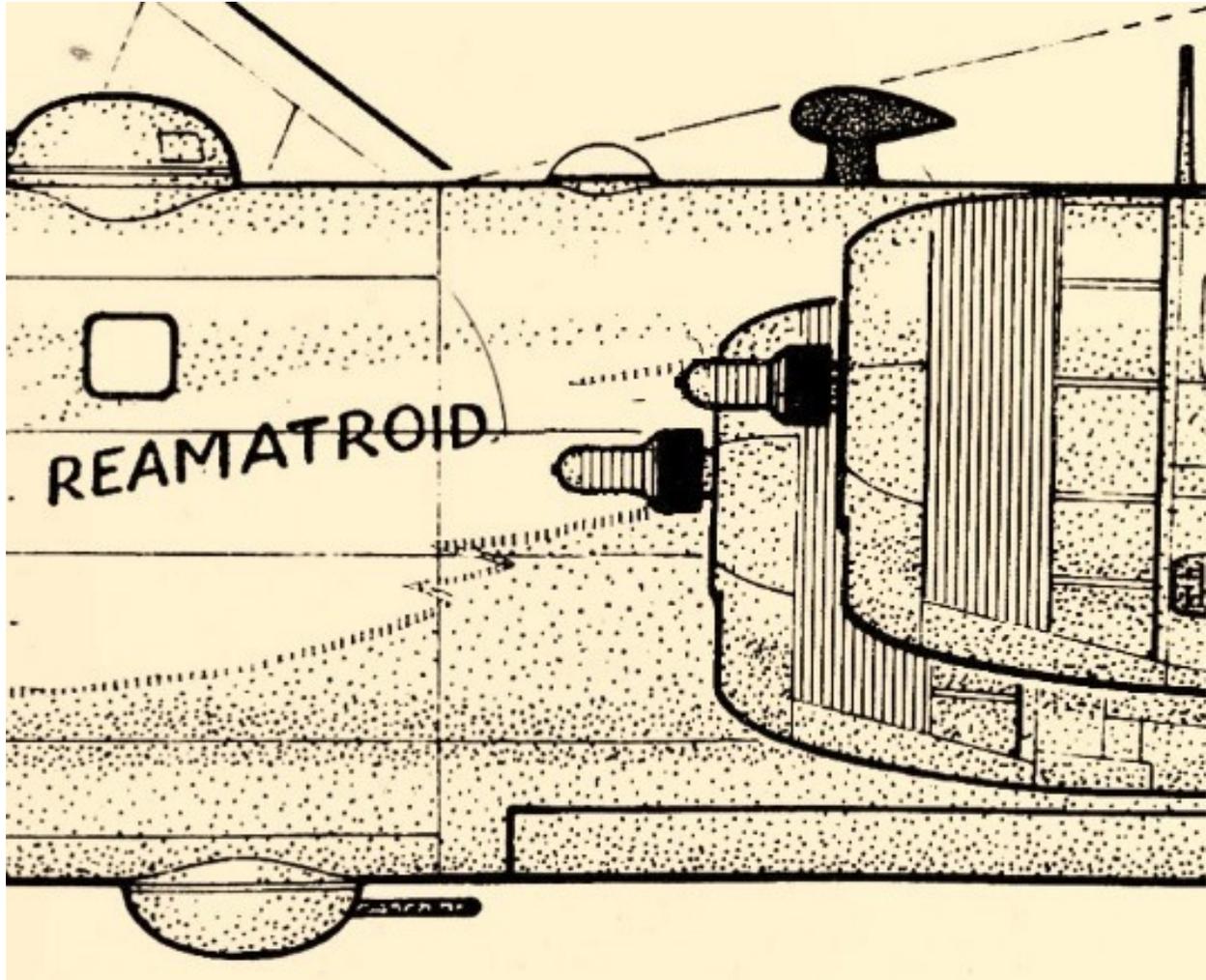


Thanks for the B-29 art sample, and offer of help with other similar art. (Nothing like the line art of the “good old days”; it seems to be a lost art now.)



In reviewing the drawings I found what seemed a conundrum. On all the B-29 profiles, a vertical line (on the “i” of “Rematroid”) represents the production splice between nose (flight deck) and center fuselage (bomb bay). Note that the navigator’s astrodome for celestial observations is BEHIND the splice line, putting it in the bomb bay section and just inches above a tunnel connecting the pressurized forward and aft crew stations. If the radome is in the bomb bay, how would a navigator access it to do his star gazing?

The internet came to the rescue with some suggested answers. This photo shows the interior of flight deck of CAF's famed B-29 "Fifi", looking aft.



Note the lower hatch, seen in center of the pressure bulkhead. It gives access to the bomb bay, not often used in flight.

One exception was for a rather unusual activity, when Navy Captain "Deak" Parsons (with USAAF 2/Lt Morris Jeppson as his assistant) crawled into the bomb bay to arm the first and only "gun-type" atomic bomb. Nicknamed "Little Boy", it had to be armed **IN FLIGHT** before it was dropped on Hiroshima.

A couple of years later USAF Captain Chuck Yeager crawled through that same bomb bay access hatch in a similar "special" B-29 in order to climb into "Glamorous Glennis", a real hotrod of an airplane (painted orange) being carried in the bomb bay! (But you've already seen "The Right Stuff!")

It should be emphasized that in the above photo the airplane's configuration is far from standard with a lot of equipment missing, most especially the bulky interior ammo container portions of both

upper and lower forward turrets. But what I wanted to point out is the huge amount of light entering the forward end of the tunnel, from an astrodome-shaped opening above! If that's how the nav accessed his astrodome, he would have to be something of a contortionist to do it. Maybe that's why the Air Force hired young guys to fly his air-e-o-planesguys whose youth was also sufficient enough that they would not know better!



(Which begs the question: Chuck, an honest answer now: if you knew THEN what you know NOW, would you still have signed on the dotted line for the opportunity to flitter around the sky in our Mutual Uncle Sammie's contraptions?)

Case in point: in October 2016 at my sixtieth year pilot training class reunion; of the **two hundred plus** who had so eagerly started on March 15th, 1955, only eighteen showed up at the Air Force Museum!



(Our memorial bench, purchased at a **not**-inconsiderable price, is one of many the museum has sold as a money-maker to any group (class, unit, whatever) whose members realize they're getting on in age, and want to make sure they're not forgotten!

I got to thinking afterwards about all the many classmates that were NOT at Daytonguys who will never make ANY reunionor anything else! We lost them all over the world...



But at least the museum does take pity on old soldiersthey did a bang-up job on our reunion! Our reunion banquet (above) was after hours in the museum, under the wings of famed "Bockscar", the B-29 which dropped the SECOND atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

First assignments out of pilot training usually determined the career path ...or career rut to which a guy kept coming back. In my case it all began in C-119's, and while I survived the "High Handle Wheelbarrow", the airplane designations after that about mostly all started with "C". Thus, the biggest gun our mutual uncle ever gave me to shoot back with was a "Pistol, flare, 40 mm, M8".



But since this is supposed to be about the B-29, I must add that out of pilot training, classmate Amos Land did get assigned to the by-then-geriatric B-29, flying out its years as the WB-29 and RB-29. He was also one of the first classmates lost from the class rosterin a WB-29. I heard via the grapevine that Amos' B-29 had been on one of the many "peacetime" losses to the Russians, Chinese, and North Koreans**thirty**-plus USAF and Navy airplanes and their crews lost in "peacetime". For a list, see <http://rb-29.net/HTML/77ColdWarStory/08.01apndxC.htm> . Many, many others were lost in just plain aircraft accidents with B-57's, T-33's, F-86's, and a whole alphabet soup of other types.

But I've distracted myself, again. Sorry.....



Back to the B-29! A fully-equipped B-29 flight station was so stuffed with “stuff” that of the six forward crew members, the three facing forward (pilot, copilot, bombardier) could see each other fairly well,



....but the flight engineer, navigator, and radio operator had so much “stuff” around them it was hard for them to even see each other.

Enough, already. My apologies to everybody who hasn't already hit the “delete” button.....



Fred Horky

Sembach Air Base

Germany

1962