

Commander's Call Topics



May 8, 2014

"The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential...these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence."

Confucius
Teacher, editor, politician, philosopher
(551-479 BCE)

May is
[Bicycle Safety Month.](#)

A bicycle is a vehicle, not a toy,
and the rules of the road prevail.

Asian Pacific Islanders Have Legacy of Service, Contribution

In May we celebrate Asian-American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, honoring the close-to-19-million U.S. citizens who, by ancestry, are either Asian or native Hawaiian or from other Pacific Island heritage.

The month of May was chosen to honor those of Asian-American Pacific Islander heritage based upon two important chapters in American history — the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants in May 1843 and the May 1869 completion of the transcontinental railroad, which couldn't have been accomplished without the efforts of Chinese immigrants.

For the Air Force, Asian-Pacific contributions began during the early days of World War II, when Chinese-American women, as Women in the Air Force Service Pilots, or WASPs, ferried planes from factories to air bases, as well as tested new planes from the factory and towed targets used for aerial gunnery. However, this was not the norm. During World War II, Asian-Americans — especially those of Japanese descent — were often turned down from entering the military. This practice was based upon their race, and they were listed by the government as "enemy aliens." Yet there were those who would not be deterred.

One example of the ultimate perseverance of Asian-Americans during the war is Ben Kuroki who, after initially being turned down, re-applied and was accepted.

Assigned to the 93rd Bombardment Wing, Ben was told that Japanese Americans could not serve overseas. He persisted and convinced his commanding officer to assign him to England as an admin clerk. Once there, he volunteered for gunnery school and became a top turret gunner on a B-24 Liberator.

On August 1, 1943, Ben was involved in one of the most dangerous bombing missions of the war, called Operation Tidal Wave, an effort to destroy the major oil refinery located in Ploesti, Romania. It would become the Air Force's costliest mission, with 53 aircraft and 660 crewmen lost.

Ben would volunteer for 30 combat missions, five more than required of airmen. With conflict in the European theater winding down, his resolve to continue to serve didn't end there. Denied the opportunity to serve in the Pacific theater, Ben took his case to the Secretary of War, Henry Stinson and was granted permission. He joined the crew of a B-29 Superfortress with the 505th Bombardment Group and was involved in another 28 bombing missions over mainland Japan. He is believed to be the only American of Japanese descent to have participated in combat missions in the Pacific during World War II.

By the end of the war, Ben Kuroki would receive the Distinguished Flying Cross three times, as well as six awards of the Air Medal. He would replace his "enemy alien" status with that of war hero. And along the way, as he changed the course of the war for many, he forever altered the stereotyping mindset of many, many more.



► TRENDING...

"...what my secretary and I owe the nation, the joint team and our Airmen, more than anything else, are the training and tools necessary to fight and win and survive," said [Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh, III](#) as he [testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee May 6.](#)

► RESOURCES

Website access to the following resources can be gained by clicking on the name.

[AF.mil](#)

[Airman magazine](#)

[Military OneSource/HomeFront](#)

[Air Force Personnel Center](#)

[Air Reserve Personnel Center](#)

[Department of Defense News](#)

[Department of Veteran Affairs](#)

[TRICARE](#)

[U.S. Government Website](#)

[Air Force Association
Scholarships](#)

[Air Force Safety Center](#)

[Civil Service Employment
Opportunities](#)

[NAF Employment Opportunities](#)

[Air Force Bands/Outreach](#)

► CURRENT ISSUES

[CSAF to Airmen: Take care of each other](#)

Two topics of equal importance—suicide and sexual assault—were emphasized in the most recent message of [Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III](#).

► FAMILY, HEALTH AND SAFETY

[Critical Days of Summer](#)

Running from May 23 to September 2, the Critical Days of Summer feature the theme "Risk: Double Checks, Not Second Thoughts."

► PERSONNEL ISSUES

[Eligible officers can request assignment with foreign allied AF](#)

The Air Force Military Personnel Exchange Program allows airmen who qualify to serve as embedded officers in an allied country's air force. Belgium, Jordan and Australia are among the 25 participating nations, and language training may be required prior to exchange assignment.

[May 5 – Pulse on AF management](#)

The weekly force management update focuses on a variety of actions and deadlines affecting officers, enlisted and civilian personnel.

[Majors, major-selects may be eligible for executive leadership program](#)

May 31 is the deadline for application to a program that provides a new approach to training civilian employees by including military participants in the Department of Defense.

► THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

May 8, 2001 – Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld made the Air Force the executive agent for the Pentagon's space activities.

May 9, 1983 - A C-141 crew from the 18 MAS at McGuire AFB became the first all-female crew to fly a round-trip mission across the Atlantic.

May 10, 1913 - Didier Masson and Thomas Dean, flying for Mexican General Alvarado Obregon, conducted the first aerial bombing in an American war by bombing Mexican Federal gunboats in Guaymas Bay, Gulf of California.

May 11, 1966 - At Holloman AFB, a Surveyor spacecraft made the first softlanding under its own power to demonstrate its ability to softland on the moon.

May 12, 1950 - Capt. Chuck Yeager flew the number one Bell X-1 research aircraft on its last flight above Edwards AFB.

May 13, 1942 - The first US bombardment squadron, the 15th, sent to England without aircraft. It flew the first US AAF operations over Western Europe on July 4th against enemy airfields in the Netherlands.

May 14 1923 - The Army accepted the first PW-8 prototype. It evolved into the Curtiss Hawk series of biplane pursuit aircraft. The "W" designated water-cooled engine.

For more information on Air Force heritage, visit <http://www.airforcehistory.af.mil>

The Defense Media Activity produces **Commander's Call Topics** weekly. For questions or comments about this, or any other DMA product, send an e-mail to afproducts@dma.mil.

To subscribe to AF news and information products online, go to <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDODAF/subscriber/new>