

HISTORY TOPIC of the WEEK

A Handful of Street Names: Boyles, Vetter, McCullen, Goins, Hanstead, Bender

It was a fateful day 5 Aug 1950, the weather was probably around 60 degrees, wind speed about 20-25 mph and there was ten miles of visibility in the sky. 12 Flights were scheduled to leave that night, the 2nd plane departing was a B-29 Superfortress. It leave just after 11pm headed for Guam with a stop at Hickam carrying 19 crew members, General Travis and a heavy load of fuel, bombs and ammunition; it crashed shortly after lift-off.

The crash occurred near the baseball diamond and Fam Camp. First on the scene were 4 airmen from the bakeshop who were working that night, a few other volunteers that witnessed/heard the crash and 10-15 minutes later the Fire Fighters arrived. The bakers and volunteers assisted the extraction of 8 crew members from the cockpit but the aft compartment had to be cut to save the lives of 10 other men. It was an unsafe unprecedented crash with unknown outcome but these firefighters were committed to get the job done and saving as many lives as possible. It was no sooner that they arrived and began cutting through the fuselage that the plane blew up. The explosion rocked the city and was felt as far away as Vallejo. The Trailer Park (now fam camp) was destroyed while debris from the blast was scattered over 2 sq miles.

There are five roads historically named after these fire fighters who lost their lives doing what they were called to do, save the lives of others while putting their own lives at risk. We pay homage to those fire fighters Pvt Edward **Goins**, SSgt John **McCullen**, Pvt Emil G. **Bender** Jr., Cpl Doyle D. **Hansted**, Pfc William **Vetter**.

Another road here at TAFB is named after Pvt John H. **Boyles**, he was scheduled to leave on the very next day to join an infantry unit on the battlefields of Korea. Pvt Boyles was a volunteer who witnessed/heard the crash and assisted with 8 members of the crew escape but died in the explosion along with a baker, Sgt Paul P. Ramoneda (the TAFB Airman Leadership School is named in his honor.)

For more on this historic B-29 Crash that took place here on Travis AFB 71 years ago stop in for a Lunch and Learn at the Travis AFB Museum on 6 Aug 2021, 12pm (30 minutes tops.) Bring your lunch for a time to learn.

Photos taken by Angela J. Parks, Wing Historian

