

RB29A Serial Number 45-21847

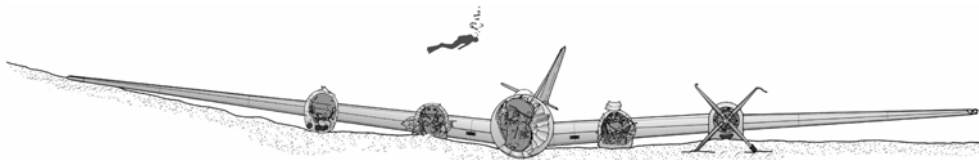
The B-29 bomber was developed as a long-range heavy bomber during the Second World War. Originally designed to bomb targets in Europe from the United States, the B-29 was mostly deployed in the Pacific and is most famous for the role it played in the closing phases of the war. On August 6 1945 Colonel Paul Tibbets, Jr. flew *Enola Gay*, to Hiroshima, Japan and dropped "Little Boy," a 9,000 pound atomic bomb. Three days later, on August 9 Major Charles Sweeney flew, *Bock's Car*, to the city of Nagasaki and dropped "Fat Man," a 10,000 pound atomic bomb. The world was shocked and horrified at the power of these weapons. Japan surrendered and the Second World War ended on August 14, 1945. Following the cessation of hostilities, the uneasy alliance between the U.S., Britain, France and the Soviet Union collapsed and the world realigned itself along the competing axes of communism and democracy. This new geopolitical drama stretched for almost five decades in the tense years of the Cold War.

B-29 45-21847 was constructed at the Boeing plant in Wichita, Kansas under the last production order issued by the U.S. Army to build B-29s. It was one of 1620 B-29s built at the Boeing-Wichita plant. 45-21847 was delivered to the United States Army Air Forces at the Oklahoma Air Depot, Tinker Army Air Field on September 13th, 1945, eleven days after Japan surrendered. In 1947, all defensive armament was removed from 45-21847 and the plane was designated as a reconnaissance B-29 (R-B29). In that same year, the plane was transferred to Muroc Army Airfield (later known as China Lake) for participation in Upper Atmosphere Research Project 288.

Upper Atmosphere Research Project 288 emerged at the dawn of the Cold War and was designed to gather basic scientific data about the nature of the upper atmosphere. This information was vital for American efforts aimed at designing and deploying intercontinental ballistic missiles. Part of the Upper Atmospheric Research Project involved the testing and development of a device that would use the sun as a reference point for missiles as they arched from the United States towards targets in Russia. While testing this "suntracker," 45-21847 crashed into Lake Mead on the morning of July 21, 1948. As the plane descended over Lake Mead, the pilot apparently lost depth perception above the smooth water. With an indicated airspeed of 230 miles per hour, the huge bomber hit the water with a glancing blow. The contact with the lake tore three of the four engines off the plane. The pilot managed to wrestle 45-21847 back into the air and then ditch; all members of the crew got out alive before the B-29 sank.

The B-29 dive site is set up for your safety and protection, but also for the protection of the airplane. By maintaining proper buoyancy you will help ensure that the divers that dive after you will have the same experience you have had and that you won't stir up silt for your buddies. B-29 control surfaces (the flaps and tail plane) are made of fabric and will disintegrate if touched—keep your hands and fins off the trailing edges of the wings and tailplane. Portions of the fuselage are thin and brittle, particularly on the top. Keep hands and fins off the airplane at all times. You are reminded that this plane is protected by law. Do not enter the plane and do not remove anything from the site.

Remember: Take Only Pictures, Leave Only Bubbles.



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

This dive site is a cooperative effort of the National Park Service, Lake Mead National Recreation Area and the Southern Nevada Scuba Retailers Association. Funding for your dive was provided by the National Park Service, the Southern Nevada Scuba Retailers Association, Overton Beach Marina and the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act.