



# Javalina Picnic Area Ramadas: From Flying Bombing Missions over Japan to Providing Shade to the Weary Visitor

## Introduction

Javalina Picnic Area in the Rincon Mountain District of Saguaro National Park contains a most unusual set of ramadas. Each of the five ramadas was constructed using recycled B-29 “Superfortress” bomb bay doors (Figure 1). B-29s were WWII era (Figures 2 and 3) long range bombers. Unfortunately the circumstances surrounding the innovative and unique choice of using bomb bay doors for ramada roofs is not known. The history of the bomb bay doors is also unknown – did these bomb bay doors come from B-29s that participated in bombing runs during WWII? And if so were they in the Pacific Theater and did the planes drop bombs on Japan?

## Javalina Picnic Area

There are 6 ramadas in the Javalina Picnic Area, each with a bomb bay door roof. In total 25 bomb bay doors were used. B-29’s had 2 sets of two bomb bay doors, so there are 7 aircraft represented. Each of the bomb bay doors is 13’8” long by 36.5” wide (see Figure 3). The ramadas were constructed in October 1954 and the bomb bay doors were acquired from the Davis Monthan Airforce Base “Boneyard” or AMARC (Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center) (see Figure 4).

## B-29 “Superfortress”

The B-29 Superfortress was manufactured by the Boeing Company. In its day the B-29 was the most technologically advanced bomber in the world. Each Boeing B-29 had an 11 man crew, who flew in a somewhat comfortable pressurized crew cabin. The plane had a range of 5,830 miles with a cruising speed of 220 mph and a ceiling of 31,850 ft. Each plane could carry a 20,000 lb. bomb load.

The airplane came into service in early 1943 and its first area of combat was India. The plane’s baptism of fire came on June 5, 1944 when B-29s attacked Makasan, near Bangkok, Thailand.<sup>1</sup> The first B-29 attack on the Japanese home islands was on June 15-16.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 1. A ramada at the Javalina Picnic Area. The ramada’s roof is constructed from three B-29 bomb bay doors.

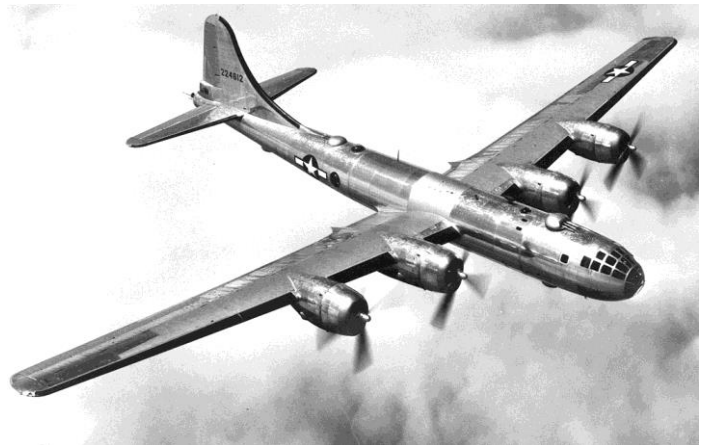


Figure 2. Photograph of a B-29 “Superfortress” in flight.



Figure 3. A B-29 in flight with both sets of bomb bay doors open in preparation of dropping its bombs (Photograph courtesy of the Associated Press/Wichita Eagle).

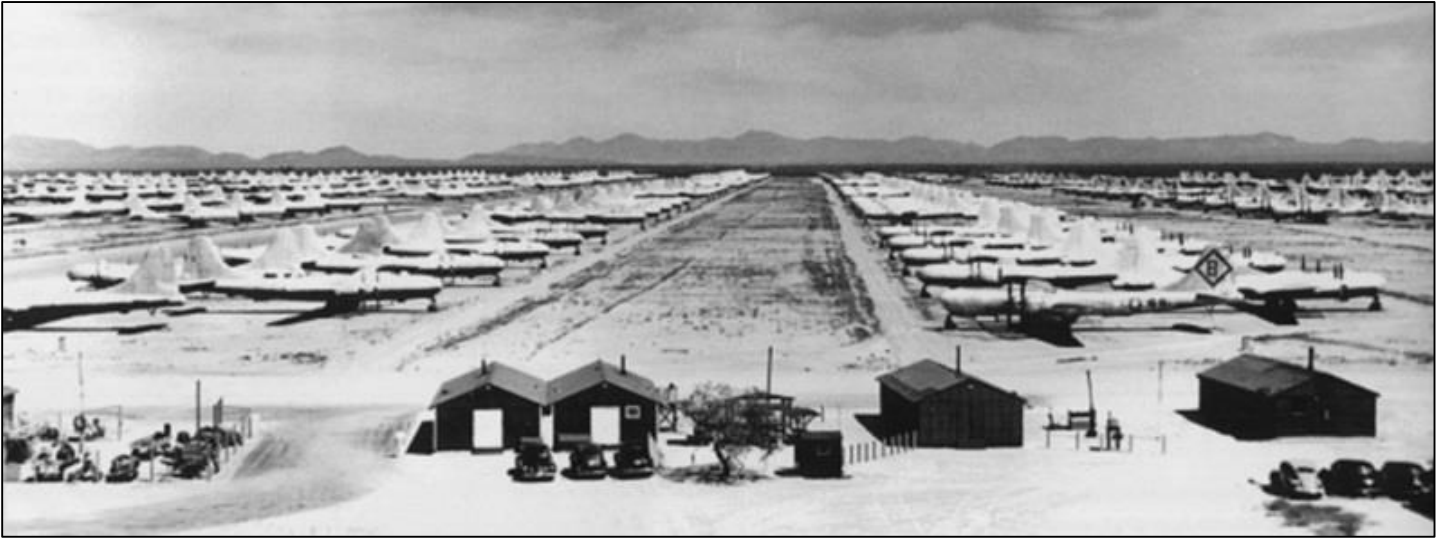


Figure 4. Rows of cocooned B-29 Superfortress bombers in storage at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, circa 1950. <sup>4</sup>

On August 6, 1945, the B-29 Enola Gay dropped the world's first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.

Before production ended in 1946, a total of 3970 B-29s were built. After the war, B-29s were adapted for several functions, including in-flight refueling, antisubmarine patrol, and weather reconnaissance and rescue duty. The B-29 saw military service again in Korea between 1950 and 1953. The last B-29 squadron was retired from service in September 1960.<sup>3</sup>

### Pima Air and Space Museum

The Pima Air and Space Museum, Tucson, Arizona, has two B-29s on exhibit. "The Sentimental Journey" (Serial Number 44-70016) was with the 330<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group and flew 31 missions over Japan During WWII. The second B-29, actually a Boeing KB-50J, Serial Number 49-0372, is a version of B-29 that was modified as an aerial refueling tanker.

<sup>1</sup> B-29 Superfortress Units of World War 2, by Robert F. Dorr, Osprey Combat Aircraft No. 33, 2004 Osprey Publishing Limited. P. 19.

<sup>2</sup> IBID P. 20.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.boeing.com/history/products/b-29-superfortress.page>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.airplaneboneyards.com/davis-monthan-afb-amarg-airplane-boneyard.htm>

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For more information contact:

Ronald Beckwith  
Archeologist  
Saguaro National Park  
3693 S. Old Spanish Trail  
Tucson, AZ 85730

ph: (520) 733-5160  
email: [ronald\\_beckwith@nps.gov](mailto:ronald_beckwith@nps.gov)