

## BOOK REVIEW

### **The Rising Sun Sets: The Complete Story of the Bombing of Nagasaki**

By Jerome Beser and Jack Spangler. AuthorHouse Publishing Co., Bloomington, IN  
ISBN 9781434318336 (Paperback \$19.99) 9781434318329 (Hardcover \$39.99)  
Photographs. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Pp vii, 279.

The book *The Rising Sun Sets: The Complete Story of the Bombing of Nagasaki* has been compiled from unpublished documents provided by the Beser Foundation for Archival Research and Preservation. Many of these documents were from the personal collection of the late Jacob Beser, 1st LT. US Army 1945. LT Beser the only man to have flown on both the *Enola Gay* and the *Bock's Car* for their historic atomic bomb delivery missions of August 6 & 9, 1945. Beser collected data over a period of more than 40 years and outlined this book in 1990. Unfortunately he was unable to complete his undertaking because of his untimely death in 1992. In 2007 his youngest son Jerome and a close personal friend Jack Spangler have completed the task.

The authors tell LT. Beser's story in a well-written and easy to read fashion. Liberal use of imbedded editor's notes and footnotes are filled with excellent commentary to supplement and interpret some of the events discussed by LT Beser.

This book gives a good glimpse into World War II years and the main battles in the Pacific. Furthermore it reminds us of how many lives were saved, on both sides, by using the atomic weapons. For a high school student of history it could well be designated as a "CRAM 101" textbook for the study of the History of World War II in the Pacific.

While concentrating on the untold events of the Nagasaki mission the book presents a well-balanced summary of what lead up to the war with Japan; some history of the war in the Pacific; why the bombs were necessary; and clarifies some myths that have existed since 1945. But, more importantly LT Beser argues that the public needs to recognize the true motivations and circumstances that led up to the use of the atomic weapons as well as their horrible effects on mankind. Without clear unbiased factual documentation and a society that understands the danger of allowing history to fade into the past, unfortunately the possibility of history repeating itself becomes a real danger to current and future generations.

LT Beser follows his activities from his enlistment in the Air Corps the day after Pearl Harbor through his participation in the Manhattan Engineering Project and the activation of the 509<sup>th</sup> Composite Group at Wendover Air Base. He continues with a discussion of the intense training program under the command of COL Paul W. Tibbets, Jr. and his part in the successful deployment of the atomic weapons. Beser minimally discusses the Hiroshima mission since in his opinion this mission had been thoroughly documented. However, the Nagasaki mission which was jinxed from the "get-go" and bungled to such a degree in its execution that it nearly ended in disaster is described more fully.

LT Beser was obviously very passionate about the dilemma President Truman's faced. It was apparent that the fire bombings of the Japanese cities had produced little effect on the Japanese morale and will to fight even though thousands of civilians had been burned to death. The Japanese leadership repeatedly made it abundantly clear of their intentions to continue fighting until the last man, woman and child had been killed. An invasion of the Japanese

mainland was inevitable and preparations were underway. When the bomb became available, President Truman had a very unpleasant decision to make.

Beser was in complete agreement with President Truman's decision and believed that it was the best decision given the options available. But it was Beser's profound hope that atomic weapons will never again be used. He summed up his feelings in this quotation "If World War III is fought with atomic weapons, World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones."

Regarding some of the myths, Beser presents copies of some original documents that accurately document why Hiroshima and Nagasaki were selected as target cities. He further presents a handwritten page from President Truman's diary that clearly states that the targets should be strictly military in nature and not women and children. Also included is an interview statement made by the Enola Gay Bombardier MAJ Ferebee wherein he said the bomb was dropped on "the Headquarters for the whole defense of the Japanese Empire". These documents should put to rest the stories that the primary objective was to "kill as many Japs as possible".

LT Beser addressed, using Enola Gay crew interview transcripts, the crew guilt and remorse myths and the alleged CAPT Lewis' comment over Hiroshima. The authors state that the tapes recorded over Hiroshima lost since 1945 have been found and they clearly dispose of the myth that CAPT Lewis commented "My God what have we done" immediately after the bomb exploded.

LT Beser also addressed the insanity myth in detail in much the same manner as COL Tibbets did in his writings. But Beser includes original copies of letters supporting his case. A particularly strong point of this book is its recounting some of the prewar political conditions that lead up to the war and battles during the war that greatly influenced the mindset of the American people in 1945. LT Beser and the authors should be commended for their fair and balanced descriptions of these events.

This book could benefit from a larger type size that would make it easier for the World War II generations to read, however this is not a serious distraction. This reviewer also notes that the authors did little or no research to verify what LT Beser had said was accurate. A task they felt out of scope of what they intended to do since Beser had said "I do not claim to be the authority in these matters, I know what I did, what I saw, and the impression it has made on me".

Nevertheless, these issues do not in any way detract from the value of this book in educating readers about these historical events of 1945. I can recommend this book to history and war buffs and to any others who have been exposed only to a "pity-the-victims" view of the atomic bombing of the two Japanese cities or only have a vague idea of what it was all about.