

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE B-52 CRASH
GRANTSVILLE, MARYLAND
JANUARY 13, 1964

from
M/Sgt. William D. Ramsey, U.S. Army Retired

On January 13, 1964, the 28th Ordnance Detachment (EOD) was stationed at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. (EOD) is the abbreviation for Explosive Ordnance Disposal. Its mission is to provide support to the military and civilian community in rendering safe and disposing of all items of explosives that are fired, thrown, or placed and fail to function as intended. I was First Sergeant of the Detachment.

1964 was the height of the Cold War. At approximately 0200 hours (2:00 a.m.) on January 13th my unit was alerted and ordered to respond to Garrett County in the vicinity of Grantsville, Maryland--the site of a crashed U.S. Air Force B-52 aircraft belonging to SAC (Strategic Air Command). The first element departed Fort Meade about 0300 hours, consisting of Lt. Ellenburg, Sgt. Coltrane, and me; followed by the second element consisting of Sgt. Well, Cpl. Black and Pfc. Richter. Travel was slow due to blizzard like conditions and sub-zero temperatures. Arriving at the Maryland State Police Barracks in Frederick we put chains on all four wheels of the jeep, picked up a State Police escort, and departed for Cumberland. Travel was on Route 40, the primary east-west highway at that time. The snowplows were out but due to the heavy drifting snow, going was very difficult. The Jeep had canvas curtains, no heater or defroster. Moving westward, we arrived in Cumberland at daybreak. Traveling had been slow. We welcomed hot coffee from the State Police. January in Western Maryland can be brutal. We proceeded on to Frostburg, then south through Lonaconing, up over Big Savage Mountain to the crash site. At each State Police Barracks we contacted our Headquarters by telephone at Fort Meade, 549th Ordnance Detachment (EOD Control) who provided us with information pertaining to the weapons systems on board the aircraft.

Arriving at the crash site we found the area secured by members of the Maryland State Police. Numerous fires were burning--tree stumps, brush, etc. The plane was a mass of alloy. Thank God it was not burning. The second element, our 2-1/2 ton truck, and trailer occupied by Sgt. Well, Cpl. Black, and Pfc. Richter arrived shortly thereafter. They traveled through the blizzard as we did. We established a command post and contacted our EOD Headquarters at Fort Meade commanded by Major Walter Korsgaard. A telephone was installed right on top of the mountain by Bell Telephone Company. We located two bombs in surprisingly good condition and performed rendering safe procedures (RSP) as instructed by Major Korsgaard as requested by Strategic Air Command (SAC) U.S. Air Force. After the RSP was completed I established a guard roster as to maintain immediate security at the aircraft. Weather conditions were extreme. The temperature dipped to minus 15-20°F. During the night of January 13th, wind velocity was excessive. Two men guarded the scene, being relieved every two hours. Shortly after daybreak of January 14th, U.S. Air Force personnel arrived and took over the accident scene. The 28th Ordnance Detachment (EOD) had completed its mission as it was trained to do in those uncertain days of the Cold War.

The Unit was never mentioned as to the part it played. This is the rest of the story of the B-52 airplane crash on Big Savage Mountain, Grantsville, Maryland, on January 13, 1964.

UNIT ROSTER

1st Lt. Carl R. Ellenburg, Commanding
SFC William D. Ramsey, 1st Sergeant
Sgt. Horace C. Coltrane
Sgt. Ronald G. Well
Cpl. Tommy L. Black
Pfc. Roy A. Richter

HEADQUARTERS
484TH BOMBARDMENT WING (H) (SAC)
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
TURNER AIR FORCE BASE, GEORGIA

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: C
SUBJECT: Letter of Appreciation

18 February 1964

TO: Commander
Explosive Ordnance Disposal Detachment
Ft. Meade
Maryland

1. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your personnel for the technical assistance and cooperation rendered after the crash of our B-52 bomber near Cumberland, Maryland, on 13 January 1964.
2. Your men were among the very first on the accident scene and controlled the delicate and dangerous weapon situation in a very professional manner. The electrical safing procedures were accomplished most efficiently and were in strict compliance with published EOD directives.
3. It was pleasing and comforting to learn that your men possessed the knowledge and training to cope with such a sensitive matter with so high a degree of technical skill and sound judgment.
4. Please convey to those who participated a sincere "well done" from the members of my organization and me.


D. G. MCPHERSON
Colonel, USAF
Commander