

VANKIRK, Theodore VanKirk

(Abstracted from information found on several internet websites)

ATLANTA — The last surviving member of the crew that dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, hastening the end of World War II and forcing the world into the atomic age, has died in Georgia. Theodore VanKirk, also known as "Dutch," died Monday, July 28, 2014 of natural causes at the retirement home where he lived in Stone Mountain, Georgia, his son Tom VanKirk said. He was 93. VanKirk flew nearly 60 bombing missions, but it was a single mission in the Pacific that secured him a place in history. He was 24 years old when he served as navigator on the *Enola Gay*, the B-29 Superfortress that dropped the first atomic bomb deployed in wartime over the Japanese city of Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945. He was teamed with pilot Paul Tibbets and bombardier Tom Ferebee in Tibbets' fledgling 509th Composite Bomb Group for Special Mission No. 13. The mission went perfectly, VanKirk told The Associated Press in a 2005 interview. He guided the bomber through the night sky, just 15 seconds behind schedule, he said. As the 9,000-pound bomb nicknamed "Little Boy" fell toward the sleeping city, he and his crewmates hoped to escape with their lives. They didn't know whether the bomb would actually work and, if it did, whether its shockwaves would rip their plane to shreds. They counted — one thousand one, one thousand two — reaching the 43 seconds they'd been told it would take for detonation and heard nothing. "I think everybody in the plane concluded it was a dud. It seemed a lot longer than 43 seconds," VanKirk recalled. Then came a bright flash. Then a shockwave. Then another shockwave. The blast and its aftereffects killed 140,000 in Hiroshima. Three days after Hiroshima, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. The blast and its aftermath claimed 80,000 lives. Six days after the Nagasaki bombing, Japan surrendered. Whether the United States should have used the atomic bomb has been debated endlessly. VanKirk told the AP he thought it was necessary because it shortened the war and eliminated the need for an Allied land invasion that could have cost more lives on both sides. "I honestly believe the use of the atomic bomb saved lives in the long run. There were a lot of lives saved. Most of the lives saved were Japanese," VanKirk said. But it also made him wary of war. "The whole World War II experience shows that wars don't settle anything. And atomic weapons don't settle anything," he said. "I personally think there shouldn't be any atomic bombs in the world — I'd like to see them all abolished. "But if anyone has one," he added, "I want to have one more than my enemy." VanKirk stayed on with the military for a year after the war ended. Then he went to school, earned degrees in chemical engineering and signed on with DuPont, where he stayed until he retired in 1985. He later moved from California to the Atlanta area to be near his daughter. Like many World War II veterans, VanKirk didn't talk much about his service until much later in his life when he spoke to school groups, his son said. "I didn't even find out that he was on that mission until I was 10 years old and read some old news clippings in my grandmother's attic," Tom VanKirk told the AP in a phone interview Tuesday. Instead, he and his three siblings treasured a wonderful father, who was a great mentor and remained active and "sharp as a tack" until the end of his life. "I know he was recognized as a war hero, but we just knew him as a great father," Tom VanKirk said. VanKirk's military career was chronicled in a 2012 book, "My True Course," by Suzanne Dietz. VanKirk was energetic, very bright and had a terrific sense of humor, Dietz recalled Tuesday. Interviewing VanKirk for the book, she said, "was like sitting with your father at the kitchen table listening to him tell stories." A funeral service was scheduled for VanKirk on Aug. 5 in his hometown of Northumberland, Pennsylvania. He will be buried in Northumberland next to his wife, who died in 1975. The burial will be private.

VANBUSKIRK, David VanBuskirk

(From several web sources)

David VanBuskirk, 36, a native Nevadan, passed away July 23, 2013. He was employed by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and embodied every sense of the word hero. David was preceded in death by his father, Red; and brother, Michael. David is survived by his loving wife, of 11 years, Adriana; his mother, Pat; sister, Jenny; and many aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews. David was employed by Metro since 1999 and joined the elite SAR Team in 2007. Within the Search and Rescue Team, David provided support as a Mountain Rescue Team Leader, Tactical Emergency Medical Support Coordinator, Helicopter Crew Chief and Tactical Medic for LVMPD SWAT. He saved many lives and took pride in being able to do so. He loved his family and friends immensely. He had a fabulous sense of humor and showed love to everyone. He will be dearly missed by all who knew and loved him. David will always be remembered as a man of integrity, honesty and great courage. His life cannot be summed up in a few lines, but will be forever missed by family and friends. David leaves many great memories to a family that loved him dearly. He was the epitome of what a true husband, son, uncle and brother should be. Not a day will go by that we will not miss his sense of humor and penchant for inserting a quick-witted comment at just the right moment. It is these memories of him that we will cherish until we join him. Visitation will be from 10 a.m.-noon Monday, July 29, with services following, both at both at Central Christian Church, 1001 New Beginnings Drive. Burial following, at Palm Valley View Memorial Park, 7600 S. Eastern Ave.