

Nathan F. Twining, CO 15th AF

Research by Bob Leavenworth

Nathan F. Twining was born the son of Clarence Walker and Maize Twining, 11 October 1897, in Monroe, Wisconsin. His distinguished military career spanned 44 years and culminated with his appointment as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1957-1960.

Twining began his military service in the Oregon National Guard as a Corporal, 16 June 1916. He was promoted to Sergeant 25 March 1917 and served until 28 May 1917. He entered the United States Military Academy 14 June 1917, and as part of an accelerated wartime class was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the infantry, 1 November 1918. He did not, however, see combat in WW I. He was promoted to First Lieutenant 1 July 1920. Subsequent promotions included: Captain 20 April 1935, Major 1 September 1938, Lieutenant Colonel 15 July 1941, Colonel 1 February 1942, Brigadier General 15 June 1942, Major General 5 February 1943, Lieutenant General 5 June 1945 and General 10 October 1950.

Twining attended the Army's Primary Flying School, Brooks Field, Texas, 1923-1924, and his principal assignments and rise to military distinction began with his official transfer to the Army Air Corps, 16 November 1926. A Flight Instructor at March Field, California, 1929-1930, he became Commanding Officer of the 26th Attack Squadron, Schofield Barracks, Territory of Hawaii, 1 July 1930 to 21 March 1932. Transferred to Fort Crockett, Texas, he was Station Engineering Officer for the 90th Attack Squadron and subsequently Group Adjutant, 3rd Attack Group, 24 March 1932 to 26 February 1935. He was Assistant Operations Officer, 3rd Wing, Barksdale Field, Louisiana, from 1 March, 28 to August 1935. At Maxwell Field, Alabama, he was a student at the Air Corps Tactical School, 1 September 1935 to 20 July 1936, and he attended Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1 September 1936 to 25 June 1937.

Twining earned his Command Pilot rating in 1937 and served as Air Corps Technical Supervisor, San Antonio, Texas, 1 July 1937 to 31 July 1940. From 9 August 16 November 1940 he was Assistant Chief, Inspection Division, Office of the Chief of the Air Corps (OCAC), and then Chief, Technical Inspection Section, Inspection Division, OCAC, 17 November 1940 to 10 December 1941.

With the outbreak of WW II, Twining was assigned to Operations Division, Headquarters Army Air Force (HQ AAF), from 11 December 1941 to February 1942. An Executive Officer within HQ AAF, February to May 1942, he served as Director of War Organization and Movement, HQ AAF, May to July 1942. Following his promotion to General Officer, Twining was designated Chief of Staff, United States Army Forces in the South Pacific Area, 20 July 1942 to 4 January 1943, and Commanding General of the 13th Air Force, Solomon Islands, 5 January to 12 December 1943. While commanding the 13th Air Force, he and 14 airmen were forced into the Coral Sea during a B-17 flight from Guadalcanal to Spirito Santo Island, 26 January 1943. They spent the next 6 days in 2 rubber rafts before being rescued 1 February 1943.

Twining was assigned to the European Theater of the war, 6 January 1944-25 May 1945, as Commanding General of the 15th Air Force and Mediterranean Allied Forces. After quick tours at



the Legislative and Liaison Division, HQ AAF, and United States Army Strategic Air Forces, 24 June 1 to August 1945, he was appointed Commanding General of the 20th Air Force, 2 August to 15 October 1945. While commanding the 20th Air Force, his planes dropped the only 2 atomic bombs used in time of war on Hiroshima, Japan, 6 August 1945, and on Nagasaki, Japan, 9 August 1945.

Following WW II Twining was Commanding General, Technical Services Command, Wright Field, Ohio, 8 December 1945 to 30 September 1947. He then served as Commander in Chief, Alaskan Command, Fort Richardson, Alaska, 21 October 1947 to May 1950. Following his assignment as Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel, Headquarters United States Air Force (HQ USAF), 14 July to 9 October 1950, he was appointed Vice Chief of Staff, USAF, 10 October 1950 to 29 June 1953.

General Twining was appointed Chief of Staff, USAF, 30 June 1953-14 August 1957. He served as the first Air Force Chief of Staff to be appointed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 15 August 1957-30 September 1960. He retired from the Air Force 30 September 1960 after 44 years of distinguished service. Remaining active, he was Vice Chairman of Holt, Rinehart and Winston Publishers and a consultant to the Martin Marietta Corporation until his subsequent retirement in 1967.

In June 1981 General Twining and his wife, Maude, moved to the Air Force Village, San Antonio, Texas, where the General could receive medical treatment at Wilford Hall Medical Center, Lackland AFB. At Wilford Hall, 29 March 1982, at age 84, he died of a heart attack. He was survived by his wife, Maude, and their 3 children: Major Richard G. Twining (USAF, retired), Nathan A. Twining and Olivia Twining Hansell.

General Twining was a major figure in the development of United States airpower. During the 1950s as Vice Chief of Staff, Chief of Staff, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Of Staff, he helped create and define aerospace doctrine and operations at the onset of the jet and nuclear age.

General Twining's primary awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star, the Airman's Medal, the Order of the British Empire, and the French Croix de Guerre with palm, as well as other U.S. and foreign decorations. Also, in tribute to his outstanding achievements, General Twining was accepted into the Aviation Hall of Fame, 1976.

General Twining was the author of "Neither Liberty Nor Safety: A Hard Look at U.S. Military Policy and Strategy", Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966.