

# Enlisted Hero Walk Lackland AFB



## Staff Sergeant Henry “Red” Erwin



*Courtesy of the Air Force Heritage Research Institute*

*Congressional Medal of Honor*

*World War II*

On April 12<sup>th</sup> 1945, Erwin, called “Red” by his crewmates was serving as the radio operator aboard a B-29 Superfortress named *City of Los Angeles*. The plane was in formation for a low-level attack on a chemical plant 120 miles north of Tokyo. Along with their primary jobs, the crew aboard the plane had additional duties to perform. Erwin’s was to drop phosphorus smoke bombs through a chute in the aircraft’s floor. While the plane was under attack by anti-aircraft fire and Japanese fighters, Erwin pulled the pin and released the bomb into the chute. The fuse malfunctioned, igniting the phosphorus prematurely, filling the aircraft with smoke. Erwin grabbed the white hot canister and carried it against his skin to the co-pilots window where he managed to release the bomb safely outside the aircraft.