

406th FIGHTER GROUP

UNITED STATES NINTH AIR FORCE EUROPE

1943-1945

Bernard Sledzik



SOUTENIR - ATTAQUER - DETRIRE

SEEK - ATTACK - DESTROY



512th FIGHTER SQDN.



513th FIGHTER SQDN.



514th FIGHTER SQDN.



514th FIGHTER SQUADRON

MEMORIES OF A WORLD WAR II FIGHTER PILOT
By Bernard J. Sledzik

Coal Run, PA (post office, Clune) is a small coal mining town in Western Pennsylvania where I was born May 4, 1924. The population at that time was about 600 people, and everyone in town depended upon the coal mining industry for their job.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, was the defining moment of my life. I was 17 years old and a junior in Indiana High School when the bombs dropped and I knew exactly what I wanted to do when I graduated from high school. I had always been fascinated by airplanes flying overhead, building model airplanes, and reading magazines about planes, and I set my goal to complete my high school education and join the Army as an Aviation Cadet. In the school yearbook, I stated this as being my goal.

Prior to meeting with the recruiting officer, I went to our family physician for a complete physical exam to be sure I could pass an exam to become a pilot. The results were fine.

I sent in my application to become an Aviation Cadet with three letters of recommendation which were required.. I chose the high school principal, my physician, and the pastor of our church and upon reflection, I don't think I could have come up with any better ones.

Shortly thereafter, I received a letter from the Army instructing me to report for a physical examination in Altoona, PA and what an experience that was!

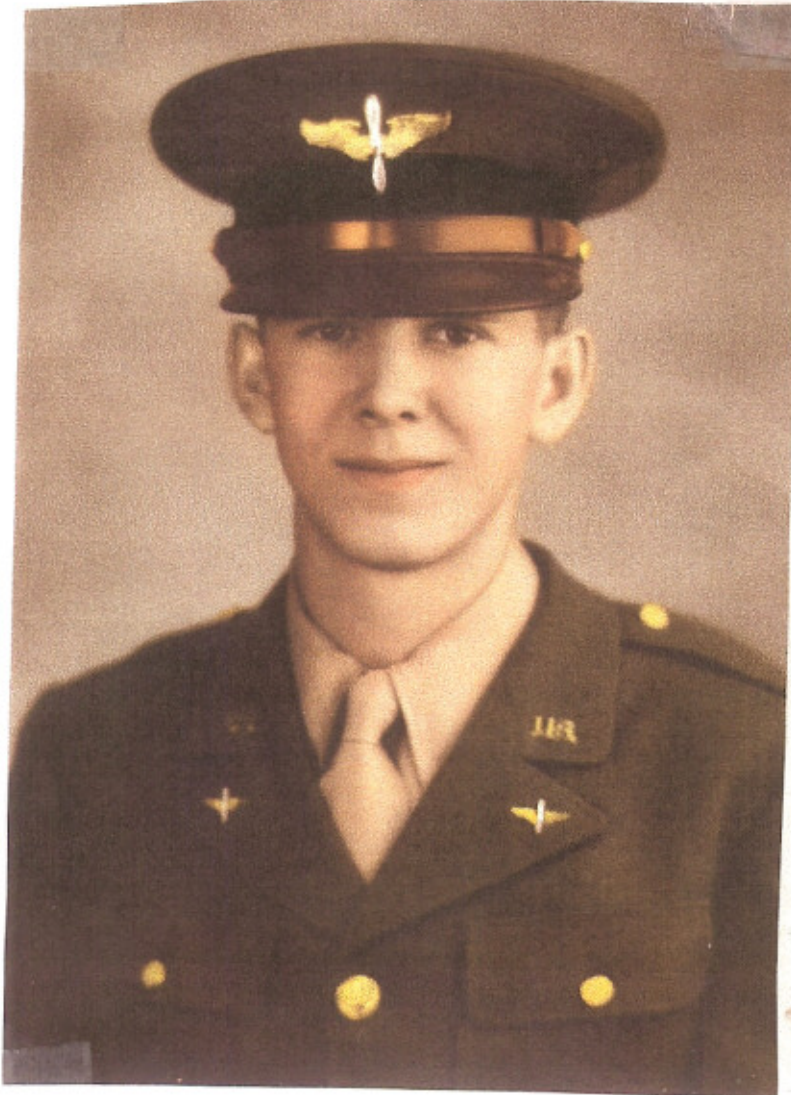
They checked me from top to bottom and had me read eye charts and color blindness charts and everything seemed to be going well. Then a nurse gave me a small bottle and said, "Go into the bathroom and fill it up," which I promptly did. When I returned and handed it to her, she said, "This is cold." I replied that I didn't know she wanted hot water. After the laughter subsided, I said, "What can you expect from a hick from a small coal mining town."

For my final review, I sat with a sergeant and he went over the results, finally commenting that I had failed the exam because I was five pounds underweight. One hundred twenty three pounds did seem low compared to some of the others around me. However, he said he would hold the papers for one week and rescheduled me for a weight check; and if I passed that, I would be accepted.

During the week, I stuffed myself with everything I could think of including many bananas. One week later I returned to Altoona, stepped on the scale and it read 125 pounds. The sergeant (God bless him) looked at the scale and said, "I'll be damned, you just made it," marked down 128 pounds and I was accepted to become an Aviation Cadet in the Army Air Corps. He said to wait for further instructions on when and where to report. Six months later in January, 1943, I was sent papers to board a train in Pittsburgh for San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center in Texas. My Dad and my Uncle Sam drove me to the train station to see me off.

The train had a car of twenty-seven cadets, and it took us three days to reach San Antonio. There we were given cadet uniforms and assigned to a barracks for future indoctrination. We were put through additional tests of intelligence, psychology, and psycho-motor.

The intelligence tests were relatively easy, and I had no problem with them. Incidentally, these tests were to determine who would be classified as a pilot, bombardier, navigator, or gunner. Naturally, every one of us wanted to become a pilot. The psycho-motor test was to test your dexterity by rapidly moving blocks into different locations, checking your depth perception, and finally more eye charts for color perception. The final review was with a psychologist who questioned me about my background, my desire to fly, and how would I feel about dropping bombs on people knowing there would be many casualties. How I would feel about dropping bombs in Poland (my ancestry) under German occupation. My answers to all these tests were satisfactory and I was named as one for Pilot training. The following letter was received by my parents informing them of my selection for Pilot training.





HEADQUARTERS
ARMY AIR FORCES GULF COAST TRAINING CENTER
Office of the Commanding General

Randolph Field, Texas

January 27, 1943

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Joseph Sledzik,
Clune, Penna.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Sledzik:

In a memorandum which has come to my desk this morning, I note ~~that your boy, now an Aviation Cadet, has been specially selected for~~ training as a Pilot in the Army Air Forces.

In order to win this war, it is vital to have the best qualified young men at the controls of our military aircraft. Upon their precision, daring and coolness will depend in large measure the success of our entire war effort.

The duties of an Army Pilot call for a high degree of mental and physical alertness, sound judgment, and an inherent aptitude for flying. Men who will make good material for training as Pilots are rare. The Classification Board believes your boy is one of them and that he will in all probability win his wings as a military pilot.

You must realize, however, that all of our study of the problem has produced no infallible method of determining in advance whether a young man has that inherent something which will make him a natural and safe pilot. As a result, some pilot candidates are later transferred to other types of military training.

Comprehensive tests indicate that your son stands a very good chance of successfully completing the rigid training for an army pilot and you have every reason to be proud of him. I congratulate you and him.

Sincerely yours,

WARREN R. CARTER
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
Commanding

I found out later that of the 27 of us that came from Pennsylvania on that train, only three became pilots. Our duties from that point on were filled with classroom studies, basic training, marching, hiking, taking turns at K.P., and all of the activities that comprise basic training. Those who failed to go into Pilot training were then evaluated for bombardier or navigator; and if you failed in these three, you were sent to gunnery school to be gunners on B-17s and B-24s. Am I ever glad that this was not my fate.

Upon completion of our training and evaluations, we were assigned to various bases in Texas and Oklahoma, and I was selected to go to Coleman, Texas, a small central Texas town, for Primary training. The plane that we would begin training with was the Fairchild PT-19. It was a beautiful low-wing monoplane with a wide landing gear, and I was nervous. I had been in an airplane once in my lifetime, a Ford Tri-Motor, that took my Aunt Catherine and me for a ride around Indiana from the Indiana Airport (now Jimmy Stewart Field).

The PT-19 had a 125 hp engine and it cruised at maybe 125 mph. Our skills in Primary would determine whether we continued to Basic Training or washed out. If you washed out at this level, you were sent to gunnery school. My instructor was a civilian, C. L. Yeatman. We got along fine from the beginning. He was instructing five students and one of them was a West Point cadet.

This is the Instructors Lament *

The dodo is my shepherd: I shall not want. He maketh me forced landings in green pastures and leadeth me thru high tension wires. He destroyeth my confidence: He leadeth me into the paths of oncoming traffic for his names sake. Yea as I ride in the shadow of death, I feel no safety for he is with me: His rudder and stick they confuse me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: And I will dwell in the realm of uncertainty forever----

*From The Master - Coleman Flying School 43-J

My first flight with the instructor was 50 minutes long and it was not particularly pleasant. When he did coordination exercises, banking left and then right, I became a bit woozy and was close to chucking up. This worried me greatly until I found out that 50% of the cadets became air sick. This first orientation flight was designed to acquaint you with the area. There were four emergency fields in the area, and we landed at two of them to show me what they were like.

Over the next five hours, I was given control of the plane in the air always being careful to know where the airfield was and constantly on the lookout for other planes. My first take-off was a very rough one; and as soon as we became airborne, the left wing dropped and I wobbled into the sky with cuss words from the instructor filling the air. The instructors also had a habit of moving the stick rapidly left and right to hit your knees if you screwed up.

The training continued with landings, take-offs, and modest aerial maneuvers until I had 9 ½ hours with the instructor. On that last flight we landed and the instructor got out and asked me if I was ready to fly by myself. I said "yes" and he said "she's all yours, son, good luck!" I made a perfect take-off and circled the field for a landing. I hit with the front wheels and

COLEMAN, TEXAS



THE FOOD WAS EXCELLENT



AND THE GIRLS VERY FRIENDLY
SMITH SLEDZIK SPRINGER

bounced into the air, but I made a 3-point landing on the way back down. I made another take-off and landing successfully and came back to the flight line. All of my friends were waiting for me and carried me into the shower for a cold one with all my clothes on. I also had to get on a chair in the Mess Hall and yell "Hooray, hooray. I soloed today." It was May 3, 1943, one day before my 19th birthday. I was the first one of my instructor's students to fly solo. The West Pointer eventually washed out.

We were given 65 hours of flight instruction at the Primary Base before we were moved into Basic Training. At the end of 20 hours flying time, I was given a check ride by one of the Lieutenants on the base to determine my progress and to write up an evaluation. Another check ride was given at the end of 40 hours and a final one at 60 hours. We always "sweated out" these checks because this is when you were notified if you washed out. I'm afraid many of my concerns were communicated to my parents in the daily letters that I wrote because the danger of failing was a constant worry. One of the cadets washed out after his 60-hour check ride.

When I passed the 65-hour flight time, I knew I had passed the first hurdle. The bulletin board postings showed that I was destined to fly Basic Training at Lackland Air Field in Waco, Texas. The plane we would be flying was the BT-13 Vultee.

Incidentally, the Commanding Officer at Coleman, Texas, 1st Lt. Raymond Freeman, wrote in our yearbook the following message:

"To the class of 43 J. In your relatively short tour of duty as Aviation Cadets at this station, you have been called upon to adapt yourselves to completely new and extraordinary situations - situations with which you were never confronted before. From the time you leave here, through Basic and Advanced flying schools, and then as Army Pilots into tactical and combat flying, you will undoubtedly meet even more extraordinary situations - week by week, day by day, almost minute by minute. It is in meeting these situations that I sincerely hope that you will remember the fundamentals with which you were indoctrinated by your instructors here and the value of self-discipline and the ability to relax. May I wish the class of 43-J the best of luck and Godspeed in your future endeavors."

One thing that I have failed to discuss up to now is the quality of the food that was served. The cooks were civilians, we were served by civilians, and the food was outstanding. Breakfast included everything from cereal to eggs, bacon, ham, sausage, pancakes, all kinds of juices, coffee, milk and rolls and butter in abundance. Lunch was usually sandwiches of all kinds because of our flying, and dinner included two different types of meats and many choices of vegetables – and as much as you wanted. (I still had a tough time gaining weight.)

As I mentioned, the plane we would be flying in Basic training was the BT-13 Vultee . (We also added Vibrator). It was a 450 hp plane with a fixed landing gear and was a healthy step-up from the 125hp PT-19. My instructor was Lt. Donald S. Greene from Des Moines, Iowa, and I was one of his five students. My friends E. E. Springer (Altoona, PA) and Frank Shrum (Noblestown, PA) had an RAF instructor, F/O James Spillane (London, England). Don B. Smith's (Mahaffey, PA) instructor was Lt. Robert B. Sherman (Great Falls, Montana).



Bernard J. Sledzik
43-J



Elmer E. Springer Jr.



Donald B. Smith
43J



Frank O. Sprun Jr.
43V

I mention these three friends in particular because we went all through our formal training together and eventually into combat. More on that later.

Our Basic Training base was located in Waco, Texas, and it was here that a determination was made to classify us as single engine (fighters) or multi-engine (bombers or transport) planes. With my weight staying around 125-130 pounds, there was little doubt that I would be a fighter pilot.

Flying heavier and faster training planes was another step toward the goal of a fighter pilot. Basic Training included landings and take-offs at night with the instructor; and after a couple of rough landings, the instructor decided I could fly the balance of the night missions without him. I guess I would have felt the same way if I were the instructor.

Another part of night flying was to fly a triangular course to two different locations, landing at one of them, then returning to base. On my flight, I could not contact the ground controller (or rather he could not contact me) and I made three passes before telling him I would make a touch and go landing and then proceed to home base. I found out later that they were receiving me, but I could not hear them.

The other part of basic training was flying under instrument conditions. Two trainees would go up together and one would be the observer while the other trainee would fly under a hood on instruments. Then we would land and exchange seats while the other trainee would fly instruments. It was during this part of the training that my confidence zoomed! I found out that I was much better at flying instrument patterns and landing the plane than the other trainees that I flew with and they were bragging about how well they were flying. This was really the turning point in my psyche from a self-conscious, unsure, skinny high school graduate to a self-assured, confident fighter pilot trainee. At this point, I knew I would succeed.

Following sixty five or seventy hours in the BT-13, I was sent to the advanced training base at Eagle Pass, Texas, on the Mexican border. Our advanced trainer would be the AT-6 Texan, a 650 horse-powered plane with retractable landing gear. This was a great training plane to fly. It was with this aircraft that we honed our skills with stalls, spins, chandelles, loops, slow rolls, barrel rolls, and snap rolls. It was fun and exciting.

The AT-6 was equipped with one 30-caliber machine gun and we conducted aerial and ground gunnery at Matagorda Island in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Texas. Each plane was equipped with different colored bullets and we fired at a sleeve target towed by another AT-6. When they dropped the sleeve target over the airfield, we would check to see how many hits our colored bullets made on the target. I must admit that with one gun, it was a pretty tough task to make many hits on a moving target.

We also fired at ground targets which was a bit easier since it was not a moving target. Then there was the dive bombing practice. We carried one hundred pound practice bombs and aimed at bulls-eye targets on the ground. I can't remember how effective I was on these training flights, but one thing I do remember was the size of the mosquitos that tormented us. We slept in cots with mosquito netting protecting us.



One other part of our training at the advanced base was formation flying and this was really a lot of fun. There were four planes in a flight and twelve planes in the squadron.

The last part of our training at Eagle Pass was flying the P-40 fighter, the plane that the famous Flying Tigers flew in combat in China. The noses of their planes were painted with sharks' jaws. The P-40 had a 1250 horsepower engine and a fairly narrow landing gear that made it tricky to land.

Before our first flight in the fighter, we had to memorize the position of all the instruments and then identify their location in a blindfold test. The crew chief usually showed us how to start the engine and then jumped off the wing as we began our taxiing out for take-off. I remember my first flight for two reasons. The first was after take-off I pulled up my wheels and climbed for altitude. Suddenly, a P-39 came alongside, lowered his landing gear and then retracted them. I thought that an instructor was trying to get me to fly formation with him, but I pulled away. He rejoined my wing and lowered and raised his landing gear; and as an afterthought, I pressed my landing gear to raise it and in a few seconds, the P-39 pilot waved and swung away from me. When I landed, I was told that my left wheel had retracted, but the right wheel was still down. By holding down the landing gear button, I caused the second gear to retract. On the P-40 there is a peg in the wing and when it is extended, the wheels are down. When it retracts into the wing, the wheels are up. What I didn't realize was that there was a peg in each wing and I was looking at only one of them. The second thing that I remember was making my first tight turn in the fighter, and it caused me to black out for the very first time. Releasing the pressure on the turn caused the gravity forces to ease up. Later on during dive bombing missions in Europe, blackouts were quite common because of the high G forces from pulling out. We had about ten hours of flying time in the P-40 including one night flight.

On our return from gunnery practice at Matagorda Island, we flew in formation and came over the field at 1,000 feet giving a show for our parents who had come from all over the country to see their sons receive their wings and second lieutenant bar as officers. My Mom and Dad came to Eagle Pass by Pullman train and it was the longest trip either of them had ever made. They became good friends with the Ainsworth family of Kansas City, whose son was graduating in our class. He was later killed in overseas fighter training.

After a two-week leave, we were ordered to report to Dale Mabry Field in Tallahassee, Florida, for assignment to an overseas fighter training base. D. B. Smith, Frank Shrum, Elmer Springer, and I were selected for P-47 training at Venice, Florida. Incidentally, D. B. and Elmer were married in a dual ceremony on their two-week leave.

Venice was a pleasant location on the West coast of Florida and the weather was perfect for lots of flying. The P-47 that we were about to fly was the largest fighter plane in the world at the time. It weighed over 13,000 pounds unloaded and had a 2000 horsepower Pratt and Whitney radial engine. This was an awesome plane that proved itself in combat in Europe..

After the usual pre-flight inauguration and blindfold test of the instrument panel, we were ready to make our first flight. The crew chief made the first start of the engine - showing me how it was done. This flight was to be a 30 minute orientation flight around the field and then land.



VENICE, FLORIDA



PILOTS FOR P-47 TRAINING



P-47 READY FOR TAKEOFF

As I completed my first 30 minutes, the tower instructed me to land. As I entered the traffic pattern, I heard on my radio a May Day call, which meant a pilot was in trouble. The tower told me to circle the field while a plane that was on fire was given approval to land on any runway. The pilot came over the Gulf of Mexico and turned his plane to line up with the runway. However, he was overshooting and he tightened his turn and lost control of the plane as it spun in, into the Gulf. This was the first time I had witnessed a pilot killed.

The tower then gave me instructions to land. I made the turn to line up with the runway and was overshooting as the other pilot had done, but I did not tighten my turn. I pulled up and the tower said try it again. This time I started timing my turn to the runway - far out - and lined up fine making a perfect landing. What we did not realize was that the turning radius of the P-47 was very wide, not like the AT-6 or P-40 which could turn on a dime.

We did considerable flying in December, 1943, and became quite proficient in the characteristics of the Thunderbolt. Part of our training here was to fire 500 rounds of skeet per month to learn that a moving target requires a different lead from different angles. I loved skeet so much that I actually fired for some of the other pilots.

In January we were sent to Camp Kilmer in preparation for assignment in Europe. It was here that Milton Sanders joined us, and we became a close knit group of five. After receiving our combat gear, we were sent by train in the early morning hours to board a ship for the journey to the combat zone.

Our journey to the European War Zone began in New York City when in the early morning hours we boarded the Queen Mary bound for Greenock, Scotland. I was one of approximately 14,000 troops on the ship which included the world champion boxer, Joe Louis. The voyage lasted four days. This was my first experience on an ocean liner; and with the number of troops on board, it was appropriate that it was the largest ship in the world.

It was pretty much uneventful except for one pleasant surprise. The officers had a huge auditorium where they could relax playing bridge and poker and other card games. We could also get soft drinks and snacks. On the way out one day, a group of enlisted men were outside looking in, when all of a sudden I heard my name called. I looked up to see a private from my hometown of Coal Run, a town of about 600 people. Stanley Yuha, nickname "Bozun" was there with a big grin on his face. After shaking hands, he said, "Bern, could you do me a favor?" I said, "Sure, what is it?" He said, "I'm dying for a coke; could you get one for me?" Officers could get them but not the enlisted men. I re-entered the auditorium and brought him a coke. I was immediately besieged by his friends who also wanted a coke. An M.P. appeared and informed me that I could not do that. I never ran into Bozun the rest of the voyage and we never met again until after the war ended and we were back in civilian life. He was a butcher in the company-owned grocery store.

After landing in Greenock, Scotland, we boarded a train taking us to the English city of Shrewsbury and an airfield called Stone. There we were scheduled to hone our flying skills with pilots who had completed their combat missions and were returning home to the United States.

★ CINQ CENT QUATORZIEME ★
 ESCADRILLE COMBAT
BOOGIE CLUB WOOGIE
 CAFE BOUTIQUE S DEUX ET LOUNGE
 WAMPÉE • AISHOLD • TOUR • COVENEY • LOUPELON • L'Y • P. MELOH 26

Whereas the following named Character
 having Passed the Rigid Requirements for
 Membership in this Organization:

Be it Known that said Character

Bernard J. Stedzik

Is Hereby Duly Elected to
 Active Membership in

THE BOOGIE WOOGIE CLUB

With all Rights, Privileges, Obligations and
 Cups of Coffee said Membership may Entail

UNDER OUR HANDS AND SEALS THIS 27 DAY OF April 1944

OFFICIAL

Frank H. Walther, Capt. A.C.

Converse B. Kelly

Albert E. Johnson, 1st Lt. A.C.

Major A.C.



Our rooms were extremely small with two bunk beds, one above the other. My roommate was Frank Shrum, one of the four of us that went all through training together. Elmer Springer and Donald Smith were in another room.

We did not get in too much flying time here because of weather; however, one training flight is vividly etched into my memory.

D. B. Smith and I were scheduled for a training flight practicing combat formation flying led by a Captain who had completed his combat missions and was returning home. There was another pilot whose name I cannot remember. The four of us took off in P-47s into an overcast sky. We entered the clouds at about 1,500 feet and the Captain said we would go above the clouds and then start our combat formation flying. Wingtip to wingtip we climbed through heavy clouds reaching an altitude of 24,000 feet and there were still clouds above us. The Captain decided to return to the field. As we started down, all of a sudden it appeared that my plane pulled away from the flight and I pushed the stick forward to get back into formation. It only took seconds to realize that I was on my back and the plane was hurtling down at an ever-increasing speed. I don't know how fast the plane was going; but when I glanced out at the wings, a vapor trail came back across the entire wing. Sometimes in a tight turn, a stream of vapor comes from the wing tip. This covered the entire wing. I throttled back to keep from accelerating all the time trying to get my bearings. The gyro instruments had tumbled and were useless so it was flying by needle, ball, and airspeed. The most important thing for me as I tried to gain control was flying through an occasional very black cloud. As I approached it, I could level my wings and get a more controlled descent. I broke out of the clouds at about 1,400 feet coming down at a 30 degree angle and right between two hills. As I headed back to the base, the controller announced that two planes had crashed. The Captain who was leading us was killed and the other pilot crashed and was severely injured. I don't think he survived. D. B. Smith and I were the only survivors of this training flight.

During an investigation it was determined that the leader's instruments were precessing causing him to be banking all the time he thought he was flying straight and level. Eventually we all ended upside down with only two of us landing safely.

It was at Stone that we were given the chance of joining either the 8th or 9th Air Force. We studied all of the Groups and Squadrons; and since the 514th Fighter Squadron - 406th Fighter Group had openings for five pilots, we selected them. Therefore, Milton Sanders, D. B. Smith, E. E. Springer, Frank Shrum and I became the very first replacement pilots for the squadron before they had even flown a single combat mission.

We joined the squadron April 28, 1944, based in Ashford, England, in the county of Kent. We made our first training flight on April 29. For the next few days, training flights included formation flying and dive bombing practice. The squadron made its first operational mission May 9, 1944 – I had just turned 20 years old on May 4.

My first combat mission occurred on May 12, 1944, and was a fighter sweep into France. We were looking for the German Luftwaffe but none challenged us. During battle formation,



PILOTS OF THE 514th FIGHTER SQUADRON



"BIG ASS BIRD" IN COLORS OF THE 513th SQUADRON
514th COLOR WAS BLUE

which is flying formation line abreast about two hundred yards apart, an aerial dogfight was taking place off my right wing with another squadron. We continued on our mission.

On landing, I was the second plane and as I neared the end of the runway to turn off, Captain Ruddell yelled, "Get off the runway fast!" Lt. Heckman had landed behind me and was bearing down on my plane. As I turned off, his wing hit the tail of my plane spinning me around. His plane proceeded off the runway and hit a truck parked off to the side. A sergeant from Philadelphia was killed.

During the balance of May, missions were flown included escorting B-26s and A-20s. One mission was flown escorting B-17s on a bombing run to Cologne, Germany. Flak was extremely heavy and the bombers flew right through it. A number of dive bombing missions were scheduled carrying two 500 pound bombs.

Training missions were also scheduled to practice night landings. This was a bit nerve wracking because only one string of lights was used. In a few days it would become obvious why night flying and landings were important.

In early June all of our planes were given invasion stripes around each wing and the fuselage for positive identification. The Germans had recovered some of our crashed aircraft and it was feared they would use them against us in the coming invasion.

At two o'clock in the morning of June 6 our squadron was alerted that the invasion had begun. The first mission took off in the dark at 4:30 a.m. to provide cover for the invasion. I was on this first mission of that day. As we flew over the English Channel, I looked down at the most amazing sight the world had ever seen. There were thousands of ships of all sizes and shapes heading for Normandy. My first thought was that I had a ringside seat above the greatest spectacle the world had ever seen. I also thought that if my engine failed and I had to bail out of the plane, the chances were better than 50-50 that I would land on a ship.

We were assigned to give top cover to the invasion at altitudes of 8,000 to 12,000 feet. P-38s were assigned lower altitudes because of their twin tailed design. The Germans had no equivalent aircraft. P-51s ranged out beyond the beach-head along with Mosquito bombers of the English. In all, some 11,000 aircraft patrolled the skies during the invasion.

The weather was lousy and we could not see much of what was happening on the ground. We could see much smoke coming from burning buildings and vehicles, but we were too busy dodging other aircraft in heavy cloud cover. No enemy planes appeared.

After a couple of hours, we returned to our base and another group of pilots took our planes back to France. When they completed their mission and returned to base, those of us who had flown the first mission took over the planes and returned for our second mission. The last mission was flown by the second group and they landed the planes in the dark.

On June 7, this same procedure was followed with each pilot flying two combat missions. The first one taking off at 4:30 a.m. and the last one landing at around 10:00 p.m.



TARGET GERMANY



88mm BURSTS OVER TARGET AREA



(GAD-53-4-447X21-2-45XK-819-7003-995-826-117-131-TYPE B17G)

NOT ALL RETURNED SAFELY

It was about this time that the Germans launched their vengeance weapon against London. It was the V-1, a ram jet-powered flying bomb that flew at a speed approaching 400 mph. It had a unique pulsing sound and flew until the fuel ran out, then dropped to Earth. It was not accurate and was only designed to terrorize the population of London.

The path of the V-1 took it directly over our airfield and we called its trajectory as buzz bomb alley. At first there were rumors that German paratroopers had landed to disrupt the invasion. We were deployed around our tent area, huddling in foxholes, and armed with 30-caliber carbines and 45-caliber pistols. It wasn't long until the word came back that it was just a flying bomb with no pilot.

At the time the only plane fast enough to shoot it down was the Spitfire fighter. One day as a buzz bomb came over our field with a Spitfire on its tail firing 20 mm cannon shells, the engine stopped and the bomb came tumbling down directly over our field. A squadron of twelve P-47s were on the runway getting ready for a mission and it looked like they would take a direct hit. I was in a foxhole in my pup tent and I ducked down. I had my canteen and mess gear on the center pole of the tent; and at the last second, the V-1 engine gave one last burst and disappeared over a small hill. The explosion rattled the mess gear and shook the tent. We went to the site of the explosion and saw an area in a wheat field about 100 feet in diameter completely leveled. The Spitfire made an emergency landing on the airfield because the flame from the ram jet was burning the fabric off the rudder of his plane. We were all very lucky to have survived that close call.

The buzz bombs continued for some time on a regular basis. One of them came over the field, again with a Spitfire shooting at it. I was in a jeep with three other pilots heading for the flight line for a mission when all of a sudden spent bullets from the plane came down and bounced off the hood of the jeep, through the windshield, between all of us, and out the back side of the jeep. It was another close call caused by the V-1.

When going on missions, planes took off two planes at a time and then circled the field until all twelve were in place as they headed for France. Usually we carried two 500 pound bombs. On one mission a bomb fell off a plane on take-off - exploded - destroying both planes. A pilot was usually assigned the job of giving a flag wave when it was ready for the next two planes to take-off. On this particular occasion, a fragment of the bomb hit the flag man in the arm sending him to the hospital. He never returned to flying status. Incidentally, both pilots survived the explosion.

It was around the middle of June that we flew our first missions carrying fragmentation bombs. We carried three fragmentation bombs under each wing, and each bomb contained a cluster of six. On one of these missions, we were to drop bombs on an enemy position and we were instructed not to go below 1,200 feet when they were dropped. Unfortunately, there was a 1,000 ft. overcast and we had to seek out targets at that altitude. My target was a marshalling yard (trains) where German troops were unloading. I headed for this target with armed bombs, but another P-47 was heading for the same target. I saw him but he did not see me. It looked like we would collide over the train station. I throttled back and the other plane went over and dropped his bomb load, followed within seconds by my bomb load. We were now at an altitude of not

BUZZ BOMB ALLEY



A BUZZ BOMB HAS JUST FLOWN OVER



HERE COMES ANOTHER ONE

more than 500 feet. His bombs exploded just as I released mine. I felt a jolt and looked out at my wings to see that I had been peppered with fragments of the bomb. I looked at my instruments and saw that everything was working properly. Upon landing, 87 holes were found in the plane.

On June 18, 1944, on another mission carrying six frag bombs, Lt. Webb could not release his bombs and made an emergency landing at an advance Airdrome in France. On landing, the bombs exploded and blew off the left wing of the plane. In spite of all the shrapnel, Lt. Webb was uninjured. A testimony to the ruggedness of the P-47.

This incident was the subject of a news broadcast called - Westinghouse Presents.

“Top of the Evening” Ted Malone speaking from London - 2 August 1944. A copy of this report follows:

Announcer: From the European War Theatre, Westinghouse presents Ted Malone with personal stories of our men at the front. Long acclaimed as one of America’s favorite story tellers, Ted Malone is winning new fame as a Westinghouse War Correspondent with a new type of reporting that brings us all closer to our men at the fighting front.

Malone: Hello there - this is Ted Malone overseas down in a basement under London with strong, black, bitter coffee served in old china cups. We drank a simple toast the other night to one grand American boy who it was never my privilege to know. A tall, curly-haired, blue eyed P-47 fighter pilot from out in the Middle West. He’s one of the dozen dramatic stories told me by a friend of mine, Capt. James E. Webb of St. Petersburg, Florida. Capt. Webb is one of the squadron of Ninth Air Force Thunderbolt pilots who several weeks ago came roaring in for an emergency landing on the dust clouded strip of the Cherbourg Peninsula and it was an emergency. Capt. Webb, piloting his P-47, Miss Tee - named after a Powers model he is engaged to, by the way, had a cluster of eighteen fragmentation bombs stuck under one wing. The fighter pilots had been over dive bombing the German headquarters near Cherbourg. Webb’s left wing bombs had not released and he was coming in to check when the bombs jolted loose on the dirt runway and his ship blew up. All of us hit the dirt, and fast. Webb’s plane was a mass of twisted steel, but the young pilot walked out of the crash on both feet. He didn’t go far. An ambulance was there in a matter of seconds and minutes later in a field hospital near the landing strip, one of our marvelous Army doctors, with his case full of instruments lying handy on Webb’s broad chest, was sewing up the lacerations in the fighter pilots’s scalp.

When I first lifted my face out of the dirt where we had all flung ourselves to avoid shrapnel and bomb burst, I never expected to see the pilot of the ship again. Even after he climbed out of the burning plane, it didn’t seem possible. In fact, after the doctor had sewed up his scalp and dressed his wounds, I doubted it.

But last night down in the Red Cross Rainbow Club, just off Piccadilly Circus, I was sitting there dunking doughnuts in my cup of black coffee when a boy with a Ninth Air Force insignia on his left shoulder walked in. It was the young fighter pilot, Capt. James E. Webb. There is hardly a hint of a scar on his forehead. He had been gone from his Thunderbolt Squadron barely fifteen days, returning just in time for their D-Day assignment, when they bombed and strafed German gun emplacements along the beaches where the troops were going to land.



PILOTS OF THE 514th FIGHTER SQUADRON



FRONT ROW: MCLAINE - SHRUM - SMITH - SPRINGER
REAR: JONES - GAUDET - MUNDY

Major Converse B. Kelly of Pittsburgh led them in his P-47 "Sturdy Burke" named after his wife, Mary Burke. Most of them came back, but not all. It sounds easy soaring along at three hundred miles an hour, skimming the beaches, brushing the tree tops, ripping ground installations to ribbons, but to give you an idea how rugged this is, eleven of the fourteen were hit in one sweep over Cherbourg. The hits weren't fatal; they all got back, but any hit easily might have been; and a solid hit on a low level fighter and the show is over. The carrier planes that have helped knocked the Japanese out of their Pacific stronghold and the fighters in Italy know this, too. On a low level attack, there is no bailing out.

One of the Air Force's most dramatic invasion stories is that of an unnamed pilot in a tiny plane who made the first trip down the beach-head. His job was to lay down the smoke screen to hide the first boats coming in. The minute he started, he became the target of every enemy gun. Bullets and shells poured at him from rifles, 88's, and anti-aircraft batteries hidden along the hillside; but he flew steadily on, as the great white smoked plumes spread behind him a quarter of a mile, a half mile, a mile. The smoke screen was almost complete. Nobody had really thought it possible. He and his ship were expendable. He knew it when he accepted the mission. It wasn't something that a fellow asks for, but somebody had to do it. If it cost his one life, it would save hundreds. This is one of the prices we pay for Sicily, Salerno, Guadalcanal and Guam.

He was almost to the end of the beach. The leaping stabbing tracer bullets had snapped at his wings and tail but hadn't stopped him, and then from somewhere from some gun, a bullet flew to find its way home. There was no explosion, no burst of fire or flame, but suddenly the tiny plane fluttered as if tearing off the plume, and plunged into the sea. That was all. Some day I am going to find out who that boy was. Some day I'll tell you.

Capt. Webb didn't tell me the story of the fighter pilot to whom we drank our toast until we had talked together for some time. Perhaps he thought I wouldn't appreciate how all the fellows felt until I knew more of the story. He went clear back to the days of ground training when they first met -- Capt. George I. Ruddell, from Southgate, California, now Operations officer; Capt. F. L. Dowell, Flight Commander, from Savannah Beach, Georgia -- the things they said: the way they talked about the folks back home: Capt. Dowell naming his plane "Mazie" after a little girl, Mary LeGrand: the grim humor of Capt. J. C. Bloom of Troy, Pennsylvania, naming his fighting ship "Bloom's Tomb": the way Lt. R. L. Wood of Menden, Massachusetts, took his ship "Woody the Wolf" into the air, the way he handled it and brought it in -- little things but important things through which they formed their opinions of each other.

War is a very personal thing to a fighter pilot. He flies alone. There are other ships in his squadron over the blue Pacific or the North Sea, other planes in his wing, but as Lt. B. E. Long, from down in the red earth country - Edmond, Oklahoma - told me in his quiet drawl, they may take off, hunt, strafe, fight and bomb together, but when a fighter pilot dies, he dies alone. I suppose this is true, and yet as I sat there talking to Capt. Webb over doughnuts and coffee, I felt no one of his squadron had ever gone down alone.

Only a week or so ago, raiding rolling railroad stock deep in France, Major Kelly, leading the squadron carrying 500-pound bombs, sighted a train ahead and went down to strafe, blew up the engine, destroying another Nazi supply line. Someone in Capt. Webb's element dropped the



DOWELL and BLOOM DIGGING A FOXHOLE



EVEN OUR C.O. COL KELLY DUG HIS FOXHOLE

first bomb. He made a direct hit and the burst of flames shot two hundred feet in the air. This told the fellows they had an ammunition train, and they came back in until the whole train was gone – sixteen cars, enough ammunition to supply an entire Nazi division – bombs, shells, and bullets exploding harmlessly, never reaching the front.

It was a good day for the fighter pilots, daring and well done. Capt. Webb emptied his cup as he paused in talking, but our doughnuts were gone. So, waiting for the story I somehow sensed was coming, I went back to the counter for some more black coffee and it was with these cups that we drank our toast.

Because the story Capt. Webb told me is about a boy typical of many American boys tonight in all theatres of war, suppose we just call him Sonny, as all boys at some time are called. Sonny grew up in the Middle West. He was tall, more than six feet. The gang used to kid him about the tall corn, but there was nothing corny about this sun-bronzed fighter pilot. He was a regular fellow. He loved to boast about having the prettiest sister in the outfit; and when he showed her picture, the boys didn't argue. He wasn't hard to look at himself. In fact, the fellows always stayed pretty close to their girls when Sonny came around. That curly hair and those laughing blue eyes were almost irresistible.

There was a girl in Sarasota, Florida, Sonny used to show off for, did a barrel roll too low over the beach one time and the C.O. almost grounded him – restricted his promotion for a year, but Sonny didn't care. He didn't want to be a General. He was a fighter pilot, one of the best, one of the hottest, wildest fighter pilots – one of the best. If the mission was going to be rugged, he was the first in his ship. He was no fool for trouble, but he knew it was war and the only way to get it over was to get out and fight it, and Sonny fought.

While they were still in the States, the mother of one of the boys, Bernard Dugan from Darby, Pennsylvania, made each of the fellows a blue silk scarf, with their names real fancy on them – eight blue scarves. Some are gone now. One was Sonny's. It's gone, too. He always carried it with him. The morning of his last flight, the briefing officers called the fellows all into the target tent on the field and showed them a red circle on a map of France. The Nazis had some important gun emplacements at that spot. The guns were taking a rich toll of lives. Their job was to wipe them out. They had done things like this before: they could do it again. They climbed into their ships, roared down the field and zoomed into the sky. A formation of fighter pilots miles up in the blue looks very much like a flight of birds, dodging in and out among the clouds. It is hard to believe there are boys up there in those tiny specks – fellows who used to drop into drug stores in Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, and Oklahoma and Kansas and Colorado, take their girls for a soda or sundae and play a few records on the jukebox before they walked them home and said good night. They were boys wearing loud neckties and trying to grow mustaches, full of big talk about money and success and the things they were going to do. They were men now, doing things they never dreamed of four or five years ago – things nobody liked to do, things somebody has to do, things that have to be done.

Flying along that morning, Capt. Webb said he noticed Sonny was wearing the bright blue silk scarf Mrs. Dugan gave to him. The fellows all liked theirs. They were warm and smooth against one's throat. They reached the target and at a signal from Major Kelly, flight leader, they



LT. MILTON W. SANDERS



SMITH - SHRUM - SLEDZIK

dived down firing. The guns stabbed back and the pilots flew through a fountain of bullets and shrapnel and they climbed and circled and dived again, but the guns kept firing. Then over their headphones, the pilots heard Sonny reporting to their flight leader. "Sorry," he said, "I've been hit. I am going down." They all thought he meant he was bailing out. He had enough altitude, but he hadn't said where he was hit or anything, except he was going down. And they saw him turning his ship toward the earth and start diving down, down, down, down, almost straight down, straight at the guns firing below. They were shooting desperately trying to stop the ship, but it only came in faster, straight into the center of the whole gun battery. There was a terrific explosion and the job was done, the gun emplacement wiped out.

Capt. Webb didn't say anything for a minute. Then "Sonny may have bailed out. Some of the fellows thought they saw a chute, and even if he rode her in, well, miracles happen sometimes" and miracles do. I remembered the day Capt. Webb walked away from his plane, a mass of twisted metal after the explosion. It was impossible for anyone to come out alive, we thought, and yet Webb walked out practically uninjured. Miracles do happen.

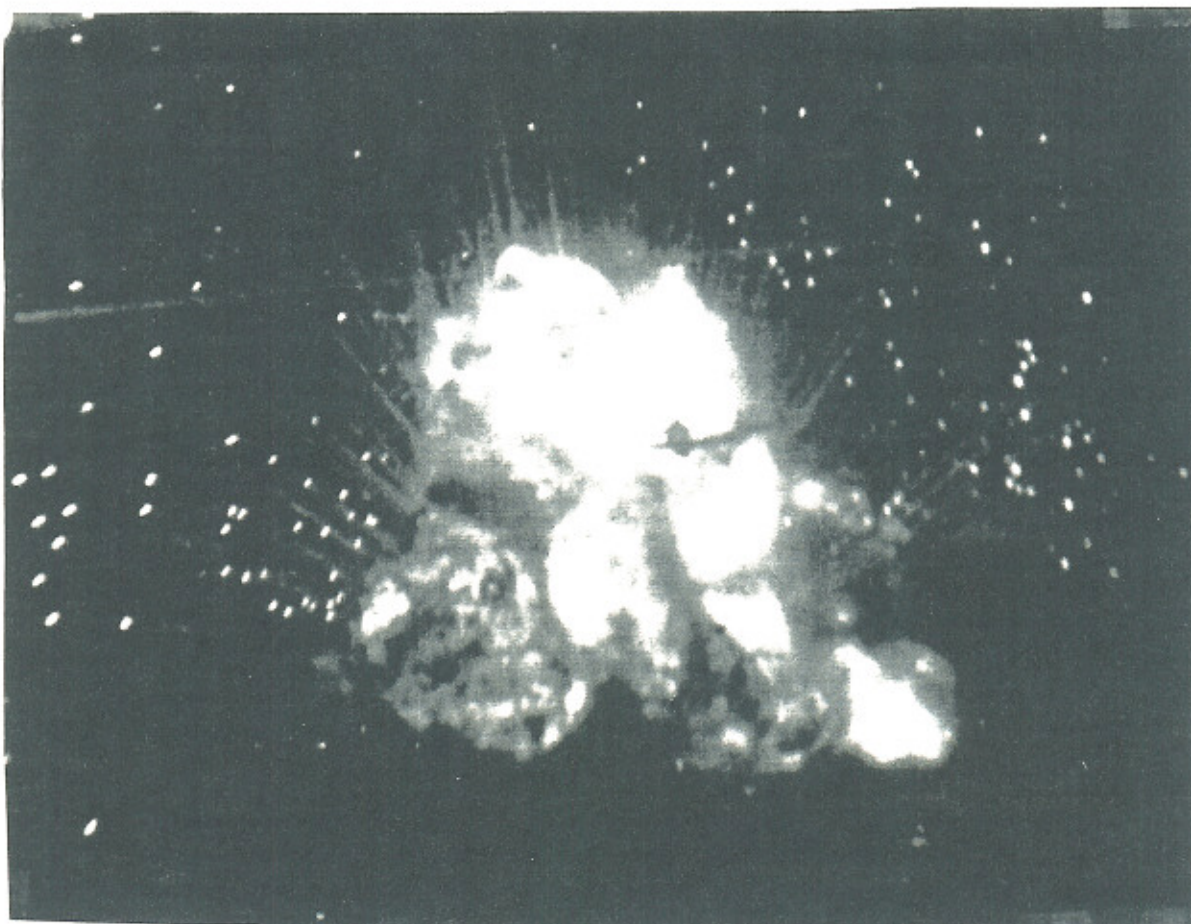
So with our black coffee, we drank a toast to Sonny from all his buddies, an American fighter pilot missing in action.

This is Ted Malone overseas wishing you the "Top of the Evening" and returning you to New York and Westinghouse.

It was about this time that we began carrying napalm bombs. These were belly tanks filled with jellied gasoline that, when dropped at low altitude, spread flaming gasoline over a wide area. On this first mission, the bomb I was carrying developed a leak and it was going back along the fuselage past the supercharger. I was advised to go down and drop the bomb on an open field. I went down to 20 - 30 feet and released it, pulled up and looked back. There was a large plume of black smoke and flames for a long distance. I remember the leader saying, "Holy Hell, did he go in?" It looked like a plane had crashed. We used napalm bombs with great effect on later missions.

On July 5, 1944, my best friend, Lt. E. E. Springer, was shot down by one of five FW-190s that attacked us. We were coming back from a mission with four of us giving top cover to the squadron. All of a sudden we saw little white puffs of smoke all around us and someone yelled "Flak." Another voice said, "Flak hell, bandits!" We turned into them and Springer was immediately hit and had to bail out. The FW-190s came from out of the sun and as soon as we turned into them, they headed for the deck at full speed. I had one of the planes in my sights and fired making strikes as the plane headed down. I followed with my finger on the trigger firing eight 50-caliber machine guns until my barrels burned out. The plane crashed in France within 50 miles of Paris. Flak from the ground began bursting around me and I broke off and headed for home. My guns were so hot that they fired off a round without my touching the trigger. I thought for a second that an FW-190 was on my tail.

Lt. Springer was found by the French Underground and hidden for six weeks until General Patton's 3rd Army came through and rescued him. Following a number of debriefings, he returned



ON 23 JUNE 1944 CAPTAIN RAYMOND M. WALSH AND HIS WING MAN 1st. LIEUTENANT WILLIE L. WHITMAN OF THE 513th FIGHTER SQUADRON ATTACKED A GERMAN TRUCK CONVOY RETREATING BEHIND THE NORMANDY BEACHHEAD. BOTH PILOTS SCORED ROCKET HITS ON THE CONVOY AND LIEUTENANT WHITMAN'S GUN CAMERA CAPTURED THIS SCENE OF CAPTAIN WALSH'S P-47 THUNDERBOLT SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION OF AMMUNITION TRUCKS SET OFF BY THEIR MARKSMANSHIP.

THE PILOTS FLEW THEIR AIRCRAFT UNSCATHED THROUGH THE FIREBALL AND THE DRAMATIC FILM RECORD OF THEIR ATTACK APPEARED FREQUENTLY AFTER THE WAR AS AN HISTORIC EXAMPLE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY AIR FORCE IN ACTION.

to our squadron and resumed combat flying after turning down an opportunity to return to the United States.

It should be noted that our first combat airfield was ALG-417 (Advanced Landing Ground) located about 2 ½ miles southwest of Ashford, Kent. The headquarters staff was quartered in a house called Little Chilmington. Present occupants of the house are Brigadier Bryon Parritt and his wife Pamela.

Our first operational base in Europe was at an advanced airfield at Bayeux, France. This was a very short visit before moving on to A-13 Tour en Bessin on the Normandy Peninsula. This airfield was closer to the front lines than any other airfield that we occupied and a number of us went as close as we dared. We saw a number of dead German soldiers in foxholes and some rifles off the side of the road. We would have taken them as souvenirs, except for signs warning of booby traps and mines. We stayed on the marked path and returned without incident and without souvenirs.

By the end of June, our squadron had flown quite a number of missions carrying 500 pounds bombs and we began losing pilots to enemy action. A major was killed on his second mission during a strafing run and another major was missing in action over France on June 3. On June 17 two pilots were shot down over France and one had a leg broken by flak and flew back to an advanced base where the ship crashed. The pilot survived. Another pilot bailed out successfully. On June 24 another pilot was shot down over France. Many planes made emergency landings at emergency fields in France after being badly shot up by flak. I made one emergency landing because of a shortage of fuel.

On August 7, 1944, our squadron flew two armed reconnaissance missions. I was on this second mission as the wing man of Lt. Bryan Cramer. Storm clouds were all around us and we were dodging the very darkest ones when 88 shells began bursting all around. In dodging the explosions, we entered a dark cloud. I lost sight of Cramer; and when I came out of the cloud, he was no where to be seen. I saw an explosion on the ground; and when Lt. Cramer did not return to base, I felt that he had been hit by 88 fragments and crashed. He was listed as missing in action.

After the war, Milton Sanders wrote the following in his memoirs:

“In Southern England in April of 1944, the daylight stayed with us for a long time; and as the evening arrived, a small group would gather around Bryan. He would bring out his record player and put on classical records. He would then sing in a most glorious bass voice with the music as his background which could send shivers up and down your back. Then, too, there were times when someone would make a small fire, so we could just sit around and listen. I didn't know Bryan very well but through his music, he made close friends of all those who heard him sing.

Sometime in August of 1944 on the return from a mission he was missing and no one noticed his absence until debriefing when he didn't show up. A number of times people got separated and some came home late, but it didn't happen this time.



BILLINGTON - CRAMER - SHELDON

A month or so later when we were on the continent, I was on a NAFFI trip from our base on a supply truck and we stopped in traffic and I noticed a cross by the side of the road. Out of curiosity I got out of the truck to see who it was – the name on the dog tags hanging on the cross was Bryan L. Cramer.

The world is missing the artistry of this man who was barely into his life.”

On another mission later on, we were carrying two 500-pound bombs when I began losing power in my engine. We were about five minutes into enemy territory when this happened, and I informed the squadron leader that I would have to abort the mission. He asked if I needed an escort back to the base, but I informed him that I thought I could make it OK. I jettisoned my bombs and kept losing altitude. From 12,000 feet I had dropped down to 3,000 feet and kept coming down. It was time to make a decision to bail out.

I was reluctant to bail out because a week earlier on one of the missions, another pilot on a strafing run was hit by ground fire and his plane caught on fire. He tried to bail out; and as he left the plane, he hit the tail of the plane and his chute never opened. This was on my mind as I contemplated a bail out. Then in the distance I saw an airfield and with my rate of descent, I thought I could just make it. As I approached the field, I had no room to make a judgement regarding wind direction, length of runway, etc., and at about 300 feet I dropped my wheels. At this point, soldiers working on the runway saw my approach and ran like hell leaving a truck right in the middle of the runway. I swerved and touched down on the side of the runway in the mud (it had been raining), pulled the stick back in my stomach, and hit the brakes as hard as I could. It appeared that I would overshoot the field, go across the road and into a herd of cows. However, at the end of the runway was a huge pile of dirt. I plowed into it, flipped up in the air and completely overturned, landing upside down.

I thought to myself, if I am hurt, I don't feel any pain. Then I remembered that I had failed to turn off all switches and the danger of a fire from a full load of gasoline was great. Hanging upside down in my safety belt, I tried to reach switches, but couldn't make it. I figured that if I loosened my safety belt, this might enable me to do it. This was a big mistake. I promptly landed on the back of my neck even farther from the switches. It was only a matter of a few seconds before I was surrounded by personnel trying to break open the canopy without much success. I motioned to the escape hatch and they finally opened it. When they pulled me out, I was ankle deep in mud and the plane was a complete wreck. Both wings had been sheared off, the propellor was bent and the tail section was torn off from the supercharger back as though a giant hand had just ripped it off. It was then that I noticed it was a Polish squadron flying Spitfires in the British sector of France just north of Caen. It was a miracle that I suffered no injury.

Later in the afternoon of August 19, 1944, after a good lunch, the commander of the base assigned a Polish Private to drive me back to our base in a truck with a canvas top. On the way back we encountered a convoy of tanks, trucks, halftracks, jeeps, etc., bumper to bumper as far as the eye could see. It was moving slowly and the driver decided to pass them. The French roads were quite narrow and the truck had one wheel off the road. This was fine until we hit a culvert and the truck overturned, ending upside down. Once again I was dragged out without suffering



LT. FRANK SHRUM



SHRUM'S MACHINE GUNS
IMBEDDED IN TREE TRUNK

further injury. The driver was also OK. A tank pulled up and righted us with an M.P. informing us in no uncertain terms to get in that damn line and stay there. The canvas top had split open and a heavy rain began to fall, soaking us thoroughly. We finally arrived at the airfield and after a debriefing, the Polish soldier with his truck loaded with all kinds of rations was sent back to his base.

After a brief physical by the Flight Surgeon, I was placed on schedule to fly the first mission the next day.

On September 1, 1944, I was scheduled to fly in a reconnaissance mission; however, my engine would not start so I sat at the end of the runway in my plane, watching the others take-off. Lt. Shrum was flying a P-47 with a new spoon bladed propellor; and as he approached the end of the runway, his plane would not lift off. I saw his plane bounce up a couple of times as he tried to lift off but the new propellor needed a longer runway. On his last try the plane bounced into the air and then settled down into a wooded area with the fuel tank exploding into a huge fireball.

Milt Sanders and I ran toward the burning plane and Sanders jumped on the wing to attempt a rescue of the pilot. However, Shrum had leaped out of the plane and was sitting on his parachute some distance away apparently unharmed. Ammunition from the plane was exploding so we backed away for fear that the 500 pound bombs would explode.

We took pictures of the four 50-caliber machine guns that were imbedded in a large tree which had sheared off one of the wings. It was a miracle that Shrum survived, but also a testament to the ruggedness of the P-47.

I don't remember the exact day that an armada of over 1,000 heavy bombers, B-17s and B-24s flew over the front lines and did a saturation bombing of the area. This was done to pave the way for General George Patton's Third Army to drive through in a breakout to encircle a German Army unit at Falais in France.

During the bombing, as the first wave of planes dropped their bombs, wind blew the dust toward American lines and as later waves came over, they bombed the dust area and, unfortunately, a number of our troops were killed including a General. However, this did permit General Patton to lead the 3rd Army on his drive toward Paris.

His right flank was totally exposed to Germany's army in Southern France. At this time he said he would depend on the Air Corps to protect his right flank. As the German Army moved north to escape from the south of France, we attacked them with every plane in every group of the XIX Tactical Air Command. We carried 500 pound bombs, rockets, fragmentation bombs, napalm, and eight 50-caliber machine guns. Our attacks were vicious and highly effective. Ground fire was intense, and we lost a number of pilots. One in my flight (4 planes) was hit and his plane caught on fire. He tried to bail out by going over the side of the plane, but he hit the tail of the plane and his parachute never opened. Another plane was hit and the pilot bailed out of his burning plane, but he was severely burned. He did survive.



BOEING B-17 FLYING FORTRESS
OVER EAST ANGLIA, ENGLAND

The column of German troops moving North was reportedly 15 miles long so there was no shortage of targets. There were many horse-drawn vehicles in the column along with armored vehicles. The attacks were so concentrated and effective that the Germans said they would surrender if the Air Corps would stop the Fight Bomber attacks. For this encounter, the 406th Fighter Group was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation. This citation is listed below:

First Presidential Unit Citation

The 406th Fighter Group for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. Ordered at 1400 hours, 7 September, 1944, to find and destroy a column of enemy vehicles and military transport in the vicinity of Chateauroux, France, which was attempting to escape from Southeastern France through the Belfort Gap. Thirty-Six P-47s of the 406th Fighter Group took off at 1504 hours and raced south of the Loire River to find the road from Chateauroux to Issoudon clogged with military transport, horse-drawn vehicles, horse-drawn artillery, armored vehicles and personnel. Attacking this enemy concentration up and down its full length at minimum altitude, in spite of accurate ground fire, the skillful pilots of this group made pass after pass until all their bombs, rockets, and ammunition were expended. The intensity with which the attack was pressed home, inflicted such damage on the enemy that the road was blocked for 15 miles with personnel casualties, wrecked and burning military transport. At least 300 enemy military vehicles were destroyed in this attack alone. Realizing the significance of such decisive destruction on the right flank of Ground Force units, the pilots of the 406th Fighter Group returned to their base; and after being refueled and rearmed in a minimum length of time, the Group returned to the scene of action. Before the enemy could reorganize and extract the remnants of his column from their plight, a further 187 vehicles, including 25 ammunition carriers were attacked and destroyed. In spite of intermittent rain and the hazards of landing at night, the pilots remained over the column until the enemy column was completely immobilized and disrupted. The extraordinary achievements of the airmen of the 406th Fighter Group on this occasion reflects the highest credit upon the entire organization and is in keeping with the finest traditions of the Army Air Force. By command of Major General Vandenberg

On September 16, 1944, 20,000 German troops surrendered as a result of air activities in which the 406th Fighter Group participated.

Major General O. P. Weyland of the 19th Tactical Air Command was present at Beaugency Bridge on the south bank of the Loire River with the Commanding General of the 83rd Division to accept the surrender of General Elster, his staff and 20,000 German troops.

General Weyland reported, "Since August 6th every Group of this command has participated in this epoch of air history. You located the enemy and successfully prevented any offensive action against our Army south flank or retreat to the east by cutting his rail line, destroying his rail and motor transport, and then decimating his trapped forces. This air action was unquestionably the greatest single factor in forcing the final capitulation of these German ground forces. When requesting a conference with U. S. Ground forces, the German commander indicated his willingness to surrender provided we stopped our air attacks on his troops. We suspended our air offensive south of the Loire during the negotiations while maintaining air

surveillance of his forces. He was threatened with all-out fighter bomber action if he did not surrender.”

“I heard and saw his final decision (September 19, 1944) at Beaugency Bridge. I am intensely proud of your efforts. I believe that our comrades who have been lost in action probably looked down yesterday with pride and felt that their sacrifices had not been in vain.” These were the words of O.P. Weyland, Major General.

General George Patton added these comments: “The superior efficiency and cooperation afforded to this Army by the Air Force is the best example of the combined use of air and ground troops I have ever witnessed.”

“Due to the tireless efforts of your flyers, large numbers of hostile vehicles and troop concentrations ahead of our advancing columns have been harassed or obliterated. The information passed directly to the head of our columns from the air has save time and lives. I am voicing the opinion of all the officers and men in this Army when I express to you our admiration for your magnificent efforts.” – General George Patton

I flew two missions on October 7 with the first mission an armed reconnaissance carrying two 500 pound bombs. The second mission carried 18 fragmentation bombs under each wing. The XII corps of the Third Army was planning a major attack near the town of Nomeny, France, and requested a fighter bomber attack on the woods south of Nomeny where a large German force was located.

Two squadrons of 12 planes each took off at dusk. When we arrived over the target area, we flew over the wooded area four planes at a time, line abreast, dropping our frag bombs from an altitude of about 1,200 feet. The bombs spread out as they fell and we could see small flashes of explosion in the woods. When all bombs were released, the ground controller requested that we strafe a gun position on the ground. We went down two planes at a time firing at guns that were firing at us. The next two planes would pick out guns that were shooting at us, and this continued until all the ammunition was expended. I remember going down on 20 mm positions and their tracers came toward us like flaming comets. By now it was fairly dark and the fireworks looked awesome.

We really could not tell how effective we were and returned to our base. A week later, a big truck arrived at our base and it was requested that all the pilots who were on that mission assemble near the runway. When they unloaded the truck, each pilot was given seven bottles of liquor that was found in a wine cellar after the battle. The bottles were marked “for the German Warmacht.” The officer who made the award said “To the victor belong the spoils.” The liquor included Champagne, Cointreau, Eu DiVie, Benedictine and Brandy (B&B) and Calvados.

Later we received a commendation from General O. P. Weyland for this mission that read as follows: “It is now known that a fragmentation bomb attack delivered by two squadrons of



P-47D



P-47N

406th Fighter Group on October 7 caused many casualties, demoralized the enemy and greatly facilitated the advance of U.S. Troops.

Third U.S. Army's XII Corps has reported to this headquarters that when its units launched their attack on 8 October, 2,500 prisoners of war were captured with virtually no losses in the woods south of Nomeny. These woods had been attacked just before dark on 7 October by twenty-four P-47 pilots of the 513th and 514th Squadrons, 406th Fighter Group, who reported forty-eight 120-pound fragmentation clusters were dropped on a troop concentration on the west side of the woods but were unable to observe results.

Prisoners of war reported that severe casualties resulted, and one captured company commander stated that the attack was the most severe he had experienced in five years of war. In his entire company, he states, only 20 men survived. Our troops advancing through the woods found soldiers stunned and hiding behind trees and logs, offering no resistance.

For this outstandingly successful attack, I take pleasure in commending the 406th Fighter Group. All personnel concerned are to be congratulated for their part in striking this effective blow at the enemy, with resultant saving of American lives." – General O. P. Weyland

General George Patton added this commendation: The superior efficiency and cooperation afforded to this Army by the 406th Fighter Group is the best example of the combined use of air and ground troops I have ever witnessed.

Due to the tireless efforts of your flyers, large numbers of hostile vehicles and troop concentrations ahead of our advancing columns have been harassed or obliterated. The information passed directly to the head of the columns from the air has saved time and lives.

I am voicing the opinion of all the officers and men in this Army when I express to you our admiration and appreciation for your magnificent efforts. -- General George Patton

October 26, 1944, was the first mission carrying two 1,000 pound bombs. Our target was a railroad and a tunnel. When we eased onto the tar paper runway with the 2,000 pound bomb load, the wheels sank in a bit. We held our foot on the brake for take-off, turned on full throttle, and then water injection before releasing the brakes.

The planes barely made it off the runway; and as soon as the wheels left the ground, we retracted them and stayed low to pick up speed before climbing for altitude. I must confess that on this mission we had delayed-action fuses and we were to skip bomb into the tunnel. As I headed for my run, I decided to fire my machine guns into the tunnel; but instead of pulling the trigger, I pushed the button dropping my bombs short of the target. I saw the bombs skipping into a field with some cattle and explode. The bovine bomber (me) headed for home with a guilty feeling.

My second mission with 1,000 bombs under each wing was November 1 and this one was more successful for me. I sank my bombs into an embankment near a railroad bridge destroying it.

In November our squadron was getting more and more replacement pilots and some of the original cadre were being sent home. I felt that probably my time to return home would be in December.

On one of the missions, an armed reconnaissance while attacking ground targets, I witnessed the death of one of the pilots, a Captain who was leading a flight when his plane was hit and exploded in the air. The pilot and the plane were lost. Two weeks later on a dive bombing mission, one of the new replacement pilots was hit by flak and he was lost. Another pilot ran out of gas had to make a belly landing at an emergency field in Luxembourg.

The weather in mid-December, 1944, at our airfield at Mourmelon, France, was miserable. It was cold and damp with snow covering the ground and most of the days were spent in the pilots' Ready Room with no missions scheduled. Across the runway on the other end of the airfield, the 101st Airborne Division was bivouacked, awaiting their next combat assignment. There was a lot of camaraderie between our groups and a number of USO shows were enjoyed by our combined units. On December 16, I traded a bottle of bourbon for a Walters P-38 pistol with one of the paratroopers. Later in the afternoon, he returned with a large German mortar which he offered to exchange for another bottle of bourbon. There were no takers. There were, however, many exchanges of Nazi flags and other souvenirs that day.

December 17 dawned with the same miserable weather, only with fog added. When we looked across the field, we were amazed to find the area that had been occupied by the Paratroop Division, completely abandoned. They had moved out overnight. Radio reports later in the day confirmed that the Battle of the Bulge had begun; and overnight, the 101st Airborne Division had moved into Bastogne and was completely surrounded by German Armies.

Our group was put on alert to evacuate our aircraft in the event of a German breakthrough, and we remained grounded by heavy fog until the morning of December 23, when the skies finally cleared.

I was in a flight of six aircraft that took off in early morning hours to support the embattled 101st at Bastogne. We arrived over the town within 20 minutes and received target instructions from the Ground Controller (code name Ripsaw). Four of the planes led by Lt. Miles Jones went down on the target with 500 pound bombs and left me and my wingman, Lt. Fuller, to provide top cover. Twelve ME-109s appeared in the sky above us, approaching from the direction of Trier, Germany.

We alerted the flight that bandits were coming down on us, jettisoned our bombs, and turned into them in a steep climbing turn. Ten of the enemy fighters went down on the four that were attacking the target, leaving the two ME-109s to attack Fuller and me. I maneuvered my plane onto the tail of one of them, fired, and saw strikes on him which caused a fire, but the fire went out in a few seconds, and the plane was smoking badly. I gave him another burst and the pilot turned the plane over on its back and bailed out.

In the meantime the second ME-109 had gotten on my tail and Lt. Fuller promptly disposed of it. I saw two tracers hit the ME-109 and it exploded in the air. The pilot did not



B. J. SLEDZIK RECEIVING MEDAL
FROM GENERAL O. P. WEYLAND

survive. Below us the battle was raging. Every time we saw an ME-109 on the tail of a P-47, we dove down causing it to break away. Lt. Jones received a hit in the cockpit and three of his toes were blown off by a 20 mm burst. Lt. McLane and Lt. Price were shot down and both bailed out. Lt. Sickling shot down two ME-109s; Lt. Lewis shot down one before the aerial battle ended. Result: Five ME-109s destroyed and Two P-47s lost.

Lt. Jones made it back to Mourmelon, but because of his injuries, he crashed on landing. He was flown to a hospital in England and he did recover. Lt. McLane bailed out over enemy territory and became a prisoner of war until the end of hostilities. I believe Lt. Price also ended up as a prisoner of war.

It seemed like the battle lasted only a few minutes and parachutes of downed pilots filled the sky. From that mission until the 101st Airborne Division was relieved by General Patton's Third Army, P-47s from the 406th Fighter Group were over Bastogne every single minute of those daylight hours within a ten mile radius, attacking the enemy.

On January 3, 1945, a commendation was presented to the 406th Group Headquarters and to each of the three squadrons by the Commander of the 101st Airborne Division. This commendation stated:

The officers and men of the 101st Airborne Division wish to express to your command their appreciation of the gallant support rendered by the 406th Fighter Group in the recent defense of Bastogne, Belgium. The success of this defense is attributable to the shoulder to shoulder cooperation of all units involved. This Division is proud to have shared the battlefield with your command.
By Major General Maxwell Taylor

We lost six pilots from December 23 until December 25 when the Third Army relieved the Bastogne garrison. Three pilots went down on one low level strafing run by four pilots.

On December 26, 1944, Walter Cronkite, a UP War Correspondent gave this report from U. S. Ninth Air Force Advanced Headquarters:

"Airmen of the 9th tactical air force were credited today with one of their greatest bags of the war in Christmas day strikes at the German spearhead in Belgium, knocking out more than 1,100 vehicles and 35 planes."

"Mustangs and Thunderbolts took off in perfect, cloudless weather to carry out the aerial phase of the allied counter-attack against the Germans' big gambling offensive into its third straight day."

"It was pay day for us," said Lt. Donald B. Smith, Thunderbolt pilot from Mahaffey, Pennsylvania. "All over the battle area there were queues of planes waiting to swoop down on targets. You could almost tell how the main roads ran by the strings of planes hovering overhead, waiting to strafe anything that moved."

Reconnaissance pilot, 1st Lt. Karl Brandt of Newport, Pennsylvania, said Thunderbolts in attacks on thirty German-held Belgian villages had left all in flames.

“Fires were burning in practically every town in the battle area,” he said.

Meanwhile, Marauder medium bombers plastered two bridges on the Moselle River and four communications centers immediately behind the front, continuing the campaign to isolate the German spearhead from supplies and reinforcements.

D. B. Smith, my friend from Mahaffey, Pennsylvania, made the national news with this report

On January 6, 1945, I received orders sending me back to the states. My combat days had come to an end, and I had sixty-seven combat missions. Springer, Sanders, and Smith returned just before the Battle of the Bulge began. They were in the USA for 30 days and returned to combat for the remainder of the war.

It never ceases to amaze me that with something approaching 35% combat losses that Sanders, Springer, Smith, Shrum and I survived. It was a testament to good training and one hell of a lot of good luck.

For the Battle of the Bulge effort, our Group received its second Presidential Unit Citation and this is quoted below:

Second Presidential Unit Citation

The 406th Fighter Group for outstanding performance of duty at Bastogne, Belgium, in continuous action against the enemy from December 23 to December 27, 1944. The 406th Fighter Group was ordered to furnish direct air cooperation with the surrounded ground forces at Bastogne; and through the united effort of all its personnel, made ready all available aircraft. With lifting skies during the early morning hours of 23 December 1944, planes of the 406th Fighter Group took off at dawn, arriving over Bastogne twenty minutes later and began a five day action which was never terminated until the approach of darkness on 27 December 1944, when relieving columns had reached the cut-off units, and only after the Group had dispatched eighty-one missions totaling 529 sorties in devastating attacks limited almost exclusively to a ten-mile radius of the city. Flying from dawn until after dark, the courageous and heroic pilots, without regard for their own lives or physical endurance, bombed, strafed, and launched their rockets at enemy tanks, vehicles, defended buildings, and gun positions. In the face of heavy concentrations of anti-aircraft fire and in spite of difficulty in recognition caused by enemy use of allied equipment, uniforms and identification, the pilots of the 406th Fighter Group pressed home their attacks with such unequalled aggressiveness and professional skill that they destroyed or damaged thirteen enemy aircraft, 610 motor transport, 194 tanks and armored vehicles, 226 gun positions, 59 fortified buildings, 43 horse-drawn vehicles, 12 bridges, and 13 ammunition and fuel dumps. On three successive mornings, flights of this Group arrived at a target at the moment when the enemy had launched all-out assaults to reduce the garrison, and each time the critical situation was relieved by their counter-attacks. The effective and extremely timely joint effort of the 406th Fighter Group brought the highest credit on the Army Air Forces and the military service.

General George Patton added this comment: "Please accept the sincere appreciation and admiration of myself and the officers and men of the Third Army for your magnificent cooperation in the reduction of the Ardennes salient."

Prince Bernhardt of Belgium gave this speech in Washington, D. C. At a reunion of Battle of the Bulge Vets:

"Between December 16, 1944, and the end of January, 1945, a six-week battle fought in the forested hills and towns of the Belgium Ardennes and in Luxembourg proved to be the last big battle in Western Europe during World War II.

Begun as a desperate Nazi offensive to reoccupy Belgium in order to recapture Liege and the harbor of Antwerp, the Ardennes campaign was called the Battle of the Bulge because of the way it bent back the American line.

The Americans fought heroically in the frigid cold, on frozen earth, grimly but gallantly holding on to vital positions in Bastogne, Malmedy, and St. Vith. They were successful but at great cost; there were 76,800 casualties in this final stance against an enemy who had for five years occupied Belgium soil. Given by Prince Bernhardt of Belgium.

Return to the USA

We spent a few days in Paris prior to heading for a Port of Embarkation for a return to the USA. I don't remember from where we departed, but it was in a large convoy of ships. This one was much smaller than the Queen Mary and it took us twelve days to land in Boston. When we approached the coast, a heavy snow storm delayed our landing for twenty-four hours.

Once we moved into the Port of Boston, we boarded a train bound for Camp Kilmer. A few miles outside of Boston, the train stalled because of heavy snow on the tracks. It took about ten hours before we were able to move again. The number one song in the country was Don't Fence Me In with Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters.

After being totally debriefed at Camp Kilmer, I was given a 30-day leave and took a train to Pittsburgh, PA arriving about February 12, 1945. I sent my duffle bag and B-4 bag back ahead by a train which delivered them to a depot in Indiana, PA. My Dad and two uncles were at the station to meet me at about midnight. I remember my Dad picking me off my feet and giving me a great big hug. Everyone was very happy. When we arrived home, my paternal grandfather, who was living with my parents, came up to me and said, "I didn't say anything to your folks, but I never thought that you would survive the war."

When my B-4 bag and duffle bag arrived at the station in Indiana, I drove there and parked my parents' car in front of the Stewart's Hardware Store. As I came across the street dragging the bags (they were very heavy), Mr. Stewart, the father of movie star, Jimmy Stewart, dashed across the street and said, "Here, son, let me help you with them" He insisted that I come into his store where he showed me the Oscar that his son Jimmy had won for the movie, "Mr. Smith goes to Washington."

My Mom used to do a lot of shopping in the hardware store and was a good friend of Mr. Stewart. Jimmy was flying B-17s in Europe while I was flying fighters; and for awhile, Mr. Stewart displayed my picture on one side of the Oscar and Jimmy's picture on the other side. He asked me if I had run into Jimmy in England, but we were in two different locations. The bombers were in Northern England and we were near the coast – and then moved into France after the invasion, so we had no chance to meet bomber pilots.

After a month of much relaxation, I was sent to Miami Beach, Florida for rest and recuperation and reassignment to another duty. The hotel that I was assigned to was the Caribbean Hotel and it was a beautiful corner room with a great view. I learned to love the Cuba Libre, a rum and coke drink.

My new assignment was Tyndall Field at Panama City, Florida, in the Florida panhandle. This was a very pleasant assignment and our primary task was flying the P-63 Bell King Cobra and making simulated attacks on B-24 bombers. The bombers were carrying gunners with 50-caliber machine guns loaded with frangible (plastic) bullets. The P-63 was armor plated with tiny microphones in each section of the armor and a floodlight in the nose of the plane. As we made our attack, if the gunners were on target, the light in the nose would light up and the microphone would record hits in the cockpit. Sometimes the plastic canopy would look like mosquitos crushing on a car window at high speed.

There was one P-47 on the base that the commander used for himself; and since I had the most recent flying time in the Thunderbolt, he assigned me to keep it in good flying condition. On one of the flights, as I put my landing gear down for a return to the field, the landing gear warning light came on indicating that the gear was not fully down. I raised and lowered the gear a number of times, but still the warning light would stay on. I reported my problem to the tower and informed them that I would try to manually lower the gear. This was attempted by pumping a handle with my left hand until the light went out. Except the light would not go out and I was getting blisters on my hand. Finally my fuel warning light came on and I had to try a landing with the warning light still on. I made a number of low level passes by the tower for a visual examination of the wheels, and they reported that the wheels appeared to be down but may not be locked in place. With fire trucks lining both sides of the runway, I came in for a landing; and as soon as my wheels touched the ground, the warning light went out as the wheels locked in place. A week later the commander got rid of the P-47, not wanting an inquiry into why he maintained a fighter for his own use.

My brother, Ed, was in the Navy learning how to swim (which he never did), and Herm, my 14-year old brother, was the only sibling at home. I suggested to my parents that they permit Herm to come to Florida, and I would pay his way and let him visit with me for a week, then we would return home together. They agreed and put him on a train informing him that when he got to Jacksonville, Florida, he would catch a bus to Panama City which would be like going from Coal Run to Indiana, a distance of 12 miles. It was a 12-hour ride, and my brother was almost in tears as he got off the bus in the morning.

We had a great time together and he was amazed at the quality and quantity of food we were served. I remember, in particular, when he had watermelon for lunch. Watermelon was cut lengthwise into only four pieces, so it was a large slice.

Herm was the first one to ever see me fly a plane. On one of the training flights, I had him stand beside the runway as I took off in a P-63. He said he looked all around to see if anyone was there because he wanted to say "that's my brother flying."

I hadn't flown an AT-6 since training at Eagle Pass and I decided to take Herm up for a flight in one. We took off late in the afternoon and I made a few touch and go landings before flying him around the area until it turned dark. I landed in the dark and Herm was the only one in the family to fly with me at the controls. I think it was a memorable experience for him.

One day on the bulletin board I noticed that there was an opening for pilots to go to Romulus Air Base near Detroit, Michigan, for the Air Transport Command. I signed up and was accepted. From here it was mostly ferrying various types of planes to different locations around the country. I flew as co-pilot on a C-47 and on one trip was a co-pilot on a B-17 from Wright Field to Tinker Field at Tulsa, Oklahoma. That was an experience. We accidentally left the pitot cover on, which meant that we had no airspeed indication. We flew to Tinker and prepared for landing. The pilot, a Captain, came in at a high speed just to be safe and finally touched down half way down the runway. It was a good thing it was a very long runway. As we parked the plane, the Crew Chief came up to us and said, "Cripes, I thought you guys were buzzing the runway." All's well that ends well.

I didn't spend much time at Romulus because the base was scheduled to be closed. The Officers Club had a surplus of cash from slot machines and they were determined to spend it all. We had some great entertainment before I was shipped off to Long Beach, California.

This was my last base of operations before leaving the service. Most of my duty here was flying fighters, mostly brand new P-47s and P-63s to bases in Kansas and Texas where the planes were either moth balled or destroyed. I picked up these planes at McClelland Air Force Base in Sacramento and at Hill Field at Ogden, Utah, and most of them went to the graveyard of planes at Pyote, Texas, a God forsaken spot in West Texas between Monahans, Texas, and El Paso.

My last flight in a P-47 was with a P-47N, the latest and largest P-47 ever constructed. It had a 2800 horse power engine and clipped wings. I landed at Luke Field at Tucson, Arizona, where I ran into Milton Sanders who was the Operations Officer at the base. When he heard my name on the radio, he greeted me like a long lost brother. We had a great reunion, but he could not talk me into letting him fly the P-47N. I wish now that I had let him because as soon as I delivered the plane to Pyote, it was moved to the end of the runway where it was crushed by bulldozers and it only had 50 hours of flying time logged on it.

My very last flight in the service was from San Bernadino, California, to Independence, Kansas. It was a target aircraft called the PQ-14 -- a little Culver Cadet with a tricycle landing gear and holding 18 gallons of fuel. I had permission to land at any field I could find to load up



PQ-14 CULVER CADET
my LAST FLIGHT

with gas and I don't think I ever went above 200 feet all the way. It was a fun ride and that ended my flying in the service.

On September 22, 1946, I was separated from the Army Air Corps at Camp Beale, California, and returned to my home in Pennsylvania.

Campaign Participation

During my eleven months in the European Theater of Operations (ETO), our Group participated in five major campaigns and we were authorized to wear the ETO ribbon with five battle stars representing the following campaigns:

Air Offensive, Europe
Air Offensive - Normandy
Air Offensive - Northern France
Air Offensive - Rhineland
Air Offensive - Ardennes - Alsace

Medals Received

Distinguished Flying Cross
Air Medal with 12 Oak Leaf Clusters
Presidential Unit Citation with Cluster
European Theater Medal with five battle stars
Belgium Forreguerre

The Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded for the following:

For extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight against the enemy in the European Theater of Operations 1 September 1944. Despite heavy anti-aircraft fire, Lt. Sledzik executed a successful, strafing attack and destroyed an enemy aircraft on the ground. After leaving the first target, his flight attacked an ammunition and supply train, and Lt. Sledzik again distinguished himself by executing a daring low level attack through intense ground fire. The aggressive determination and aerial proficiency which he displayed on this occasion reflect great credit on himself and the Army Air Forces. Entered military service from Pennsylvania.



HIGH FLIGHT

by John Gillespie Magee, Jr. (An RAF Pilot)

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth

And danced the skies on laughter-silvered

wings;

Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth

Of sun-split clouds - and done a hundred

things

You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung

High in the sunlit silence, hov'ring there,

I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung

My eager craft through footless halls of air.

Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue

I've topped the windswept heights with

easy grace

Where never lark, or even eagle flew.

And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod

The high untrespassed sanctity of space,

Put out my hand, and touched the face of God



SEPARATION QUALIFICATION RECORD

SAVE THIS FORM. IT WILL NOT BE REPLACED IF LOST

This record of job assignments and special training received in the Army is furnished to the soldier when he leaves the service. In its preparation, information is taken from available Army records and supplemented by personal interview. The information about civilian education and work experience is based on the individual's own statements. The veteran may present this document to former employers, prospective employers, representatives of schools or colleges, or use it in any other way that may prove beneficial to him.

1. LAST NAME FIRST NAME MIDDLE INITIAL			MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS		
2. ARMY SERIAL NO	3. GRADE	4. SOCIAL SECURITY NO.	10. MONTHS	11. GRADE	12. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY
SLEDZIK, BERNARD J					
0695098	Capt	Unknown	24	2ndLt	Pilot Single Engine (1054)
5. PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS (Street, City, County, State) P O Box 64 Clune, Indiana Co, Pennsylvania			10	1st Lt	Fighter Pilot Single Engine (1055)
6. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE			7. DATE OF SEPARATION		
3 Nov 1943			22 Sept 1946		
8. DATE OF BIRTH			4 May 1924		
9. PLACE OF SEPARATION Separation Center Camp Beale, California					

SUMMARY OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONS

13. TITLE DESCRIPTION RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION
FIGHTER PILOT SINGLE ENGINE--Served in the European Theater of Operations with the 9th Air Forces. Piloted P-47 type fighter craft in operations against the enemy. Flew 67 Missions over Germany. Has two enemy planes credited to his activity. Has approximately 850 hours of flying time.





B. J. SLEDZIK @ THE PIMA AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM
TUCSON, ARIZONA

IN FRONT OF P-63 KING COBRA (BJS - AGE 83)