

Found: The Horatius at the Oschersleben Bridge

Bombers Hail One-Man Air Force

ACTION TOOK PLACE 11 JAN 1944

By Andrew A. Rooney

Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

A MUSTANG BASE, Jan. 18—A lone, unidentified Mustang pilot battled 30 German fighter planes for half an hour high over central Germany last Tuesday. Fortress crewmen, who cheered as they watched the U.S. fighter send plane after plane smoking to the ground, have been trying ever since to find out the pilot's identity.

Today the fighter pilot whose man was the wage the story-book battle in their defense finally was identified. He is Squadron Leader Maj. James H. Howard.

With his deeds buried in an over-cautious intelligence report, Fighter Command officials had to comb the records to find the man for whom bomber crews were claiming six destroyed enemy planes and countless bombers saved. With the records, they dug up possibly the best fighter-pilot story of the war.

The six-foot two-inch former Flying Tiger's own report on the battle claimed two destroyed, two probably destroyed and one damaged, but it is one of the few cases where the official figure probably will be raised by the confirmation board. It appears certain from Maj. Howard's own report of the action, from the reports of other fighter pilots and from the statements of many bomber crewmen, that he destroyed four planes and probably five, beside the planes he hit and damaged but did not destroy.

"I seen my duty and I done it," Maj. Howard said. "I never saw 30 fighters all at once the way the bomber people tell it. I'd see one, give him a squirt, and go up again. There were an awful lot of them around; it was just a matter of shooting at them.

"Our group was assigned to provide target support for



Planet Photo

Maj. James H. Howard.

the bombers," explained Howard, who was leading the group in support of the B17s going to Oschersleben and Halberstadt.

"When we rendezvoused with the bombers from the rear, I dispatched two flights to cover the last bomber

(Continued on page 2)

—Lest They Forget, Back Home

ETO Soldier Wants to Vote, With No Snafu About It, Either

By Earl Mazo

The average American soldier in the ETO wants to vote in the forthcoming Presidential elections. And he would like it well understood at home that he wants no political manipulations to prevent that vote.

Perhaps the best expression of the general feeling on this subject, gathered in conversations with officers and men of all services in the last two weeks, was made by Capt. Carl P. Geis, of Salem, Ore., a fighter pilot who was decorated with the DSC for action against the Japs in the Philippines.

"I can't see the difference between being a citizen at home or over here," he said. "If anything, I feel I have more right to vote now than ever before."

Sgt. Jack Goldner, of Brooklyn, who is in the engineers, added, "... and the politicians trying to block that vote had better watch themselves. A lot of us will be coming out of this war, and we won't easily forget those sly maneuverers on the part of some people to take our voting privileges from us."

Information Please, Too

Capt. Charles Shaw, of Cody, Wyo., a Fortress navigator, pointed out that in the vote the American Forces over-

V-Mail to U.S. Tops 50 Million

Regular Air Mail Would Have Meant 2,000 More Ocean Hops

The 50,000,000th V-mail letter written by American forces in Britain has been sent to the U.S., the Postal Division of SOS disclosed yesterday.

Lt. Col. E. E. Schroeder, ETO chief

boxes. 'A' Squadron was sent to the forward box, and I later discovered that this was where all the activity was centered, but at the time I was unable to do anything about it but use what we had to the best advantage.

"The bombers passed over the target," Maj. Howard continued, "and there we met our first enemy attacks. Flights of P51s were dispatched to engage the attacking enemy aircraft, and I began attacking with my flight. On the first encounter, which turned into a melee, my flight lost me.

"When I regained bomber altitude, I discovered I was alone and in the vicinity of the forward boxes of bombers. There was one box of B17s in particular that seemed to be under pressed attack by six single and twin-engine enemy fighters. There were about 20 bombers in a very compact formation, and the fighters were working individually.

Round One: a KO

"The first plane I got was a two-engine German night fighter. I went down after him, gave him several squirts and watched him crash. He stood out very clearly, silhouetted against the snow that covered the ground. He went down in a cloud of black smoke and fire and hit the ground.

"Shortly after that an FW came cruising along underneath me. He pulled up into the sun when he saw me. I gave him a squirt and I almost ran into his canopy when he threw it off to get out. He bailed out.

"Then I circled trying to join up with the other P51s. I saw an Me109 just underneath and a few hundred yards ahead of me. He saw me at the same time and chopped his throttle, hoping my speed would carry me on ahead of him. It's an old trick. He started scissoring underneath me but I chopped my throttle and started scissoring at the same time, and then we went into a circle dogfight and it was a matter of who could maneuver best and cut the shortest circle.

"I dumped 20-degree flaps and began cutting inside him, so he quit and went to a dive, with me after him. I got on his tail and got in some long-distance squirts from 300 or 400 yards. I got some strikes on him, but I didn't see him hit the ground.

"I pulled up again and saw an Me109 and a P51 running along together. The 51 saw me coming in from behind and he peeled off while the Me started a slow circle. I don't remember whether I shot at him or not. Things happen so fast it's hard to remember things in sequence when you get back.

A Probable, But Unclaimed

"Back up with the bombers again, I saw an Me110. I shot at him and got strikes all over him. He flicked over on his back and I could see gas and smoke coming out—white and black smoke."

In Maj. Howard's report he did not put in a claim for having destroyed this plane, although there was almost no doubt that it crashed, according to reports from bomber crews.

"It could be that he had some sort of smoke equipment to make it appear that he was damaged worse than he was," Maj. Howard explained.

Again the major climbed up with the box of bombers he was fighting to protect.

"I saw an Me109 tooling up for an attack on the bombers. They often slip in sideways, the way this one was doing.

We were pretty close to the bombers, and I was close to him. I give him a squirt and he headed straight down with black smoke pouring out."

The fighters were scheduled to stay with the bombers in the vicinity of the target area for just an hour, and Maj. Howard, fully conscious that his job was to protect bombers first and shoot down German fighters when it was part of the job, had up to this time been using his ammunition sparingly. In his first two attacks all four .50 caliber guns were firing, but on his third attack only two were functioning. In his last two attacks only one of his four .50s was firing.

With his one good gun, Maj. Howard climbed once again to the port side of the bomber formation. By this time the bomber crews were practically hanging out their plane windows watching the one-man show.

"I saw an Me 109 over on the starboard side getting in position to attack the bombers," the Major said. "I dived on him from where I was and got strikes all over him with my one gun. He turned over on his back and skidded out. He thought he had lost me with the skid and he pulled out into a 45-degree dive. I followed him down and kept on shooting.

"I'd been with the bombers for more than an hour altogether by then and just before I left I saw a Dornier 217—I think it was—coming alongside the bombers, probably to throw rockets. I dived on him and he left, but I never did fire a shot at him."

With his job done and his gas getting to the point where he had to leave, Maj. Howard took off for home with nothing more serious than a lone hole through his left wing. He doesn't know for sure when he was hit.

A Valued Boss in the Air

Despite Maj. Howard's individual performance over Oschersleben last Tuesday, the men who fly with him insist that he is most valuable, not as a fighter pilot, but as an air commander. Quiet, uncommunicative on the ground, the lanky fighter pilot takes command in the air.

"Maj. Howard flies into enemy territory, waits until enemy aircraft come up to attack the bombers, and then, after looking the situation over, he starts despatching flights from his group where he thinks they'll do the most good. He always saves the biggest group of enemy planes for his own flight," said 2/Lt. Mike Rogers, of Newton, Mass.

The fighter ace's background is as unusual as his performance in the air. He was born 30 years ago in Canton, China. His mother was the wife of an eye surgeon who was playing a dual missionary-medical role in the south Chink province.

Maj. Howard studied in a school in Peking until he was 14, when his family brought him to America. When he was 19 he entered Pomona College in California, determined to become a surgeon in the footsteps of his father. When graduated from Pomona in 1937, he gave up medicine, joined the Navy and learned to fly at Pensacola, Fla.

Flew With Navy 3 Years

For three years Howard flew with the Navy, operating Grumman Wildcats off three different aircraft carriers, the Lexington, the Wasp and finally the Enterprise.

The fantastic story of this American airman never tapers off. It was just beginning when he left the Navy and joined up with Claire Chennault's Flying Tigers in 1941. Howard returned to China and started operating against the Japs with the AVG.

In 13 months with the Flying Tigers, Howard flew 56 combat missions and was credited with the destruction of six Jap planes. At first he flew as deputy squadron commander under "Scarsdale Jack" Newkirk, one of the most famous of the Flying Tigers, and took command of the outfit after Newkirk was shot down.

As recognition for his work on the staff of Gen. Chow, chief of the Chinese Air Force, and for his work as a pilot, the Chinese government conferred upon Howard two decorations, the White Cloud Banner and the two-star medal of the Chinese Air Force.

He Hates the Japs

"I have a personal hatred for every Jap that I don't feel for the German," Maj. Howard says. "The Germans are good fighters. You really have to riddle one of their planes to bring it down, whereas a few hits on a Jap plane will finish it."

"The Japs aren't very good shots either, but they are more alert than the German pilots. The Japs flew different planes, and the formations were different, so it is hard to compare the fighting here with the fighting in China. This is the biggest air offensive center in the world here, and it was on a small scale there with Chennault.

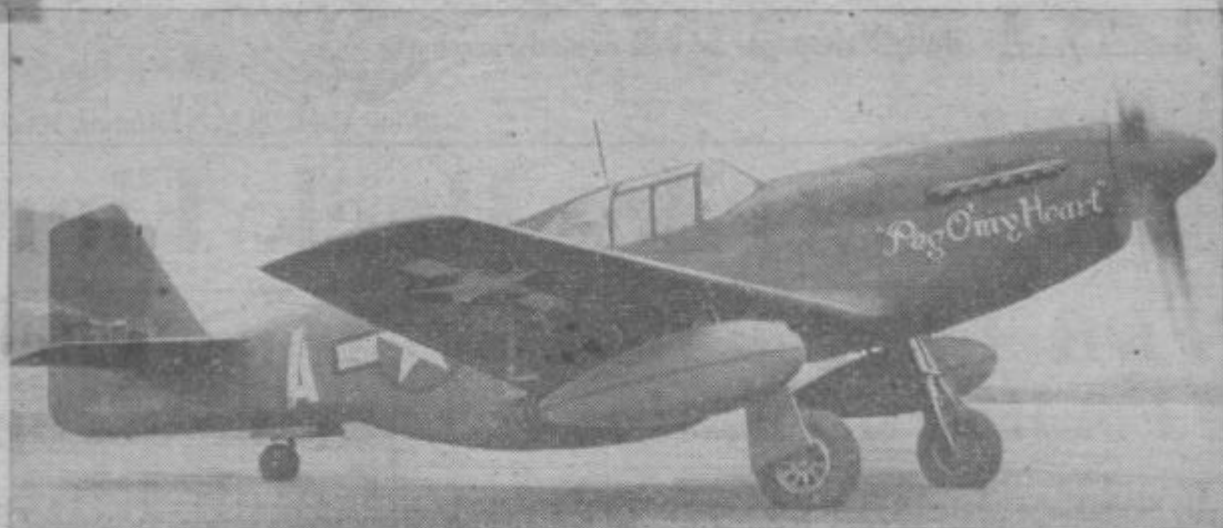
"I'll tell you one thing though, you have a better feeling flying over France and Germany in a single-engine plane than you have flying in Burma. You have the feeling you'll get better treatment here if you do go down. Over there once you are shot down you are either lost or in the hands of the Japs."

The men at the base with Maj. Howard know little about him. "He doesn't drink much, plays chess once in a while and is often studying navigation and technical magazines on aviation," they said.

James Howard is a professional fighter pilot, and at this point any story on his career must end: "To be continued."

S/SGT. Bill Flynn, La Crosse, Wis., engineer gunner on a Fort, figures maybe he's in the wrong branch of the service. In one week he had to make

New Mustang Kicks Nazis Around



Associated Press Photo

Long-Range P51B Is an Escort on U.S. Attacks

The P51B, America's newest long-range fighter, is on combat operations from bases in Britain, it was announced officially yesterday.

The announcement came after the new Mustangs had completed more than 12 missions against the Luftwaffe, escorting Eighth Air Force heavy bombers through the war's most bitter dogfights over Germany Tuesday.

The new fighters, second of the basic type built by North American Aviation Co., are the "long-range fighters" referred to in USAAF operations announcements of the last month or so, and in that time they have chalked up a score comparable to performances of the P47 Thunderbolts and P38 Lightnings already announced as in operation in the ETO.

The Mustangs' first outstanding success came exactly a week ago yesterday when the group led by Lt. Col. Kenneth R. Martin, of Kansas City, Mo., flew with the Fortresses and Liberators the 850-mile round trip to Kiel without loss and brought the bombers home again.

Win Unanimous Praise

Praised by bomber crews they escort and by the fighter pilots themselves, the new Mustangs are a high-altitude, long-range version of the original P51 Mustang built by North American to RAF specifications for a low-altitude intruder and fighter.

The B version of the 51 is powered with a Packard Merlin, U.S.-built model of the famed British Rolls Royce engine which has become the mainstay of British airpower.

The liquid-cooled Packard-Merlin, which is the critical engine, is the

The new bomber-escort—P51B Mustang—warms up at a fighter station in the ETO.

formance, plus a startling climb rate, lies in the radically new wing which North American put into the original rush-order Mustang for the RAF.

The wing is described as "a laminar flow airfoil," designed to provide nearly equal lift across the entire chord of the wing instead of a high peak just behind the peak of the airfoil's curve as in conventional designs. The new wing cross-section apparently cuts down drag while simultaneously providing greater lift. When the 51 is fitted with a jettisonable auxiliary fuel tank its range at least equals the operational limits of any other fighter plane.

Addition of the new Mustang gives the U.S. air forces in the ETO three formidable long-range fighters and provides the answer to the problem which was posed in the experimental stages of high-altitude daylight bombing in this theater: How to escort heavy bombers over the more distant Nazi targets, thus permitting the heavies to concentrate on accurate bombing and relieving them of some of the necessity of fighting their way to the target through swarms of Luftwaffe defenders flying on do-or-die orders.

The P51B was introduced secretly to the ETO, and through hush-hush weeks of trials proved itself as a first-line combat plane, capable of taking on the Luftwaffe's best, on the basis of the box score of fighters destroyed to U.S. losses.

Looks Like Nazi Plane

When bomber gunners first were briefed that they would be accompanied by the Mustangs, they ran into a prime difficulty in aircraft recognition—with its blunt wing tips, liquid-cooled engine and square-cut tail assembly, the P51 strongly resembles the Messerschmitt 109E, predecessor of the Me109F and G, which are today's first-line liquid-cooled fighters in the Nazi airforce. Germany, however, apparently has a rapidly dwindling stock of the obsolescent 109Es, and combat crews report little difficulty in recognition. Armament of the original P51 was eight

.50 cal. machine-guns, six in the wings and two in the sides of the engine cowling. Details of the P51B's armament have not been released.

Leading the first of the new Mustangs in their ETO trials—and on the basis of their performance in the "big league" of aerial warfare, the new craft were judged for combat everywhere—were a group of pilots led by Col. Martin and a handful of veteran USAAF combat pursuit fliers.

Maj. James H. Howard, 30, of St. Louis, Mo., a veteran of the famed American Volunteer Group flying in Burma and China against the Japanese, led one squadron. Maj. Howard was decorated by Chiang Kai-shek for destroying six Jap planes while an AVG pilot.

2 Pearl Harbor Veterans

Other squadron commanders of the experimental group were Capt. Henry Lee Priser, of Tucson, Ariz., and Maj. George Bickel, 27, of Nutley, N.J., both of whom were stationed at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

An earlier squadron commander was Maj. Owen Seaman, 27-year-old San Mateo (Cal.) pilot, who was reported missing after an escort mission to Germany. Seaman's plane, crippled by enemy fire, was seen plunging toward the North Sea, while over the RT came a muttered, "Hell of a cold day for a swim."

Executive officer of the P51 group is Lt. Col. Wallace P. Mace, of Salt Lake City, who was at Pearl Harbor and Midway before being ordered home to help form the new force for combat in the ETO.

Operations chief of the group is Capt. Carl Gies, of Salem, Ore., who was one of the handful of American fighter pilots who defended Bataan and who won one of the war's first DFCs for destroying two Jap planes in the enemy attack on Clark Field, near Manila, three days after Pearl Harbor.

Beats All Nazis:

MUSTANG FIGHTER IS NEW SENSATION

A U. S. MUSTANG BASE IN ENGLAND, Jan. 19—(AP)—In their first 15 missions the sensational new, long-range Mustang (P-51B) fighters, which can outdo any known German interceptor in combat, have destroyed or damaged 87 Nazi planes against a loss of six and given the United States Air Force assurance of protection for heavy bombers almost anywhere over Germany.

Although their presence in the European theater was announced only last week, the Mustangs have been operating incognito since Dec. 7 and have scored 41 confirmed victories over enemy planes, 13 probables and 33 damaged.

24

The first detailed account of their accomplishments was given correspondents today at an official "unveiling" of one fighter group headed by Col. Kenneth R. Martin, Kansas City, Mo.

The Mustang has a combat radius of 450 miles with a speed of more than 400 mph (actual speed not disclosed) and is capable of operating with precision at an altitude of 35,000 feet. It has four 50-caliber machineguns.

The way these new fighters have been roughing up the Germans has stirred such enthusiasm among the Fortress and Liberator airmen that one entire crew of a bomber which had been saved by them huddled into an Army truck and drove over to a Mustang station recently to pay its respects.

In the most violent battles fought 300 miles or more from home the little Mustangs have maintained a better than 6 to 1 superiority over anything the Luftwaffe has sent up.

Their biggest day was the Kiel raid Jan. 8 when they blasted 18 Nazis out of the sky without loss to themselves. Because they were still operating behind a mask, nothing could be said of their victory at that time.

They made their second big haul last Tuesday—15 Nazis without a loss—while herding a great formation of Fortresses to Ocherleben, less than 100 miles from Berlin, in the deepest fighter penetration yet made into Germany.

This extra long range and endurance is made possible by auxiliary fuel tanks under the wings. The tanks can be replaced by 50-pound bombs, quickly converting the planes into fighter-bombers.

Bombers Hail Fighter Escorts On Raids All Over NW Europe

American fighter planes which ranged all across northwestern Europe in support of Flying Fortresses and Liberators Wednesday hung up their most impressive performance yet, bomber crews reported.

One group of long-range fighters, led by Lt. Col. Kenneth R. Martin, of Kansas City, Mo., and Maj. J. R. Howard, of St. Louis, Mo., came back from the 850-mile round-trip to Kiel with one of the best escort combat records of the war in the ETO—16 German planes destroyed without loss to the group.

Another group of fighters—long-range Thunderbolts from the station commanded by Col. James J. Stone, of Westfield, N.J.—convoyed heavy bombers from Bordeaux, and despite the necessity of caution with strained gas capacity, lost only five of their own while definitely destroying two enemy fighters and covering the bombers almost over the target itself.

The day's gross record for the fighters

was 33 Nazi aircraft definitely destroyed for the loss of 12 U.S. planes.

The long-range fighters which shepherded the bombers to the Reich's No. 1 naval base at Kiel were on their second straight mission to that target, as were the bombers, but it was their first chance at German rocket fighters in any quantity. They shot down 13 Me110s, two Do217s and one FW190. Three fighter pilots shot down two enemy planes each: 1/Lt. Richard E. Turner, of Bartlesville, Okla.; 1/Lt. Robert Goodnight, of Elko, Nev., and 1/Lt. Thomas Miller, of Portland, Ore.

In addition to Bordeaux and Kiel, the fighters went to the Ruhr Valley, to Tours, a fighter base in France and to other lesser targets. In addition to the usual number of Me110s and FW190s, the day's bag included several Do217s, nominally used as bombers but of late pressed into service as both day and night

fighters, and at least one Heinkel 177, the four-engined heavy bomber used on long-range attacks on Atlantic convoys.

Bomber crews on all the missions were enthusiastic about the support. "Our fighter escort was like something from heaven," said T/Sgt. Edward Gressler, of Grand Rapids, Mich., Liberator radio-gunner who went to Kiel.

Maj. Warren Poling, of San Antonio, Tex., task force leader in a Lib., reported, "Our fighter cover was superb."

S/Sgt. Edward Carter, of Ball City, Neb., top-turret gunner in a Fortress over Kiel, said of the fighter support: "Two Ju88s dove on us and were jumped by two of our fighters. In a few seconds all that was left in the air were our two fighters and scattered bits of Ju88s."

COL. Jim Howard's Mustang group supported Marauders for the first time last week. It is a job that RAF Spitfires have been doing since the B2fs started operating at medium level. The group destroyed five enemy fighters and brought its total to 203½, all of which have been shot down in the last four months. (The half represents one that was shared with a RAF pilot.)

PROBABLY 13 DEC 43

4

LATE JANUARY OR
EARLY FEBRUARY 1944

HE FLEW WING TIP
TO WING TIP WITH
A NAZI FIGHTER



First Lieutenant Robert W. Stephens, of St. Louis, is one of the men who fly the new Mustang fighter.

After an almost continuous round of combat his Mustang ran out of ammunition. A German fighter came after him. "I was watching the Hun's eyes as we flew side by side and slowly drew near to him until we were wing tip to wing tip.

"Then he pulled up trying to make me get ahead and in line with his guns . . . I throttled back and then we both peeled off . . . I had driven him off and then one of my squadron got him."

Flyers Say Mustang Is Best Ever Built

From PHILIP GRUNE
Evening Standard Reporter with U.S. Forces
U.S.A.A.F. FIGHTER STATION, Wednesday.

To-day I was shown the secrets and met the flyers of America's fastest fighter, the P-51B Mustang, which has a longer range than any other escort aircraft in the world.

This aircraft has been operating against the Luftwaffe for six weeks, but it was not until the great raids on the triple targets in the heart of Germany on January 11 that its operation with the Eighth Air Force was made known.

The Germans know something about this fighter—they have felt its sting when it was used by the R.A.F.

And now, in its improved form, they are opposing it with heavy cost in the hands of American pilots.

Here are some facts about the fighter which I am permitted to tell:

The new Mustang has a combat radius of 450 miles, enabling it to support and cover heavy bombers in attacks in North-Central and North-Western Germany.

One of the most manoeuvrable aircraft in operation, it can fly at more than 400 miles an hour and can operate with perfect precision at 35,000 feet.

With the United States Army Air Force here it has been in operation against the enemy on 15 occasions.

The Luftwaffe have paid with 41 aircraft for the loss of six Mustangs.

Leader of the group who fly these super-fighters is Colonel Kenneth R. Martin, who has flown at least eight types of military aircraft since he joined the Air Force in 1932.

He now says the Mustang is the "best ever built."



Armourer Marvin Lippoff, of New York, feeding in ammunition.

Maj. Richard Bong, Pacific Theater Ace, Paces Air Force With 40 Planes Downed

McGuire in Runner-Up With 30; Gabreski's 28 Still Third

WASHINGTON, Dec. 28 (ANS). — Maj. Richard Bong, of Poplar, Wis., continues to lead the list of 34 air force fighter aces who have destroyed 15 or more enemy planes in combat. The WD's latest list gave the Southwest Pacific ace 38 kills but he has since been credited with two more, it was revealed.

Bong's theater-mate, Maj. Thomas B. McGuire, of San Antonio, is runner-up with 30. Lt. Col. Francis Gabreski, of Oil City, Pa., now a prisoner in Germany, has 28.

Maj. Robert S. Johnson, Lawton, Okla., Eighth AF, follows with 27; Maj. George E. Preddy, Greensboro, N.C., Eighth AF, 24; Capt. Don S. Gentile, Piqua, Ohio, Eighth AF, 23; Maj. Gerald T. Johnson, Eugene, Ore., 15th AF, 23; Maj. Fred J. Christenson Jr., Watertown, Mass., Eighth AF, 22; Col. Neel E. Kearby, Dallas, 22, missing in action.

Col. Glenn E. Duncan, Houston, Eighth AF, 21 1/2, missing in action; Capt. John J. Voll, Goshen, Ohio, 15th AF, 21; Maj. Walker



Lt. Col. Francis E. Gabreski

M. Mahurin, Ft. Wayne, Ind., Eighth AF, 21; Maj. Jay T. Robbins, Coolidge, Texas, Fifth AF, 21; Lt. Col. Robert B. Westbrook, Hollywood, 13th AF, 20.

Col. Charles H. MacDonald, St. Petersburg, Fifth AF, 20; Lt. Col. Thomas J. Lynch, Catasqua, Pa., Fifth AF, 20, killed in action; Col. Hubert Zemke, Missoula, Mont., Eighth AF, 19 1/2; Lt. Col. David G. Schilling, Traverse City, Mich., Eighth AF, 19; Col. David L. Hill,

Army Releases List of Pilots With 15 Or More Kills

Victoria, Texas, 14th AF, 18 1/2; Capt. John T. Godfrey, Woonsocket, R.I., Eighth AF, prisoner in Germany.

Lt. Col. Herschel H. Green, Mayfield, Ky., 15th AF, 18; Capt. Duane W. Beeson, Boise, Eighth AF, 18, prisoner in Germany; Maj. Walter C. Beckham, De Funiak Springs, Fla., Eighth AF, 18, prisoner in Germany; Maj. Don M. Beerbower, Hill City, Minn., Ninth AF, 17 1/2, killed; Capt. James S. Varnell, Charleston, Tenn., 15th AF, 17; Capt. Cyril Homer, Sacramento, Fifth AF, 17; Maj. Edward Cragg, Coscob, Conn., Fifth AF, 17, missing; Capt. Glenn I. Eagleston, Alhambra, Calif., Ninth AF, 16 1/2; Lt. Col. William Reed, Marion, Iowa, 14th AF, 16 1/2.

Maj. George S. Welch, Wilmington, Del., Fifth AF, 16; Lt. Col. Richard E. Turner, Bartlesville, Okla., Ninth AF, 16; Maj. Samuel J. Brown, Tulsa, 15th AF, 15 1/2; Maj. Bill Harris, Springville, Calif., 13th AF, 15; Capt. Richard A. Peterson, Alexandria, Minn., Eighth AF, 15.

COLONEL GABRESKI WAS COMMANDER OF THE 354TH AT MYRTLE BEACH AFB FROM SEP 1956 TO JUL 1960

U.S. Fighters Destroy 4 for 1 In One of Most Bitter Battles

1944

EIGHTH FIGHTER HQ, Jan. 11—American fighter pilots outscored Nazi interceptors nearly four to one over Germany today in one of the most bitter dogfights of the war which saw 1/Lt. Glen D. Schiltz, P47 ace from North Canton, Ohio, destroy three enemy fighters for his second triple.

Schiltz shot down three Me109s, bringing his total to eight, while driving enemy planes away from the bombers in what Lt. Col. David G. Schilling, of Traverse City, Mich., called "the greatest dogfight ever."

Schiltz scored his first triple last Aug. 17, the day of the shuttle raid to Regensburg and Africa, when he destroyed three FW190s. The only other U.S. pilot credited with a pair of triples is Capt. Walter Mahurin, Fighter Command's leading scorer.

Col. Schilling reported he was able to destroy an FW190 at 9,000 feet because Maj. Horace C. Craig, of Summerfield, Ohio, covered his tail all the way down to a point admittedly dangerous for the high-altitude American fighters.

One P47 group came back with a score of 12 German planes destroyed without loss to themselves.

1/Lt. Michael J. Quirk, of Washington, became an ace when he shot down an Me109 for his fifth victory.

Maj. James H. Howard, of St. Louis, who was credited with shooting down six Jap planes while with the Flying Tigers in the Pacific, got a double today—an Me110 and FW190—bringing his score of Germans to three. 1/Lt. James L. Bradley, of Brownwood, Tex., also got a double with two FW190s. *Jack*



TACKLED 30 NAZI PLANES—Major James Howard (above), 30, of St. Louis, identified as the American Mustang pilot who dived alone into 30 Nazi planes over Germany last week, bagging a probable six in 30 minutes as he protected a formation of Flying Fortresses.

Howard Promoted, Given Command of First P51B Group

Maj. James H. Howard, of St. Louis, 30-year-old Flying Tiger who, single-handed, took on 30 or 40 Nazi fighters over Oschersleben Jan. 11 to protect an entire wing of Fortresses, has been promoted to lieutenant colonel and given command of the first P51B Mustang group to operate against the enemy in the ETO.

Howard, an ace in both Pacific and European theaters, succeeds Col. Kenneth R. Martin, of Kansas City, who went down over Frankfurt earlier this month after a head-on collision with an Me410. Martin had led his group in escort missions to Emden, Kiel, Brunswick and other targets deep in Germany.

Howard, for whom a Congressional Medal of Honor is believed to have been recommended, is credited with at least 12 and possibly 14 enemy planes destroyed, including six Japanese and part of a seventh during 13 months over China and Burma.

For his feat over Oschersleben, Howard claimed only two Nazi aircraft, but eyewitness reports from Fortress crews indicated he shot down four or six. The score has not yet been listed officially.

Capt. Richard D. Turner, 23, of Oklahoma City, will succeed Howard as squadron leader.

11 JAN 1944

He Seen His Duty

The Nazis had never seen a Flying Tiger over the Reich before. This one astonished them. He dived, climbed, circled, and scissored—all single-handed amid a cloud of whirling opponents. The Germans gave battle but couldn't tail him. Some of them burst into smoke and fell. Others scattered. Consequently the big group of Flying Fortresses—which the Germans had tried to attack on the bombers' return flight from Oschersleben on Jan. 11—soared home unscathed.

Who was the Allied hero? Not even the Eighth Air Force's own experts could tell for several days. Then they read through the lines of a matter-of-fact, unspectacular report made by Maj. James H. Howard, 30-year-old P-51 pilot with a grin as broad as his Mustang's wings and a frame so tall that he stooped from being constantly cooped in a cockpit. A former Navy flier who was born in Canton, China, and flew as a Flying Tiger for thirteen months, Howard would only admit: "I seen my duty and I done it."

And he claimed only two kills, two probables, and one damaged in the fight—against the "possible six" shot down as estimated by Fortress pilots who looked on.

11 FEB 1944

'Lone Wolf' Pilot Takes Command

The "lone wolf" pilot who dived among 30 or 40 German fighters to protect Flying Fortresses over Germany last month has been promoted to lieutenant colonel in the United States Army Air Force.

He is Lieut.-Colonel Howard, aged 30, and now commands the Mustang group which has made the deepest fighter penetration yet into Germany. He was born in China and served in the Chinese Air Force. His score is 12, and possibly 14, enemy machines.

FIGHTER pilots at the Mustang station from which Maj. Jim Howard operates know why his claims of e/a destroyed on the Oschersleben mission were so modest: The Major was president of Claire Chennault's combat claims confirmation board when he was with the Flying Tigers in China.

During the Battle of Central Germany on June 11 Howard took on some 30 Nazis in a lone and successful effort to break up an attack on a bomber group. Fortress crews sang praises of the Mustang pilot, claiming "better than half a dozen" for him. But the reticent Howard turned in claims only for "two, two and two"—two certain, two probable and two damaged.

What may have influenced the fighter ace's claim was his background on that confirmation board, which passed on every claim put in by the volunteer pilots in China. At that time the Flying Tigers were an unofficial group, and one of their main sources of income was the \$500 bonus given them by the Chinese government every time they got a Jap plane confirmed. That was big money and Howard's board used to check and recheck and then be conservative.

wears baggy pants and an old sweater under his flying suit. His old habit of turning up unexpectedly at his medium-bomber and fighter stations has a new twist: now he leaves a trail of red printed placards which read "Keep Mobile—Brereton."



AIRMAN KONG
"Jeepers."

14 FEB 1944 AIR
Kong Gets a German

The frustrated Nazi was at 27,000 feet, madly popping his Focke-Wulf's guns at U.S. bombers well out of his range. A U.S. P-51B Mustang turned into him and the Nazi peeled off into a diving turn. Ten thousand feet farther down the Mustang pilot nailed his man with a long close-in burst. First the FW's wheels fell out, then the plane exploded and its pieces tumbled earthward. Second Lieut. Wau-Kau Kong, pilot of "Chinaman's Chance" and one of the U.S. Fighter Command's hottest aerobats, had made his first kill.

"The handsomest Chinese fighter pilot in the European Theater of Operations" is what slight, Hawaiian-born Lieut. Kong calls himself (he is the only one; there are a few Chinese-American bombardiers). He got into flying by way of the Corps of Engineers, for which he worked as a chemist after he finished the University of Hawaii. Between missions he tries to teach other pilots Hawaiian without notable success. They cannot even learn to say "Hemakana Hewahewa Okalani Vim," which is his niece Shirley's Hawaiian name.

Lieut. Kong has his own troubles with all languages except Hawaiian American. He lags a sentence behind the actors when he goes to the English theater; his mother is Cantonese but he cannot speak Cantonese well enough to get along with Chinese waiters; and he dares not call on the Chinese Ambassador in London because "He'd probably expect me to speak Mandarin . . . jeepers!"

Ninth in Britain

For months the shoulder patch of the Ninth Air Force has been bright on the U.S. uniforms visible in British trains, pubs, and village dances. But not until last week was there official announcement that the outfit had been moved from the Mediterranean to join the new Allied Expeditionary Air Forces under Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory as part of the Tactical (close support) Air Force.

Under rough and rugged Major General Lewis H. Brereton, the Ninth was formed in the China-Burma-India theater, moved to the Middle East when Rommel banged at the back door of Egypt.* It supported the British Eighth Army as it advanced westward, from El Alamein to Cap Bon.

The new job for Annapolis-educated Lewis Brereton: to umbrella the invasion. Made Companion of the Order of the Bath last November, the General still

* Other principal U.S. air forces: Fifth, Southwest Pacific; Seventh, Central Pacific; Eighth, England (heavy bombers); Twelfth (tactical) and Fifteenth (heavy bombers), Mediterranean Theater.



George Rudger

A.A.F.'s BRERETON
The pubs knew.

'Civilian' Bags 8 Nazi Planes



Bruce W. Carr.

Recommended for promotion after shooting down eight German planes, five of them in one day, Bruce W. Carr, of Union Springs, N.Y., a Ninth Air Force Mustang pilot, discovered he wasn't even in the Army.

Originally flight officer in the Pioneer Mustang group, he resigned from the Air Forces to take a direct commission as a 2/Lt. Not knowing that a lapse of several weeks had occurred between resignation and commissioning, Carr continued to fly, shooting down eight enemy planes and increasing his total to 11 1/2 Nazis destroyed.

When Col. George R. Bickell, Nutley, N.J., group CO, asked that promotion papers be drawn up, it was discovered Carr's papers had been lost and he was technically a civilian.

He's back in the Army now, a second loote, still awaiting that promotion.

Dived 19,000 Feet

Chasing Me109s 1944

A U.S. FIGHTER BASE, Mar. 7 (AP)—The bowl of sky over Berlin was just a big shooting gallery for the devil-may-care pilots of this Mustang base.

Two of the boys—Lts. Robert Meserve, of Sand Point, Idaho, and Glenn Pipes, of Roanoke, Va.—chased two Me109s almost into the streets of the capital after diving 19,000 feet at a speed above 600 mph. They met them head on at 20,000 feet and dove to within 1,000 feet of the streets of Berlin before losing them.

Pipes blacked out, but came to in time to keep control of his plane, and also to get a good look at the bombing results which he called "miraculous."

Lt. Lowell K. Brueland, of Callender, Iowa, a peacetime house-painter, had better luck than Pipes and Meserve. He bagged an Me109, a Ju88 and shared another Ju88 with Lt. Billy D. Harris, of Altusok, La.

It's Just One Great Big War

Only Chinese Flying in ETO Bags His First Nazi Fighter

1944

A MUSTANG BASE, Feb. 14—It took him 12 missions, but 2/Lt. Wau Kan Kong, of Honolulu, only Chinese fighter pilot in the ETO, finally bagged an enemy plane.

Flying a P51B Mustang bearing two names, Chinaman's Chance on one side and No Tickie—No Washee on the other, Lt. Kong made his kill last Friday while escorting heavy bombers over Frankfurt. He was on his way home when he sighted a FW190 to his right at about 27,000 feet.

"The Jerry was out of range of the bombers," said Lt. Kong, "but he was firing at them to beat hell. I turned into him and he peeled off into a diving turn."

Lt. Ridley E. Doanell, of Murfreesboro, Tenn., in front of Lt. Kong, peeled off with him. As they closed in, Lt. Kong cut his turn short "so I'd be in position for an overhead shot, when Jerry turned into me. When he came around I gave him 25 rounds from 1,000 yards."

Then the enemy fighter leveled off at 17,000 feet, with Lt. Kong on his tail.

"I let him have everything I had . . . and I saw his front wheels fall down. I had to pull up to avoid a collision," the Chinese pilot said.



2/Lt. Wau Kan Kong, only Chinese fighter pilot in the ETO. Wash drawing by S/Sgt. Nathan Gluck, of Montgomery, Ala.

22 FEB 1944-

MISSING in action after a dogfight over central Germany is 2/Lt. Wau Kau Kong, of Honolulu, first Chinese fighter pilot in the ETO. A member of Lt. Col. Jim Howard's original Mustang outfit, the Chinese fighter's last battle was against one of Germany's newest fighters, an Me410. He had just shared its destruction with Capt. Jack Bradley, of Brownwood, Tex., when a stray bullet hit his double-named P51 (Chinaman's Chance and No Tickie, No Washi). The ship exploded and plunged into the overcast.



MARCH 1944-

"Blitz Week" closed and the lessons learned were being studied for more violent attacks upon the war-starting Germans. If any American pilot was amind to claim that bombing Berlin would be too costly without long-range fighter escorts, then no bomber man would disagree. The fighter pilot came into his own during "Blitz Week" and here three Mustang men engage in a little "hangar flying" as they recount their deep penetration of the Nazi's aerial barricade. These fighter pilots have been to Berlin. They are Lieut. Robert L. Meserve, Sand Point, Idaho; Capt. Wallace Emmer, St. Louis, and Lieut. James J. Parsons, Seattle.

Village Honors Flier Who Died To Save Its Civilians in Crash

ACTION TOOK PLACE 1 MAR 1944

A FIGHTER BASE, Mar. 12 (AP)—The first Mustang pilot to shoot down an enemy plane over Europe, Lt. Charles F. Gumm, of Spokane, has been added to the list of American airmen who have given their lives to save civilians from crashing planes.

He died Mar. 1 when the engine of the fighter he was checking failed on a test flight.

The story of Gumm's heroism in refusing to bail out of the plane, which would have crashed in the English town of Nayland, was told by Canon W. Wright, of St. James' Vicarage there, who came to this base to assure the pilot's mates that the townspeople were deeply touched by his sacrifice.

He said that many saw Gumm's plane falling toward the village and that there

was no doubt that if the pilot had bailed out safely the plane would have crashed into houses.

Instead, Gumm stayed with the falling ship, fighting it clear of the town. He neared an open field, but was too low and the wing caught a tree, flipping the plane over, throwing Gumm from the cockpit to his death.

Canon Wright requested a picture of the pilot, which was to be hung in a prominent place. He said that the villagers wished to write Gumm's family and had started a fund toward a permanent memorial at Nayland.

Gumm was flight leader and leading ace at this station with 74 planes to his credit. The fighter he bagged Dec. 16 over Bremen was the first German downed by a Mustang pilot in this theater.

Fighter Pilot Bucking in ETO Wins a Big Montana Stripe

A NINTH MUSTANG BASE, Mar. 12—Okay, Maynard Stapleton, get out that brush and blue paint and start painting. Bob Welden has shot down a German airplane.

That for Maynard Stapleton, and for the rest this:

2/Lt. Robert D. Welden used to live next to Maynard Stapleton's house back in Weldon, Mont.

Welden joined the Air Forces and got to be a P51 pilot. Just before he came overseas, Lt. Welden went home on leave and Maynard Stapleton, suspecting Welden would be overseas before long, said:

"Look, Bob, every time you shoot down a German fighter plane, I'll paint a blue stripe around my house."

Maybe Stapleton didn't think Bob would shoot down a German plane, or maybe he figured the pilot would just forget about the blue-stripe deal, but he hasn't and what's more he told The Stars and Stripes about it and we are going to have our Lewiston (Mont.) correspondent check on the blue stripe around the house next door to Welden's.

Last week Welden shot down an Me110 and shared in the destruction of another. We don't care whether Maynard Stapleton paints one thick stripe and one thin one all around the house or one thick one all the way around and another thick one only halfway around, but he better get painting. Welden's not done yet.

Memo to Welden: Neighbor Stapleton IS Striping House

Memo to 2/Lt. Robert D. Welden: "Your Lewiston, Mont., neighbor, hard-pressed to keep pace with you, has his can of blue paint and a ladder in a handy place in his yard ready for instant use when word arrives that you have shot down another German plane.

"Confirmation that Maynard Stapleton is keeping his promise to paint a blue stripe around his home for every kill you score is given by an ETO captain, Henry E. Cottam, whose sister in Lewiston has seen the gaily-striped home.

"When you see a photo of Stapleton's home in Life magazine, however, the home will be two and three-quarters stripes shy. Life rushed a photographer to Lewiston after The Stars and Stripes published the story of the stripe promise made months ago, but you've done a bit more shooting since then."

New 1-Engine Fighter Put Into Action by Nazis

NINTH AIR FORCE HQ, Apr. 14 —A new-type German fighter plane, described as an improved single-engine Messerschmitt or Focke-Wulf, was reported in action over Germany yesterday by Mustang pilots.

Capt. Charles W. Lasko, of Nema-colin, Pa., who destroyed two of the new models, said they were faster, more streamlined and more maneuverable than other Mes and FWs. German pilots, he said, appeared to be more aggressive and to have more confidence in the new ships. After shooting down his first victim, Lasko got his second without firing a shot when he followed it in a 20,000-foot power dive and watched it crash.

* Because of the discomfort he experienced from some kind of personal malfunction, Capt. Cross got a shot of novocain in his posterior prior to each flight.

'Unmanageable' P51 Is Coached to Base By a Fellow Pilot

A MUSTANG BASE, Mar. 7—Team-work between two Mustang pilots managed to bring a P51, vibrating so violently that the pilot could hardly keep control of the stick, all the way back from Berlin to home base here.

2/Lt. Edward R. Regis, 21, of Rimersburg, Pa., was flying with a Mustang group in a patrol over eastern Berlin when the left magneto on his ship, the Rigor Mortis, went bad. He found it nearly impossible to hold on to the stick, and telephoned by radio to his flying partner, 1/Lt. Glen Eagleston, of Alhambra, Cal., flying the Feeble Eagle, that he was going to bail out.

"Junior," answered Eagleston, "I'll get you home if I have to get a rope and tow you."

Through dense overcast, the Feeble Eagle shepherded the Rigor Mortis on a nearly blind journey as Eagleston kept up a steady radio refrain: "We'll make it O.K." Sixty miles from the coast the pilots lost each other in the clouds, but Regis strained the Rigor Mortis across the channel and landed at a field on the south coast.

"If it hadn't been for Eagle's coaxing, I'd never have made it," Regis said.

Pilot Gets Hole-in-One As Bomb Hits Chimney

WITH NINTH AF, Dec 28— He doesn't exactly claim it as precision bombing, but Capt. Clayton K. Cross, of Spokane, dove his fighter-bomber at a building in the battle area yesterday, and dropped a 500-pound bomb right down the chimney.

"It slipped right down the hatch," Cross said. "There was either a lot of ammunition or gasoline in there because the whole building exploded in a sheet of white flame."

19 APRIL 1944

Enlisted Men Pilots Get Their Bars



T/Sgts. John Ferguson (center) and Daniel L. Richards (right), who held the distinction of being among the few enlisted men piloting fighter planes in combat, are just ordinary shavetails now. Col. James H. Howard (left), Mustang ace and former Flying Tiger, is shown swearing them in.

NINTH FIGHTER COMMAND HQ, Apr. 19—Two technical sergeants, among the few enlisted men flying fighter planes in combat in the ETO, were commissioned Mustang fighter pilots here, Ninth Air Force headquarters announced today.

T/Sgts. John Ferguson, 22, of Long Island, N.Y., and Daniel L. Richards, 23, of Long Beach, Cal., took the oath from their commanding officer, Col. James H. Howard, a former Flying Tiger. Both flight officers received their wings after training with the Royal Canadian

Air Force and transferred into the USAAF last December.

Richards, a former Lockheed aircraft worker, has flown his Mustang on eight missions over Europe, two of them to Berlin, with Col. Howard's group.

Ferguson has been on three missions over enemy-held territory, two of which were to Augsburg. He was sent to England after training in Spitfires in Canada, and has just completed his final combat training course, when he transferred into the USAAF.

60 DFCs and Silver Stars Given Pilots of 19th TAC

Maj. Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Ninth Air Force commander, presented 60 DFCs and Silver Stars to pilots of the 19th Tactical Air Command, commanded by Brig. Gen. O. P. Weyland, at ceremonies held at two landing strips in France.

The Mustang group commanded by Col. George R. Bickell, of Nutley, N.J., received the Presidential Unit Citation "for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in the ETO from Sept. 4, 1943, to May 15, 1944," during which time the group destroyed 471 planes.



BERLIN RAIDERS' ESCORT.
Some of the Mustang pilots who escorted the American heavy bombers which raided a district of Berlin yesterday.

P51 Pilot, Wounded Tackling 2 Waves of Planes, Decorated

Flew Damaged Plane 400 Miles to Make Hazardous Landing

1944

A NINTH MUSTANG BASE, May 5
—1/Lt. Warren S. Emerson, P51 pilot from Neligh, Neb., yesterday received the Silver Star for "engaging two waves of enemy fighters without assistance, for destroying one interceptor and, despite wounds, for flying a badly-damaged plane 400 miles to make a hazardous landing by the light of flares."

The citation, however, did not tell the complete story of Emerson's daring action. It took place Jan. 5 when the Nebraskan, flying with the Pioneer Group of Mustangs, escorted heavy bombers to Kiel. After a force of Me110s attacked the bombers from the rear, Emerson became separated from his flight in the skirmish, but engaged six of the enemy planes. He opened fire on one at 200 yards, saw pieces of the Me cockpit scatter and engines smoking and followed it into a steep dive. Emerson got a probable.

Climbing back to 25,000 feet, the Mustang pilot closed with four more Me's attacking the bombers, shooting down one and scattering the rest. During the action a shell struck Emerson's plane behind the cockpit, tearing holes in the wings, severing the hydraulic lines, which made his brakes and flaps useless.

Emerson was stunned momentarily by



U.S. Army Air Force Photo

1/Lt. Warren S. Emerson

a fragment that struck him in the neck. Another came close enough to rip his parachute harness.

Although the plane was damaged sufficiently for him to abandon it, Emerson elected to head 400 miles for home and made it, without flaps or brakes and with the aid of a flare path.

10 Reich Cities Pounded by Air

U.S. Heavies Hit Germany 4th Day in Row; Escape Routes Are Blasted

Eighth Air Force heavy bombers slashed into Germany yesterday for the fourth straight day to climax a weekend in which more than ten Nazi cities felt the weight of Allied explosives and Wehrmacht escape routes in France were blockaded continuously from the air.

Joining the force of nearly 500 Fortresses and Liberators in the revitalized Battle of Germany were RAF Halifaxes which struck Ruhr synthetic-oil plants in the deepest British daylight penetration of German territory in strength. It was the first long-range daylight attack by RAF heavies in more than two years.

In the savage campaign to close air, sea and ground channels of escape for the enemy's battered troops in France, Allied aircraft attacked naval and merchant shipping, transport planes, enemy troops, vehicles, tanks and supply lines.

Spearheading the assault, Thunderbolts of the Ninth Air Force's 19th Tactical Air Command bombed and strafed Brest

(Continued on page 2)

Maurice Chevalier Slain By Maquis, Patriots Say

PARIS, Aug. 27 (Reuter)—Maurice Chevalier, the former French film idol who became a collaborator in 1940, was killed by the Maquis last Friday, French patriots said today. He was 55.

Chevalier achieved world fame when he was signed by Paramount studios and co-starred with Jeannette MacDonald in the early talkies. In World War I Chevalier was captured at the front by the Germans.

10 Reich Cities Pounded by Air

(Continued from page 1)

harbor Friday, destroying a vessel believed to be a German light cruiser and heavily damaging a destroyer and 14 merchant ships.

Revised figures showed last night that Ninth fighter-bombers in 48 combat-packed hours had destroyed 151 planes—80 in the air and 71 on the ground—and knocked out 717 motor transports, 73 tanks, 366 railroad cars, 51 locomotives, 111 horse-drawn vehicles, 36 barges and 28 gun positions. Ninth losses were 30 fighter-bombers.

A possible German effort to save their trapped forces by air similar to their vain attempt to evacuate Cape Bon in the African campaign was thwarted by other planes of the 19th Tactical Air Command by the destruction of 30 Ju52s—Nazi equivalents of the American C47 cargo plane—at inland airdromes.

Strafe Ground Targets

Eighth P51s and P38s, in addition to escorting the heavies to northwest Germany yesterday, strafed ground targets, while other formations of Eighth P47s swept the French-German border.

On Saturday alone, Eighth P47s and P51s, disrupting enemy lines of communication in Belgium and northern France, destroyed or damaged at least 100 locomotives and more than 570 railroad cars and 200 motor vehicles. Ten pursuits were lost.

In a combined British-American offensive, Ninth and RAF planes Saturday evening hurled explosives on German troops, transports and tanks of the Seventh Army waiting to be ferried across the Seine at Rouen.

Attacking for 45 minutes, 120 Marauders and Havocs, escorted by RAF Spitfires, showered enemy targets with fragmentation and high-explosive bombs.

Retreating eastbound enemy columns were given no rest during the night as RAF Mosquitoes, sweeping the German line of retreat, harried the defeated Nazis, making organized movement impossible and turning defeat into rout.

Combat reports of the Ninth Air Tactical Command on operations Friday indicated that the Luftwaffe was giving considerable opposition. Almost 100 enemy craft were up to meet P38s attacking airfields and other targets north and west of Paris, in the St. Quentin area and a section south of Soissons. In two separate engagements the Lightnings claimed the destruction of 41 enemy aircraft, with six more probably destroyed and 19 damaged. Incomplete reports showed the loss of nine P38s.

Group's Biggest Day

The Pioneer Mustang group of the Ninth had its biggest day in history Friday, shooting down 49 enemy craft to boost its total kills in less than ten months of combat to 520 planes. Thirty-six were in the air and 13 on the ground.

Pounding German fuel supplies for the third consecutive day, nearly 750 escorted Fortresses and Liberators Saturday bombed three synthetic-oil plants, an oil refinery and an oil-finishing plant in Germany. No fighter opposition was encountered, but ten heavies and six pursuits were lost.

On another Eighth Air Force mission, Fortresses, escorted by Mustangs, attacked German gun positions and fortified targets at Brest, hit the night before by the RAF.

In addition to harrying retreating Nazi troops, Ninth Air Force medium and light bombers on Saturday set ablaze a number of German fuel dumps. Attacking in nine waves at midday, Marauders and Havocs heaped more than 500 tons of explosives on four dumps in the Compiègne-Laon area.

On 25 August the 354th launched 83 aircraft in 6 separate fighter sweeps. Although outnumbered on each sweep, the day's "bag" included 51 enemy aircraft destroyed, 9 damaged, and 2 hangars destroyed, earning the 354th its second Distinguished Unit Citation.

Mustangs Bag 24 Planes in Fierce Battle

29 OCTOBER 1944

In a 35-minute dogfight against three-to-one odds, the Ninth Air Force Pioneer Mustang group yesterday shot down 24, probably destroyed two, and damaged eight ME 109s at a cost of three P 51s reported missing.

The aerial battle, about 25 miles north of Stuttgart, started when 190 ME 109s attacked 36 Mustangs. The Pioneer group, which since December has destroyed 609 enemy aircraft, was led by Capt. Glenn T. Eagleston, Alhambra, Calif., who destroyed three ME 109s in yesterday's fight.

Approximately 200 Marauders attacked four railway bridges, two west of Coblenz, one southwest of Trier, and one near the Maas River in Holland.

In support of the First and Third Armies, Ninth fighter bombers bombed and strafed railroad lines, bridges and factories in the Ruhr Valley.

19th TAC Hits Tunnel

Supporting the Third Army, 19th Tactical Air Command fighter bombers struck both ends of a railway tunnel near Teterchen, 19 miles northeast of Metz, possibly trapping inside one of the Germans' huge disappearing railway guns.

The fighter bombers, flying more than 240 sorties during which they dropped more than 120 tons of bombs, also destroyed four FW-190s.

Georgia County Stays Wet

MACON, Ga., Oct. 29 (ANS).—Bibb County voted last week to continue whisky sales. The vote was 4,355 to 2,959. All county precincts except one voted dry, but the preponderance of wet votes in Macon kept the county wet.

2 ETO Pilots Near Mark of Rickenbacker

Johnson, Gentile Have Shot Down 23; Latter Has KO'd Seven on Ground

Capt. Robert Johnson, of Lawton, Okla., P47 pilot in Col. Hubert Zemke's group, shot down an enemy fighter plane while escorting heavy bombers to Germany yesterday to tie Capt. Don S. Gentile, 23-year-old Mustang pilot, for top place among Eighth Air Force aces. Both have 23 destroyed in aerial combat, three short of Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker's World War I record.

Gentile, 23, of Piqua, Ohio, has a total of 30 enemy aircraft destroyed, seven of which he shot up on the ground. He got five Ju88s on the ground Wednesday and three FW190s in the air Saturday. He did not fly yesterday.

Top-ranking ace among all Allied pilots in the United Kingdom is an RAF flier—Group Capt. A. G. (Sailor) Malan—who shot down 32 German planes during and shortly after the Battle of Britain in 1940.

At least two U.S. pilots in the Pacific have equalled Rickenbacker's record of 26 planes shot out of the sky.

Marine Maj. Joe Foss, of Sioux Falls, S.D., got 26 Japs before he went home to get the Medal of Honor. Maj. Greg Boyington, ex-AVG ace from Okanogan, Wash., got his 26th Jap on the same day he was shot down himself. Lt. Robert Hanson, of Newtonville, Mass., went down after with a record of 25 in the Pacific while Capt. Richard Bong, of Poplar, Wis., was credited with his 25th on Mar. 17. S/Ldr. Lance C. Wade, of Tucson, Ariz., American pilot in the RAF, was lost over Italy two months ago after bringing down 25.

Early reports indicated fighters of the Eighth and Ninth may have marked up a 7-1 score yesterday.

Lt. Col. David Schilling, of Traverse City, Mich., and 1/Lt. Carl J. Luksic, of Joliet, Ill., each were credited with three enemy planes destroyed. Lt. Col. Francis Gabreskie, of Oil City, Pa., shot down one to raise his total to 22.

Col. James H. Howard's pioneer Ninth Mustang group destroyed ten enemy planes without loss over Denmark yesterday while giving withdrawal support to heavy bombers returning from eastern Europe. This brought the group's total to 31 planes destroyed in two days.

1/Lt. Robert L. Shoup, of Port Arthur, Tex., and 2/Lt. Thomas F. Miller, of Portland, Ore., destroyed two FW190s each to become aces.

92 Destroyed in Air

Gentile's score was part of 92 German planes destroyed in the air Saturday in addition to "a considerable number" destroyed on the ground by fighters of the Eighth and Ninth and RAF Mustangs.

The Eighth AF Mustang group commanded by Col. Blakeslee, which set an ETO group record for a single month by destroying 156 enemy planes in March, set a new mark of planes shot down in the air in one day Saturday with 31. The previous high for combat in the air was 30 established by Col. Zemke's Thunderbolt group Mar. 8.

Lt. Col. Harold J. Rau, of Hampstead, N.Y., destroyed four aircraft on the ground and one in the air while leading his P38 group against an enemy airfield. The group destroyed eight interceptors in the air and 17 on the ground.

Cpts. Don M. Beerbower, of Hill City, Minn., and Jack T. Bradley, of Brownwood, Tex., each destroyed three enemy planes while their P51 group was shooting down a total of 20 in the air.

Other triples were scored by 1/Lts. Willard W. Millikan, of Malvern, Ia., and Louis H. Norley, of Conrad, Mont.

Meanwhile, the Air Ministry announced that Spitfires bombed targets in northern France without loss Saturday, operating for the first time as fighter-bombers. The planes were flown by an RCAF squadron of the Second Tactical Air Force.

Maj Glenn Eagleston's P-47D (353rd FS) 18.5 April

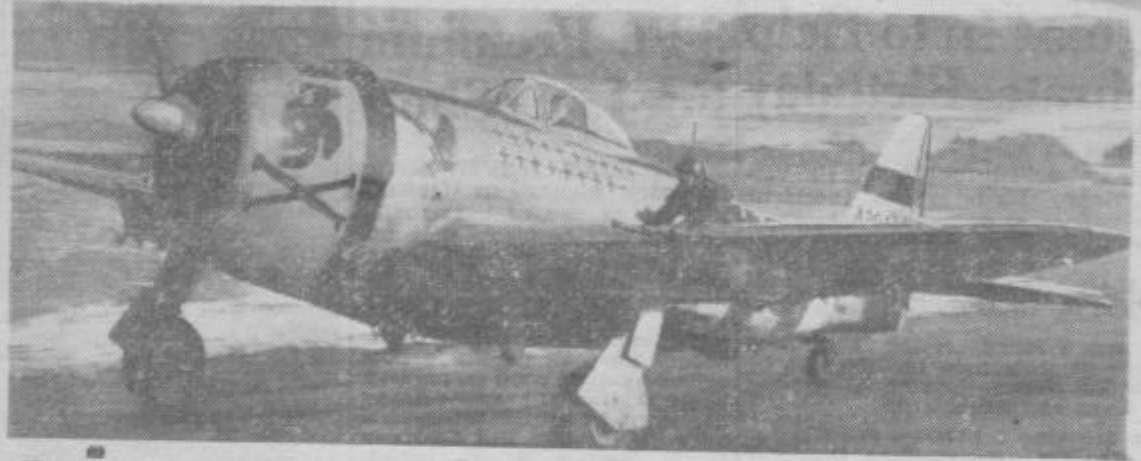
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COULDRN
BRIGHT YELLOW
IN BLACK SKULL
I. CROSSBONES

Victories
EAGLE ATTACKING
WITH WINGS STRIPPED
PAINTED IN
COLOR.

INVASION
STRIPES UNDER
NAT
18516/1/1
OV
10521/1/1

The Hand Is Surer Than the Eye, Guiding Warbirds to Roost



The pilot's field of vision is limited as he taxis down the runway after a mission, so a ground crewman on the wing gives hand-signal directions. The plane is a P47 Thunderbolt of the 354th Fighter-Bomber, Gp.

The 354th flew P-47s from November 1944 until February 1945. The "jocks" were overjoyed to get their 51s back.

HE LEADS LONG RANGE FIGHTERS



NEWEST aircraft to be used on European "ops" is the P.51B—and it has the longest range of any single-engined fighter aircraft in the world.

Commanding Officer of P.51B group in England is Lieut. - Colonel Kenneth Martin (picture left), of Kansas City, who led all the plane's secret trial missions.

P.51B is an improved Mustang. These aircraft took part in the war's greatest air battles on Tuesday when the U.S.A.A.F. attacked N.W. Germany.

There is reason to believe that P.51B may have the range to accompany day bombers as far as Berlin.

It is more manœuvrable than the Lightning and the Thunderbolt, though it cannot compete in this respect with the latest Spitfires.

As a ground support weapon it can substitute two 500lb. bombs for the external wing tanks it carries on its forays.

U.S. Flier Wakes In Nazi Ward Next To Foe He Crashed

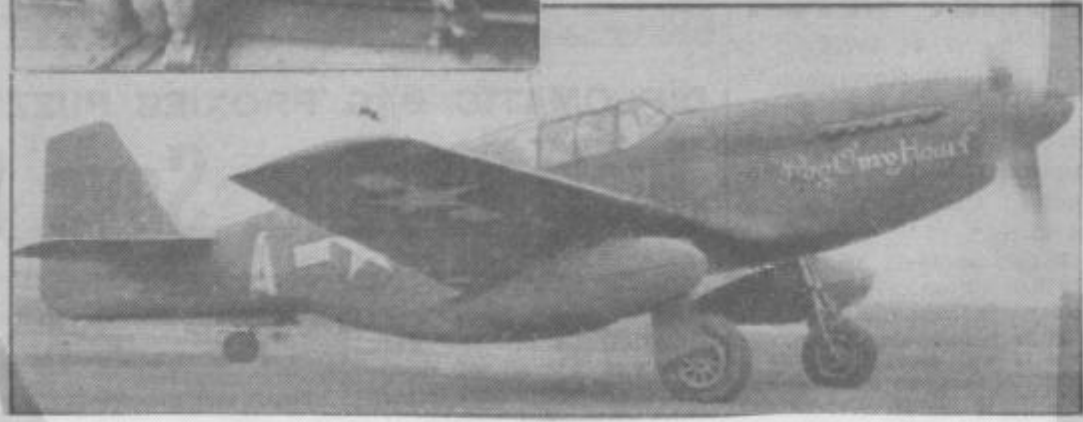
★ 1944

A U.S. FIGHTER BASE, Apr. 9 (AP)—Col. Kenneth R. Martin, 27, of Kansas City, Mo., reported missing after leading a bomber-escort in the Frankfurt raid Feb. 11, wound up in a hospital ward next to the German fighter pilot with whom he crashed head-on five miles up in the air, it was reported today.

Martin, a veteran fighter pilot, suffered a broken left arm and a broken right leg, a German Overseas Radio war reporter said in a broadcast in English beamed to North America. The German pilot suffered a broken arm.

"It is a story of courage and luck on both sides," the reporter said. "I went to see the colonel. He had the plaster taken off his left lower arm that morning and was exercising his fingers, which had grown stiff. The only other injury was a broken right leg still in a plaster cast; otherwise he was very fit. . . ."

"He imagined his companions who had seen the collision had reported his death, so he asked me to pass this message to his wife in Kansas City. I left him having afternoon coffee with two slices of white bread and a piece of cake."



★ Colonel Martin escaped from the POW camp and after an eleven-day march with an injured leg, returned to the 354th at Ober-Ulm, a former Luftwaffe base about 5 miles west of Mainz, Germany.

Here Is the Aces' Box Score

up to Tuesday, March 7, 1944

NAME	SCORE	MACHINE
MAJ. WALTER BECKHAM, De Funiak Springs, Fla. ..	18	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. WALKER MAHURIN, Ft. Wayne, Ind.	17	Thunderbolt.
LT. ROBERT S. JOHNSON, Lawton, Okla.	17	Thunderbolt.
LT. COL. GLENN E. DUNCAN, Houston	15	Thunderbolt.
MAJ. GERALD JOHNSON, Owenton, Ky.	14	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. DUANE W. BEESON, Boise, Idaho	14	Thunderbolt.
MAJ. FRANCIS S. GABRESKI, Oil City, Pa.	14	Thunderbolt.
LT. COL. JAMES H. HOWARD, St. Louis	11-plus	Mustang.
COL. HUBERT ZEMKE, Missoula, Mont.	11	Thunderbolt.
LT. COL. DAVID C. SCHILLING, Detroit	10	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. LEROY A. SCHREIBER, Plymouth, Mass.	10	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. DON S. GENTILE, Piqua, Ohio	10	Mustang.
CAPT. MICHAEL I. QUIRK, Washington, D.C.	10	Thunderbolt.
LT. COL. EUGENE ROBERTS, Spokane, Wash.	9	Thunderbolt.
COL. CHESLEY G. PETERSON, Salt Lake City	9	Spitfire.
LT. STANLEY B. MORRILL, Willimantic, Conn.	9	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. GLEN D. SCHILTZ, N. Canton, Ohio	9	Thunderbolt.
LT. COL. DON BLAKESLEE, Fairport Harbor, Ohio	8	Mustang.
LT. FRED J. CHRISTENSEN JR., Watertown, Mass.	8	Thunderbolt.
LT. JOE H. POWERS, Tulsa	8	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. VIRGIL K. MERONEY, Pine Bluff, Ark.	8	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. ROBERT A. LAMB, Ridgewood, N.J.	8	Thunderbolt.
LT. PETER E. POMPETTI, Philadelphia	8	Thunderbolt.
MAJ. JAMES C. STEWART, Corona, Calif.	8	Thunderbolt.
LT. CHARLES F. GUMM, Spokane, Wash.	7½	Mustang.
LT. VERMONT GARRISON, Mt. Victory, Ky.	7	Mustang.
LT. JAMES M. MORRIS, Detroit	7	Lightning.
CAPT. DON M. BEERBOWER, Hill City, Minn.	7	Mustang.
CAPT. ROBERT W. STEPHENS, St. Louis	6½	Mustang.
LT. FRANK E. McCAULEY, Hicksville, Ohio	6	Thunderbolt.
LT. GEORGE F. HALL, W. Palm Beach, Fla.	6	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. THOMAS ACE WHITE, Kelso, Wash.	6	Lightning.
LT. DONOVAN F. SMITH, Niles, Mich.	6	Thunderbolt.
LT. WARREN M. WESSON, Brooklyn	6	Thunderbolt.
LT. GRANT N. TURLEY, Snowflake, Ariz.	6	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. NORMAN E. OLSON, Fargo, N.D.	6	Thunderbolt.
LT. VASSEURE H. WYNN, Dalton, Ga.	6	Mustang.
CAPT. JACK T. BRADLEY, Brownwood, Texas	6	Mustang.
LT. FRANK Q. O'CONNOR, San Francisco	5½	Mustang.
CAPT. CHARLES LONDON, Long Beach, Cal.	5	Thunderbolt.
MAJ. ROY W. EVANS, San Bernardino, Calif.	5	Thunderbolt.
MAJ. JACK C. PRICE, Grand Junction, Colorado	5	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. WALTER COOK, Cincinnati	5	Thunderbolt.
MAJ. I. B. JACK DONALSON, Tulsa	5	Thunderbolt.
MAJ. JAMES A. CLARK, Westbury, L.I.	5	Mustang.
LT. JESSE W. GONNAM, Verona, Ill.	5	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. JAMES A. GOODSON, Toronto, Que., Canada	5	Mustang.
LT. QUINCE L. BROWN JR., Bristow, Okla.	5	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. EUGENE W. O'NEILL, Douglaston, L.I.	5	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. LINDOL F. GRAHAM, Ridgewood, N.J.	5	Lightning.
LT. ANTHONY R. CARCIONE, Bethlehem, Pa.	5	Thunderbolt.
CAPT. JOHN W. VOGT, Elizabeth, N.J.	5	Thunderbolt.
LT. JAMES N. POINDEXTER, Howe, Texas	5	Thunderbolt.
LT. JOHN H. TRULUCK, Lynchburg, S.C.	5	Thunderbolt.
LT. ROBERT A. NEWMAN, Goose Creek, Texas	5	Thunderbolt.
LT. JOSEPH L. EGAN JR., Bridgeport, Conn.	5	Thunderbolt.
LT. COL. SELDEN R. EDNER, San Jose, Calif.	5	Spitfire.
CAPT. RICHARD E. TURNER, Bartlesville, Okla.	5	Mustang.
LT. JOSEPH W. ICARD, Granite Falls, N.C.	5	Thunderbolt.
LT. NICHOLAS MEGURA, Ansonia, Conn.	5	Mustang.
LT. JAMES W. WILKINSON, Swarthmore, Pa.	5	Thunderbolt.
LT. LOWELL K. BRULAND, Callendar, Iowa	5	Mustang.
LT. GLENN T. EAGLESTON, Alhambra, Cal.	5	Mustang.

Fighter Aces of the ETO



6376 SS pg 11 2 col

41
FEATURE SECTION, Thursday, March 9, 1944

63 British-based Americans in most exclusive Fighter Pilot organization of them all; no ribbons, no rules, they're just aces.

By Earl Mazo

Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

ALL a flying man has to do to become a member of the world's most exclusive organization of fighter pilots is destroy five enemy aircraft.

Five pilots did that during the Berlin raid on Monday, swelling the total of American Thunderbolt, Lightning and Mustang aces in the ETO to 63.

And only one of that number—the top scorer at this writing (Tuesday), Walter Beckham—has been reported missing in action.

The Monday mission when American fighter men escorted Fortresses and Liberators to, over and away from the Reich capital, was a typical ace-making battle.

Robert Johnson and Walker Mahurin continued their nip-and-tuck tie for active lead of ETO aces when each shot down an Me109, bringing both their scores to 17.

Glenn Duncan, the Thunderbolt dive bomber leader, accounted for two Germans, his 14th and 15th, and Hubert Zemke, the live-wire leader of the now-famous "Zemke Group" destroyed three Germans and showed the kind of dash that made his outfit the top scoring fighter team in the ETO.

Newcomers to the aces ranks that day were Joseph Icard, Nicholas Megura, James Wilkinson, Lowell Bruland and Glenn Eagleston.

There was no special ceremony to welcome the new aces into the high-class organization, which doesn't really exist. At some stations the

successful pilots were dunked in the nearest stagnant pool. At others the only notice taken of their success was that sent to their home town papers by the Public Relations Officers.

Old timers like Col. William Stovall, who shot down seven Germans in World War I, recall that the ace system, which never has been set up officially, was started by the French in the second year of World War I.

The British quickly took up the idea, and soon it even spread to the Germans and Austrians.

In almost no time the exploits of people like Rickenbacker and Richtofen became legends that spread and grew like the tales of King Arthur's Knights. And when the American, A. R. Brooks, single-handedly took on over a dozen Germans and shot down most of them, the account of his battle, in which at first the greatly superior enemy circled and played with him like a cat with a mouse, spread like wild-fire, and his Spad was brought back to America and put in the Smithsonian Institute for everyone to see and marvel over.

Today the British-based top rankers, the Johnsons, Mahurins and others, are continuing the tradition.

No war story yet told is more exciting and thrill-packed than that of James Morris, who in a half-crippled P38, accounted for four of the Luft-waffe's prize aircraft in one day; and there are few accounts of devotion to duty and plain heroism that can match the record of James Howard's lone

42
Mustang fight with about 30 German fighters on Jan. 11.

One fighter unit commander, recalling that some people consider his aces "cockey," points out that if that is the word for what they are, "God Bless 'em . . . I'll take all of that kind of cockiness I can get."

Like others intimately acquainted with American fighter men, this commander knows that the aces of Eighth and Ninth Fighter Commands are probably among the "uncockiest" combat people in the ETO.

The common concept that successful fighter pilots are small, wiry, nervous individuals who always jump about and fight only in the rough and tumble manner isn't so.

There are, perhaps, no more able tacticians in the world than the leaders of American fighter teams over here.

The missing Maj. Beckham was a classic example.

Fellow fliers tell how he deployed his units of Thunderbolts carefully and quickly, and how he in his ship sat out in front of all the rest, like a general on a white horse.

Beckham always was two or three jumps ahead of his next move.

On his last mission, after his ship was hit and he knew he couldn't make it back to base, Beckham quietly called his wingman, instructed him in the course he should take back to England,

and apologized for not being able to make it back himself.

Mahurin is an ace of somewhat the same type.

Calmly, he once reported running into 25 German fighters in this manner: ". . . as we approached . . . we sighted many condensation trails coming from a southerly direction . . . upon investigation they turned out to be nine or ten Me109s and about 15 FW190s."

Then the battle:

"At this time these enemy aircraft were slightly above us, but they attempted to get up-sun on us. Naturally, since all of our aircraft and all the enemy aircraft were pulling very dense condensation trails, there was no element of surprise on either side. We started to climb. The enemy aircraft were flying in a group of vee's, with a tail-end man weaving behind the unit. When we began our climb we rapidly climbed above them, and by the time we got into position to bounce we were all about 1,000 feet above them. One of our Flights was acting as top cover, approximately 2,000 feet above the whole show at all times. By

42
this time the enemy aircraft were in a turn to the left. We bounced and they began to split up. I fired several large deflection shots. Finally, one enemy aircraft straightened out and headed down for the clouds about 500 feet below us. This enabled me to work in a shot from dead astern.

"I hit this Me109 in the cockpit. There were the usual flashes, coupled with a fairly large flash and a dense cloud of black smoke. The ship fell off, belching smoke, and headed for the clouds in an extremely erratic manner. I am claiming this Me109 destroyed.

"By this time the other two flights were in the scrap. I looked over the

left side of my ship in time to see a pilot in my flight shoot down an Me109 which exploded.

"We were all in the same turning circle, but we found that we could easily out-turn and out-run the Jerry. In fact, the whole enemy force was definitely panicky and not aggressive. After a short while the enemy aircraft all disappeared into the clouds and we again set course to pick up the bombers. We spotted another Me109, but were only able to make an ineffective pass at it because it rolled into the layer of clouds.

"Shortly after the last engagement we were given a recall sign by the Group CO. We turned, and in the turn

my engine quit. I was forced to drop down. My wing man started down with me. By the time we reached 16,000 feet I spotted a flight of six Me109s above me and off to my left. They came from the rear, passed over in front of me, and then started a turn to the left. I called to the wingman to climb back into the clouds, but before he could get there the enemy aircraft had passed over me again, and had started to attack him. Another flight then came into play. This flight bounced the enemy aircraft and, after a short turning engagement, forced the enemy aircraft to break off and hit the deck. At the conclusion of these engagements we all started out.

I found myself at 12,000 feet. However, I managed to pick up another P47 from a different group. My return trip was uneventful in so far as enemy aircraft were concerned."

Charles London, who is in the States now instructing fledgling pilots, is the American Air Force's first ETO fighter ace in this war. He destroyed his fifth German on July 30.

On August 19 Gerald Johnson became the second ace, and shortly afterward Eugene Roberts became the third.

Then the ball began to roll quickly. Zemke, McCaulley, Evans, Beeson,

4

Beckham, Robert Johnson—all accounted for enemy No. 5 within a few weeks, and as the score began to mount early in the fall, Mahurin stood out above the rest, and for several months he held his lead.

Several weeks ago Beckham caught up with, then exceeded, Mahurin's score, and, with 18 Germans to his credit, still held the ETO lead on Tuesday.

A number of British-based American fighter men came to this theater as aces.

Thomas White was in the Mediterranean. In a Lightning he saw action through all of the early Tunisian campaign, and accounted for six enemy aircraft before he was shot down.

After a period of recuperation from a serious back injury, he insisted on returning to combat in a P38.

James Howard was credited with six Japs while fighting with the AVG, and Jack Donaldson accounted for two Jap bombers and three Zeros in the Pacific.

While the average ace age is about 25 years, the high scoring pilots range from Donovan Smith, who is 21, past James Howard, who is 30, and they all are equally as quick and agile as any fighter men anywhere.

Unlike many RAF pilots who set themselves off by their mustaches, most American fighter airmen have clean upper lips. But some few are different.

Beckham, for instance, came overseas with the longest, most pointed mustache in the Air Forces. The story is that he shot down his first German only after he had shaved off that mustache.

To prove that the bushy upper lip had nothing to do with his fighting results, Beckham began to nurse his mustache back to its normal size in January—and he accounted for several German aircraft while that mustache was growing.

Since the whole aces scheme is unofficial, men who hold membership don't even have a ribbon to identify themselves, but none of them seems to mind. Most high scoring aces have almost every available medal anyway.

Mahurin, for instance, has the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, four Distinguished Flying Crosses and four Air Medals. Gabreski, who flew with the Poles for a while, has a Polish Cross of Valor in addition to two American Silver Stars, five DFCs and five Air Medals.

And the transferees from the RAF have British decorations. Peterson, who at one time commanded the converted Eagles, has both the British DSO and DFC, plus the American DSC, Purple Heart and four Air Medals, and London has been awarded both British and American DFCs and the American DSC and four Air Medals.

The ETO's 63 American fighter aces up till Tuesday afternoon alone have destroyed almost 500 German aircraft, and with the ace ranks growing daily, the American score of downed Germans shortly will be doubled.

Lt. Col. James H. Howard



Commander of the ETO's first Mustang group, Col. Howard has destroyed five Germans since December. Previously he accounted for 6-plus Jap aircraft while flying with the AVG in China. The 30-year-old St. Louis pilot, a tall, rangy individual, waded into about 30 German fighters attacking a bomber formation over Germany Jan. 11. He shot down several and chased off the others.

Lt. Col. Donald J. M. Blakeslee



One of the first AAF fighter pilots to lead a Mustang group over the Berlin area, Lt. Col. Donald J. M. Blakeslee, of Fairport Harbor, Ohio, has shot down eight enemy aircraft. One of the top American fighter leaders in the ETO, Col. Blakeslee began operations here with an RCAF Spitfire squadron, then joined an American unit when it became active in the ETO. He has shot down Germans with Spitfires, Thunderbolts and Mustangs.

This is not Blakeslee - it appears to be Gabreski SDB



Col. Laurence K. Callahan

Col. William H. Stovall

World War I aces, "retreads" in this war, see experiences like their own of 26 years ago in the stories of today's ETO aces. While they don't pretend to compare their Spads with Lightnings, Thunderbolts and Mustangs, Cols. Laurence K. Callahan and William H. Stovall (above) figure the action they saw against Fokkers in the last war pioneered all this business of aces. Col. Callahan, of Chicago, intelligence officer for Eighth Fighter Command, was credited with destroying five Germans in World War I and Col. Stovall, of Stovall, Miss., now Eighth Fighter Command Personnel officer, accounted for seven of the Kaiser's aircraft.



Capt. Walker Mahurin



Lt. Robert Johnson

Walker Mahurin and Robert Johnson, each credited with destroying 17 German aircraft, are at this writing (Tuesday, March 7) leading the active list of American Air Forces fighter aces in the ETO. Mahurin, 25, an apprentice engineer from Fort Wayne, scored his first combat success over Germany August 17 when he destroyed two FW190s. A couple of weeks later he accounted for another Focke-Wulf, and on Oct. 10 he and his Thunderbolt entered the select field of aces by shooting down three Me110s, bringing his total to six. Since then Mahurin's record shows another triple-kill, three doubles and two singles. The singles were both Me109s; the triple he scored Nov. 26 when he shot down three twin-engined Me110s in quick succession; and the doubles included a bag of two Ju88s, another of two Me109s, and one day he shot down an Me109 and an Me110. He scored his 17th victory on the Berlin mission Monday.

Twenty-four-year-old Robert S. Johnson scored his first aerial success June 13 by shooting down an FW190. The Lawton, Okla., carpenter, who, fellow fliers say, handles his Thunderbolt like an artist does his brush, piled up his score mostly in singles, but he shot down two Germans in one day on three occasions. On Oct. 10 he got an Me110 and an FW190, on Dec. 31, two FW190s and on Feb. 20, the opening day of the smash-the-Luftwaffe offensive, he shot down two Me110s. He shot down his 17th enemy Monday while escorting bombers to Berlin.

415
Capt. Thomas Ace White



Friends figure the Whites looked pretty far into the future when they named their son: Thomas ACE White. The Kelso, Wash., Lightning pilot began combat in Africa, where he destroyed six Germans. He was returned to the States after being injured in combat, and now he is back in action with a P38 group in the ETO. A flight leader, Ace White says he'll take his Lightning anywhere.

Lt. Col. Francis S. Gabreski



With 14 German planes to his credit Col. Gabreski is one of the most colorful pilots in Eighth Fighter Command. He has scored three doubles in more than 50 engagements with the enemy. The colonel was at Pearl Harbor when the Japs attacked, and he later transferred to England to fly with an RAF Polish squadron of Spitfires. As a civilian, the Oil City, Pa., pilot studied medicine at Notre Dame. At the outset of his operations he flew with a Polish squadron of the RAF and was decorated by the Poles.

415
Maj. Walter Beckham



The AAF's leading fighter ace in the ETO, Maj. Walter Beckham, of DeFuniack Springs, Fla., was the first high scoring pilot in this theater reported missing in action. He was lost on an escort mission into Germany a couple of weeks ago, after he had destroyed 18 German aircraft.

Capt. Charles P. London



First fighter pilot in the ETO to become an ace, Capt. Charlie London, of Long Beach, Cal., has returned to the States to teach some of the tricks he learned in more than 100 missions, sweeps and sorties in the ETO. One of the first AAF fighters to score a double victory over here last June, he started flying P36s in 1941, then P40s, next the obsolete P66s and finally P38s before he took over a Thunderbolt. He has destroyed five enemy aircraft.

Capt. Glen D. Schiltz Jr.



Strictly a triple-threat, Capt. Glen D. Schiltz Jr. accounted for nine German fighters, six of them on two triple-victory days. The 25-year-old Thunderbolt pilot, from North Canton, Ohio, scored his first victories August 17 in shooting down three FW190s. On Jan. 11 he hit another triple, three Me109s, and between times shot down another Me109, an Me210 and an Me110, all singly. The captain was a machinist as a civilian.

46

Capt. Duane W. Beeson



An Oakland, Cal., hotel clerk as a civilian, Capt. Duane W. Beeson has accounted for 14 enemy aircraft to date. Sticking strictly to the Luftwaffe's single-engined ships for his combat, all of the captain's kills except one have been Me109s and FW190s. The exception was a Ju88, which he shot down Feb. 28. The 22-year-old pilot, a transferee from the RCAF, has flown Spitfires, Thunderbolts and Mustangs in combat.

Maj. Gerald Johnson



When Maj. Gerald Johnson went hunting for something to shoot at while escorting American heavy bombers to Brunswick recently, nothing else turned up, so he headed his Thunderbolt for a passing three-engined Ju52, a German transport, and brought his total of enemy aircraft destroyed to 14. The Owenton, Ky., pilot was one of the first AAF fighter men in the ETO to shoot down two Germans in one day. He followed that up last July by scoring a triple.

Lt. Col. David G. Schilling



A Flying Group executive from Detroit, Col. Schilling is called "Lucky" and "One-a-Day" by Thunderbolt mates. He brought down four Germans in as many days. On his first flight over enemy territory his plane was badly shot up and he went scoreless for the next 43 missions. The Colonel chalked up his initial victory on an Emden raid in October. Since then he has become a "double ace" with ten enemy planes to his credit.

1/Lt. James M. Morris



A 23-year-old Detroit Lightning pilot, 1/Lt. James M. Morris was the first AAF fighter pilot in the ETO to destroy four German aircraft in one day. A couple of days before he had gotten his initial enemy kill, and a couple of days afterwards he shot down another, making six enemy aircraft destroyed in one week. Since then Morris has scored a seventh victory.

Lt. Col. Glenn E. Duncan



Leader of the AAF's first dive-bombing P47 group in the ETO, Lt. Col. Glenn E. Duncan, of Houston, has 15 enemy aircraft to his credit. On a recent mission he destroyed an FW190 in the air, a Ju88 on the ground, and on the way home shot up an armed merchant ship off the European coast.

47

47

TARGETS of OPPORTUNITY

By Sgt. BILL DAVIDSON
YANK Staff Correspondent

“ONE of the principal reasons for the delay in mounting our offensive to drive the Anglo-Americans out of Normandy and into the sea, is the enemy’s crushing superiority in the air. His fighter-bombers continually attack our road networks, railroads and motor columns. He has been able severely to interfere with the grouping of our counter-attacking units and reinforcements. Our troops go through hell even before they reach the front lines. We are restricted to moving at night. In this respect—the enemy’s fiendish use of air power—it is our 1939 Polish Campaign in reverse.”

—Col. Ernst Von Hammer, German News Agency commentator, June 12, 1944.

ENGLAND—The briefing was short and to the point. It took place at 0530 hours in the cowshed that served as the Mustang fighter-bomber groups' briefing room. While the briefing was going on, the pilots rubbed the sleep out of their eyes and the egg-yolk from the corners of their mouths. The only thing that made this briefing different from the dozens of escort and bridge-busting missions the group had gone on since D-Day, was that after Lt. Burkhardt, the Assistant A-2, finished telling them their target was to be a certain stretch of railroad between two certain towns, an Infantry major stepped up to the improvised rostrum. The Infantry major was short, stocky George Bravos, a veteran of one of the assault divisions now in France. He was going to brief the pilots. This did not seem strange to the men because one such officer is now attached to every fighter-bomber group. Our Mustangs, Thunderbolts and Lightnings are being used the same as corps and divisional long-range artillery.

"Today," said Major Bravos, "you will bomb your assigned target. Then you will go out and look for targets of opportunity—for strafing."

The pilots snapped wide awake.

The Major pointed to the map. "Everything east of this line and south of this line that moves, is enemy," he said. "A panzer division is reported moving north to reinforce the Germans holding this city. When you see a panzer division, you can't miss it." He paused. "A panzer division is strung out for 30 to 50 miles and has hundreds of big gasoline trucks in the convoy. They burn beautifully. Also, there is a general German troop movement to the north over this entire sector." He pointed to the map again. "They're trying to consolidate their small defense garrisons all over this part of France into battle groups. Remember—everything that moves is the enemy. Go get him." The Major stepped down.

The pilots erupted out of the briefing room into the early morning brightness. A few minutes later they took off, roaring down the metal strip two by two in their graceful black-and-white-striped Mustangs.

The group wheeled, gained altitude and headed east. All three squadrons hung together flying over the Channel, in that tight, beautiful spear-like bombing formation peculiar to fighters. The weather was clear, and from 4,000 feet they could see the choppy whitecaps of the Channel, still jammed with Allied shipping. A battleship was standing off one of the beaches, firing inland, and even in the bright light of morning, the flash of the big guns hurt the pilots' eyes.

They flew over the beaches, now fairly clear and workmanlike. They flew over the peaceful-looking countryside, past the tiny gun flashes of the battle-line. Then they reached the target.

THE target was two shimmering rows of railroad track stretching flat and straight between two towns on the horizon. Slowly, professionally, the entire group (48 planes) wheeled over the target. Then, two by two, they peeled off to 1,600 feet, each Mustang dropping the two 500-pound bombs slung beneath the wings, and pulling out at 1,400. As each squadron went in, the other two circled overhead providing top cover. But not an enemy plane or gun challenged them. The whole operation was unhurried and deliberate. The first pair of Mustangs ripped four holes in the track near one of the towns. The others moved the pattern of holes straight down the track to the other town, until all that remained of the track was dust clouds and pieces of rail jutting grotesquely upwards every hundred yards or so. Direct hits on the track raised black dust clouds. Near misses raised yellow ones. As the Mustangs

turned away, a squadron of P-38s, which had been standing by, wheeled in to take their crack at the tracks—along which a German infantry division had been scheduled to move.

The Mustangs left the target and split up into squadrons to look for the "targets of opportunity." Major Jack Bradley's squadron saw most of the action. They swung along at 4,000 feet, watching the roads and looking for suspicious shadows in the trees. Every once in a while, a flight (four planes) would think they saw something and go down to the deck to investigate. Then they would climb back up again.

SUDDENLY, Capt. Robert Meserve, an ex-education student at the University of Idaho, took his flight and headed off to the west. There, stretched out along a secondary road (the primary roads in the vicinity had been knocked out) was a convoy of 15 vehicles. In the convoy were two gasoline trucks, eleven loaded lorries and two staff cars.

Meserve put his ship into a dive to check on the identity of the vehicles. He almost didn't come back. The Mustang stalled pulling out of the dive. The right wing dropped. It crashed into a tree top and sawed right through the trunk, ripping off part of the tree and part of the wing as well. Miraculously, Meserve pulled out. Two things convinced him that this was indeed a "target of opportunity." In the first place, the vehicles were all plainly marked with the German Cross. In the second place, 7-mm. and 20-mm. slugs ripped around his ears.

Meserve went upstairs, re-formed his flight, and brought the four Mustangs in on the convoy in a long raking glide at 150 feet. They came in at right angles to the convoy, firing a broadside of machine guns all at once. One gasoline truck blew up. The other vehicles began to smoke. Meserve took his flight around in a complete circle and raked the convoy again from the same angle. The other gasoline truck blew up, one of the staff cars went over on its side, the rest of the vehicles burned with a greasy black smoke. No one got out.

Meserve and his flight rejoined the squadron.

A few minutes later, Capt. Carl Frantz, of Brownsville, Pa., went down to 800 feet with his wing man, Lt. Hayden Holton, who was on his first operational flight. Frantz had spotted a gasoline truck, the biggest, fattest gasoline truck he thought he had ever seen. It was so big that it was having trouble negotiating the narrow country road. The gasoline truck pulled into a clump of woods when its driver saw the two Mustangs coming, and disappeared. Frantz's slugs whipped futilely through the trees. The clump of woods was surrounded by four pastures filled with sheep and horses. The other men in the squadron saw Frantz firing his guns and thought he had lost his mind. "The crazy bastard is shooting up horses," said Maj. Bradley, over the RT. All this took place above the outskirts of a little village, and the French people were standing around on the roads shading their eyes and watching the battle.

Frantz pulled up to 800 feet and spun around. The driver of the gasoline truck apparently thought Frantz had gone away because he began to back out of the woods. Frantz swooped down. He pounced savagely on the rear end of the truck poking cautiously from among the trees. A hundred rounds—incendiary, tracer and armor-piercing—poured into the rear end of the truck. It blew up with a tremendous red-flash explosion that shot 200 feet in the air. Frantz's Mustang flew through the flames and was tossed up into the air like a cinder in a flue. He straightened out finally, and climbed back to 4,000.

It was young Holton who spotted the next "target

of opportunity." This was a column of six half-tracks protecting a large supply truck with what looked like dozens of upturned metal bushel baskets. The half-tracks were parked along the road, and in the woods were enemy machine guns and 20-mm. guns set up as anti-aircraft protection. All of them began firing on the Mustangs.

Frantz took his flight down first. They dived to 300 feet from 800, approaching from the front of the column. They went right down the column to the rear. The four planes set up a pattern of .50-calibre slugs that literally blanketed the vehicles. German soldiers poured out of the half-tracks. Some of them reached the woods. Others were not so fortunate. They were smashed to the ground by the .50-calibre slugs, and lay there on the road, buffeted about by further blasts of machine gun fire. Each of the Jerry half-tracks as well as the supply trucks showed little spurts of orange flame and began to smoke.

Meserve brought his flight in on Frantz's flank. His objective was the machine guns and ack-ack set up in the woods, then occupied in raking Frantz's flight. Maj. Bradley's flight came down the middle. The entire squadron made five merciless passes like this, directly over the vehicles and guns. When the five passes were over, there wasn't much left on the road or in the woods. Only one of an estimated 30 machine guns and two 20-mm. guns was still firing. It was firing spasmodically and in short bursts, as if one man was trying to feed and fire at the same time.

This little battle took place on the outskirts of another village, where the people also watched with a great deal of interest. Bradley lifted the squadron over the village. A railroad switch yard was sitting on the other side, completely knocked out by previ-

ous bombings. But over on a siding was a locomotive and thirty-five goods wagons, all seemingly loaded. The entire squadron pounced on this target, attacking in a broadside from 150 feet. In a matter of minutes, the locomotive had exploded and the goods wagons were burning furiously. Not a single car escaped. By this time, the Mustangs' gasoline and ammunition were running low, and the concussion of the exploding locomotive had shattered a gas gauge on young Holton's instrument panel, so the squadron decided to head for home. They passed over the beach, where the battleship was still firing. Below them was a peaceful French village, with little fishing boats drawn up on the sands. As they pulled into their home field, other Mustangs were gassed up on the line, ready to go out on the second mission of the day.

In the next 48 hours the group accounted for 117 tank cars and goods wagons; 91 trucks and armored cars; six half-tracks; three tanks; eight staff cars; 13 locomotives; eight bridges; four howitzers; one self-propelled artillery piece; one heavy gun emplacement; three machine gun nests; one ammunition dump; two radio towers; four marshalling yards; one railroad station; 50 miles of railroad track; 17 Messerschmitt 109s destroyed on the ground; one barracks; two buses loaded with about 60 German officers; approximately 200 German soldiers and one Focke-Wulf 190 in the air.

This FW-190 was the first air opposition the group had run into since D-Day. The FW-190 was skulking along a railroad at about 50 feet when he was spotted. He didn't even try to fight. He pulled up to 1,000 feet and tried to bail out. His chute didn't open, however, and he splattered down on liberated French soil a few feet from his crashed ship.

