



Newsletter 367th Fighter Group – Issue # 2, January 2012



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Dear Friends, Families and 367th Fighter Group members,

After I sent the issue # 1 of the newsletter I received two articles, one from Stacy Crossen Roberts and one from John Cely. I thank them a lot for sharing with us the story of their father or their own story. You will find in this issue the article of Stacy. John's article will be published in issue # 3. The articles concerning the airfields in UK and the first missions should be published in an other issue of the newsletter.

The article concerning the training is not directly linked to the 367th FG but I thought that it could bring some memories to some pilots of the Gang. It can also give an idea to the rest of us of the steps they went through and the very hard work the cadets had to furnish to earn their wings.

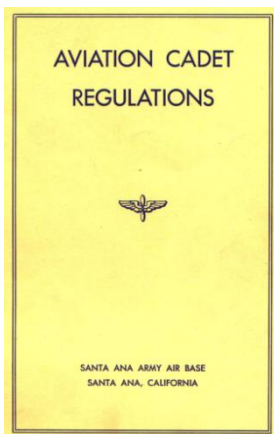
As I told you in the first issue, do not hesitate to send me any comment, idea or even critics. **I wish you a Happy New Year.**

Pilot training, part 1

Before joining the 367th FG the pilots went through very hard training divided in clearly defined steps. According to an Aviation Cadet Training Air Forces document, men between 18 and 26 could apply for air crew training (the young men who had reached the age of 17 could apply for the enlistment in the Air Corps Enlisted Reserve). The applicant had to go to an Examining Board, usually located in the Post Office or Federal Building, for an examination. This examination was divided in two parts, mental and physical. If the applicant passed the examination he was given a letter to be presented to the commanding officer of an Induction Station. The young men could also go to their Selective Service Board and volunteer for induction. Upon induction, the applicant was

assigned to a Basic Training Center and next to a selected college for a five-months course of preparatory pre-flight training. During the five month the volunteers received academic courses in maths, physics, geography, modern history, English and military induction and military subjects. In some cases some flying hours were dispensed.

The applicant whose educational qualifications were such as to make unnecessary the academic training course could be exempted from it. In this case, he was sent to one of the three Army Air Forces Classification Center. The men who received the Basic Training were also sent to the Classification Center at the end of the five months.





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Classification

The most famous Classification Center was the one in Santa Ana Army Air Base (SAAAB), CA. The two other ones were in Maxwell Field, AL, and the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center, TX. The young men were assigned to a squadron for the first few weeks to follow the first steps of the military life: G.I. haircut, military indoctrination, shots, etc. But the most important steps were the dreadful physical and aptitude tests. Before the end of these tests, the new enlisted men had to specify on a form their choice concerning their desire: pilot, navigator or bombardier. Nevertheless, only the result of all those numerous examinations and tests would determine the type of training the cadet would be fit for.

The lucky ones eligible for pilot training were assigned to a new squadron for pre-flight. The trainees were associated to a Class identified by the letter of the graduation, A for a graduation in January, B for a graduation in February, etc. They received the pay of a private, \$50 per month.

The instruction was divided into four stages, each of nine weeks duration, the 3 last stages were associated to flying, with flying time respectively of sixty/sixty five, seventy and eighty hours. The trainees washed out during one of these steps were sent to navigator or bombardier schools or to any school they were the best fitted for.

Cadet Ray Jackson, 392nd FS. The caption was : 'This is how I learnt to salute' (Carolyn and Joe Cobb)



Pre-flight

Before being able to sit in a plane, the young men had to follow the ground school called pre-flight. During 9 to 10 weeks they studied maps and charts, maths, physics, code, ship and aircraft recognition. Furthermore they received daily physical training, military and gunnery training and had to follow the aviation cadet regulations. They also quickly learnt the well known army 'Hurry and wait' !

According to the SAAAB regulation : "a cadet becomes eligible for graduation from pre-flight school when he has satisfactorily completed the ground School course of instruction. The grading scale will be zero to 100. A grade below 70 is a failing grade and indicates that minimum course requirements have not been met. A cadet who receives a final course grade below 70 in any Ground School subject may be held for an extra period of instruction. If he passes all courses during this extra period, he will be eligible for graduation".

In one of his letter to his father and mother Lt. Eugene Fleming, of the 392nd Fighter Squadron, explained that the test on aircraft recognition was to identify about 30 planes and know their dimensions (span and length). They had approximately ½ second to look at the plane! In naval identification, they had to know the nationality of U.S., Jap, British, German, French and Italian warships of all types. In addition they had to know the types and class of U.S. and Jap ships. In other words they had to know at a glance (about 10 sec in this case) whether the ship was a battleship, aircraft carrier, light or heavy cruiser also have to know what class it belonged to. As concerns the code, the cadets had to find 10 words per minute.



Cadet Owen Fincher, 392nd FS, ready for a flight in a PT-22 (Jean-Luc Gruson)



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When assigned to their first squadron in Classification center the young soldiers were asked to send this letter. This one was sent by Lt. Eugene L. Fleming, initial pilot of the 392nd FS (Marcia Crouch)



SANTA ANA ARMY AIR BASE
SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA

11/20, 1942

Dear Mother & Dad

I'm sending this from the Classification Center here at the Santa Ana Army Air Base, where I arrived today. I was met at the train and am now here with the rest of the future Army Air Crews.

I've been registered and assigned to Squadron 17, where I shall remain for about two weeks. During that time I will have my physical examinations and tests which will determine whether I become a Pilot, Bombardier, or Navigator. After being classified, I will be assigned to another squadron here on this post, and then my actual preflight training begins. That preflight training will last for about nine weeks and then I will be sent to one of the flying schools to start my flying training.

You will, no doubt, think it strange receiving this type of letter from me instead of a personal note, but here is why: Our Commanding Officer knows that during the excitement and process of getting settled during the next few days, some of us will be apt to forget to write to the folks at home. This is his way of letting you know where I am and that I am well. It's just one of the many indications that I shall be well taken care of in the Army Air Forces. Another is my protection by National Service Life Insurance which is granted me free of charge all through my training period.

I know I'll have more nice things to tell you when I write a real letter. In the meantime, please let me hear from you. My address is:

Squadron 17
Army Air Base
Santa Ana, Calif.

E. Fleming



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Cadet Eugene L. Fleming (Marcia Crouch)

Primary

For their 2nd stage in their training the men were appointed as aviation cadets and received a pay of \$75 per month and were sent to one of the numerous flying school. Most of these schools were operated by private companies with civilian instructors. Nevertheless the check rides were made with an Army instructors.

The cadets could fly on one of the following model of airplane: the Ryan PT-22 Recruit, a low wing monoplane, the biplane Stearman PT-17/PT-13 Kaydet (the P-13 could fly inverted thanks to its Lycoming engine) or the Fairchild PT-19

Cornell also a low wing monoplane. All of them were two seaters aircrafts with open cockpit. 'PT' was for Primary Training.

This time again the cadets received ground training to study aircraft engine and propeller, principles of flight, weather and navigation. They received dual and solo flying. They learned the basic flying maneuver like turns, gliding, 180° side approach, chandells, lazy 8, spins and stalls. The first solo was generally made between 10 to 12 hours of dual flight. The first takeoffs and landings were pretty difficult to master for these new bird men

and it was quite common to observe a ground loop on landing. During one of his first solo flight, Lt. Eugene Fleming ground looped at his third landing and as punishment, he had to walk all around the airfield perimeter with a chute full of sand.

Don Gelhaus in his book 'The Lightning Bolt' explains very well the training he received in SAAAB and in the different steps as a cadet. This book is really worth the reading. The student had to pass a 30 hours and a 50 hours check as well as the final check to be qualified for the basic.



Cadet Ray Jackson, 392nd FS (Carolyn and Joe Cobb)

SEQUENCE OF PRIMARY FLIGHT TEST

1. Taxiing. (slow, turn constantly)
2. Takeoff. (judgment leaving traffic)
3. Straight and level flight to area. (Slight coordination)
4. "S" turns across road. 500'
5. Rectangular course. 500'
6. Series of eights. 500'
7. Climbing turns to 1500' (shallow banks)
8. Series of turns.
9. Series of stalls. (power on, 1 2 3 -- power off, 1 2 3)
10. Slips. (forward)
11. Spins. (two turns right and two turns left)
12. Spirals. (360° each way, 60° bank.)
13. Glides and gliding turns. (shallow)
14. 180° overhead spot at area.
15. Coordination exercises. (rolling on point)
16. 180° approach at field.
17. Judgment entering traffic, approach and pattern.

The final primary flight test (Don Gelhaus, 'The Lightning Bolt')



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Cadet Gene Fleming (Marcia Crouch).

All the cadets had this picture taken with the leather jacket, flying helmet, silk scarf and goggles

I received from Jack Curtis some years ago the story of Lt. Bruce Carr who was a P-51 Mustang jockey.

Bruce was shot down in Czechoslovakia, far inside the enemy territory. He managed to steal a German fighter and made it to his base. Several years before, when 18-year-old he enlisted in the Army. When he enlisted, all he had just focused on flying airplanes,...fighter airplanes. By the time he had joined the military, Carr already knew how to fly. He had been flying as a private pilot since 1939, soloing in a \$25 Piper Cub his father had bought from a disgusted pilot who had left it lodged securely in the top of a tree. His instructor

had been an Auburn, NY, native by the name of Johnny Bruns. "In 1942, after I enlisted, " as Bruce Carr remembers it, "we went to meet our instructors. I was the last cadet left in the assignment room and was nervous. Then the door opened and out stepped the man who was to be my military flight instructor. It was Johnny Bruns!! We took a Stearman to an outlying field, doing aerobatics all the way; then he got out and soloed me. That was my first flight in the military."The guy I had in advanced training in the AT-6 had just graduated himself and didn't know a bit more than I did".

The ground school was dedicated to

study airplanes, engines and propellers, theory of flight, navigation and weather. Physical training was still an important part of the schedule.

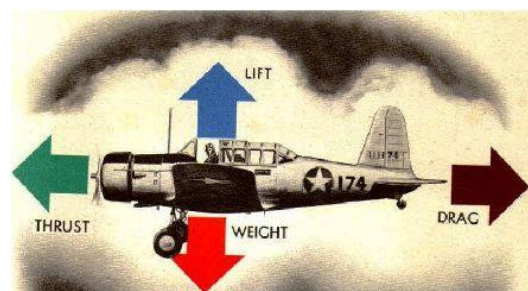
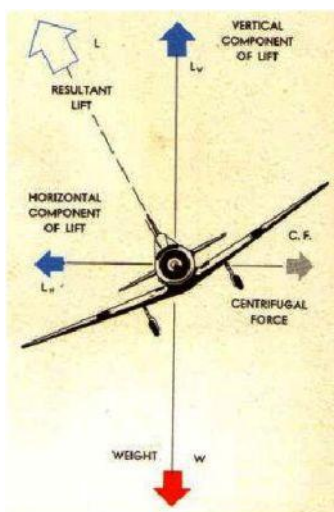
It was also during the primary training that was taken the famous picture of the cadet with his helmet and goggles, the leather jacket and the famous silk scarf and to finish the 'fighter pilot touch' the cadets could buy a pair of Rayban for 7\$25 (1943 price).

The washing rate was high. If the cadet succeeded in the ground school, check rides and the final flight test he was sent to the basic training.

To be continued in next issue



Cadet Jack T. Curtis



Principles of flight



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Lt. Col Crossen, part 2

I received this article from Stacy on October 20, exactly 67th years after the death of her father, Lt. Col. 'Mo' Crossen.

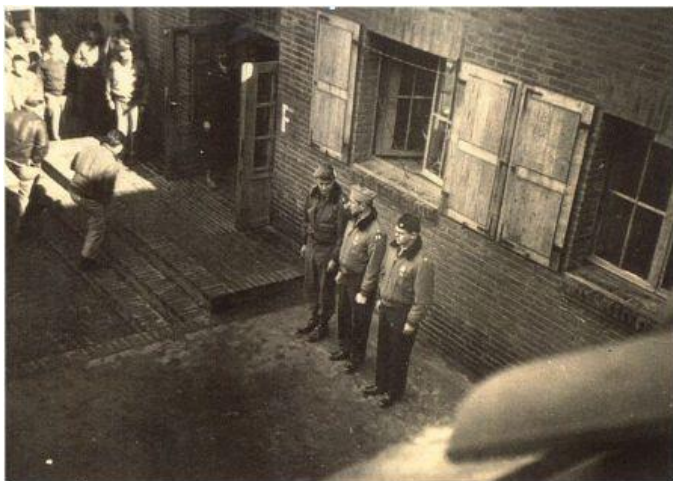
"Today is the day 67 years ago that my father, Lt. Col. Morris Charles Crossen, was shot down in his P-38 over Kierdorf, Germany. As a tribute to him, and in honor of all those of us seeking the truth about our fathers, I would like to tell another chapter of my story that happened last year.

You have read about my sister's and my visit to Ardennes for the first time to honor our dad, "Mo". We were shadowed by an American reporter for 3 days and she told our story in an online newspaper. I believe photos and the reference to the newspaper article are still under our AWON website. A 45 second spot was also on NPR that weekend. That experience of meeting so many of you, seeing the cemetery and his grave for the first time, being paid tribute to by the Belgian people, royalty, and American dignitaries is one of the very most important in my life.

One of the days that followed is another.

On June 2nd, 2010, my sister, her husband, Gail Eisenhower, and I rented a car and drove into Germany. We stopped to honor Gail's dad in the Huertgen Forest before heading to our hosts' home in Aachen. The following day, a church holiday over there, we drove to meet a German contact who had been helping me in my research. Prior to our trip he had located an eyewitness to our father's crash in 1944. The man was still living and in the same small town where the crash took place. Albert had arranged for us to meet him. This was to be the day. We drove for about an hour into the countryside. I was with Albert in his car and the rest followed with our host driving. We arrived in Kierdorf about noon and Mr. Esser was standing in the middle of the narrow street waiting for us. He was tall, healthy, and had a welcoming smile. He had arranged for us to go to lunch with his wife at the only open restaurant. Following our meal where we did our best to converse with Albert and Otto acting as interpreters, we set out on foot to 4 places in the village where Mr. Esser began to tell us his story. He was 12 years old at the time and he and friends saw the dogfight happening in the sky. When they heard the crash they ran to see what had

happened. The first location he showed us was the place where the plane crashed. The second was where our father lay in the field. A Polish farmer stole his shoes and his papers but the Germans came soon and asked where these things were and the farmer unburied them and returned them. They had covered my father with his parachute, though some women in town took some of the silk to make clothes. The villagers made a pine box and put my father in it and pulled the box through the village on a wagon where they buried him in the Prisoner of War section of their cemetery. The cemetery was another of the places where Mr. Esser took us and we stood in the exact spot where my dad was laid. The villagers laid flowers on the grave at night for fear of being seen. We then went to the village square where Mr. Esser said that on March 8, 1945, an American tank drove into the center and a soldier called out 2 questions: "Who speaks English?" and "Where is our American pilot?"



Col. Young and Lt. Col. were awarded the DFC by Gen. Vandenberg on October 13, 1944, in A-68 Juvincourt. 'Mo' Crossen was killed just one week after this picture was taken (Jean-Luc Gruson)



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A Polish farm wife named Hala was the only one who knew English and she took them to the cemetery to show them the grave. They returned 2 weeks later to recover his body and took it to Belgium, where he rests today. We then went to Mr. Esser's Garden House where his wife had laid out a formal coffee/tea and cakes on linens and china.

He had arranged to have his account typed out in English - signed, had aerial maps of the area from both '44 and present ready - all in a folder. Just as I had always wondered what really happened, Mr. Esser had always wondered about the pilot and if he had a family. He never dreamed he would know of them nor get to meet them. He lost sleep waiting for our arrival. His care and kindness were his way of apologizing for what happened. Their village had only this one experience with the fighting. We took photos and said our thanks and goodbyes.

There is one additional thing to add in the account after where Mr. Esser showed us where he lay in the field that might be of interest to the 367th. It is that he saw my father with his parachute attached falling out of the sky. The chute "looked like a hose". I have talked to many people about this. They said of course that it could be that it had not enough time to open, that it was shot up, packed poorly,.....?

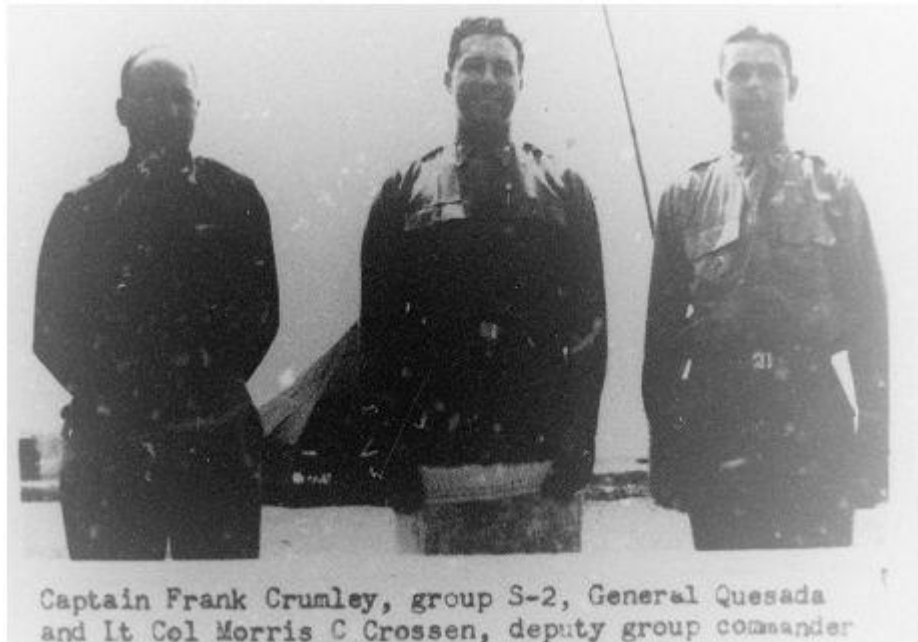
I had always wondered if my father were captured or died in the crash and now I know."

Stacy Crossen Roberts

daughter of Lt. Col. Morris "Mo" Crossen

Deputy Group Commander 367th FG, 9th AAF

KIA 10/20/44 buried at Ardennes Military Cemetery Plot D, Row 5, Grave 25 Belgium



Captain Frank Crumley, group S-2, General Quesada
and Lt Col Morris C Crossen, deputy group commander

This picture is of bad quality because it comes from a microfilm



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Pictures of the first Reunion of the 367th Fighter Group

Thanks to Joe Raiti via Vern Truemper, the identity of the guys in front of the red nosed P47 at the reunion at McAllen TX in Oct 1965 is known. From left to right :
Dwayne Tjomsland, Jack Curtis, Howard (Killer) Cain, Joe Raiti, Clair Kephart, Ervin (Brownie) Brown, Charlie Bruce (Co-Host with Danny Heath)



Jack T. Curtis

I think that a lot of you knew Jack T. Curtis. He was assigned to the 394th FS and became the treasurer of the 367th FG association. For a lot of people Jack was also a wonderful friend. Did he ever tell you that he was very very young when he made his first flight and that he was also the younger member of the Dynamite Gang? I have the proof !



Jackymite (Jack + Dynamite), I miss you and your daily emails.



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Books and Links

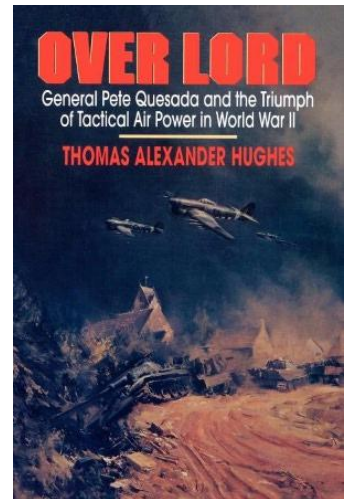
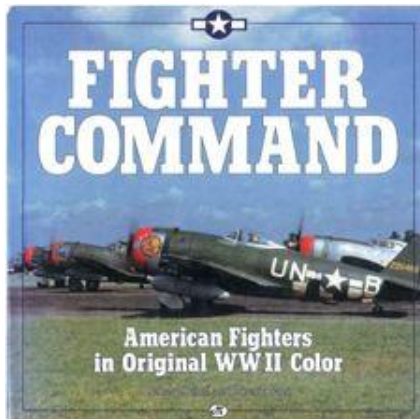
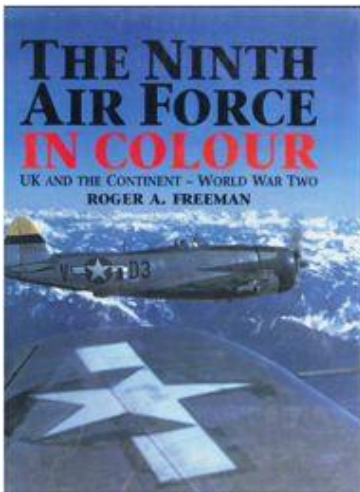
The 9th Air Force in Colour

Roger Freeman gathered a lot of color pictures of the fighters and light bombers outfits of the 9th Air Force. A few pictures are concerning the 367th FG

Fighter Command

Jeff Ethell and Robert T. Sand, a propeller specialist who took many color pictures while serving in a P-38 outfit of the 8th AF, gathered many stories of cadets, pilots, ground crews and women of the Red Cross. These accounts are illustrated by color pictures. This book helps to learn more about the life of the Air Force personnel while they served on the MTO and ETO.

Over Lord, General Pete Quesada and the Triumph of Tactical Air Power in World War II by Thomas A. Hughes. I was offered this book by John Cely who told me that it was really interesting to know Gen. Pete Quesada and to understand the Tactical Air Force and especially the 9th one. John was totally right.



Ed Whigham, radar Officer of the Group has published his memories in this web site : <http://www.whigham.info/familyhistory-edwartime.htm>

The AWON, American WWII Orphans Network is dedicated to the fathers who gave their life for our liberty during WWII : <http://www.awon.org/>

Evasion reports. Use the following link and next click on 'DIGITAL COPIES'. Next, enter the name of the pilot in the Digital Copies search bar. For example, Robert Dawn. You will find the two evasion report written by Robert who was the first pilot in the ETO to be shot down twice and make it to his squadron twice ! <http://arcweb.archives.gov/arc/action/Timeout?jScript=true>

Coming in the next Newsletter



- the training, part 2
- Captain Claude Cely, 394th FS