



## 367<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group newsletter – Issue # 10 – September 2014

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Dear Friends and 367<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group members,

First, I wanted to publish the rest of the article concerning the dogfight on August 25, 1944, in NL # 10 and NL # 11 but as the number of NL is around 2 per year I decided to insert all the article in a single part 2 in this issue.

My friend Jack Curtis told me one day that he should go to the Bong Heritage Center. Richard Bong, for those who don't know, was the top American ace of WWII. His 40 kills were all made while he was flying the P-38 Lightning in the Pacific Theater of Operation. Al Diefendorf also went with Jack. You will discover a few pictures taken during their visit.

The « Honoring the pilots » article is more detailed than the last one. Lt. Fleming was the pilot who strafed the train in my home town so this article is a short « résumé » of all the information I gathered. I added some pictures taken during some ceremonies.

Don't forget that each day of 2014 is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of events and missions of the 367<sup>th</sup> FG. I wish you a good reading.

Olivier Le Floch

### 25 August 1944, the big dogfight, part 2

Six other pilots of the Gang were shot down but four managed to bail out. These last had the chance to escape the German. As the dogfight took place at low altitude and also because of the number of airplanes engaged, a lot of French stopped what they were doing to watch this huge dogfight. It can explain why the four pilots who bailed out were helped by the French people and next by the Resistance. They were seen to bail out by many people so by the members of the resistance themselves.

Lt. James Johnston gave his statement of the dogfight in his Encounter Report written on September 24, 1944 after he was sent to UK for a debriefing by the intelligence services:

*"I was flying #2 of Red flight in Casket Squadron when Red flight had finished bombing and had climbed back up to about 7,000 ft. We had circled twice just north of target when red #3 called in enemy fighters and identified them as FW 190's. There were fifty-six I was told later. After I shot down the one (?), another slipped in and I got a short burst into him but I lost my guns. He rolled out smoking badly and going down. I lost sight of him. I claim one probable".*

Lt. Wilson Harrell wrote also his Encounter Report on September 25, 1944 after he arrived in UK: *"I was flying Red No. 4 on a dive bombing mission to the Clastres airfield, 25 August. After coming off target the flight spotted some 40 to 50 FW 190's. Red flight maneuvered into position to be on the enemy's tail. I observed four enemy aircraft attacking the flight from 8 o'clock in a slight climb. I called Red flight to break left. The message was not received by Red flight. After I turned into the E/A, they refused head on pass with me and broke down and to the right. Two other E/A passed through my sights, and as I began shooting, the planes made a right turn. I observed strikes on the tail man as he broke into straight and level flight. I observed further strikes on the inner most part of his wing and cockpit. The enemy plane exploded in mid-air, completely destroyed. The altitude was 1500 ft.*





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*Another E/A was now on my tail. I began a turn to the right and was soon on the enemy's tail, observing strikes on his engine. He came out of the turn and began skidding, continuing to smoke. The full fire power of my plane was concentrated on the 190's left wing. Approximately half of his left wing flew off. His plane went into a radical tumble, tail over head, still smoking. After parachuting I observed this plane burning on the ground. After destroying the second plane there was a violent explosion in my cockpit from enemy bullets. I jettisoned canopy, kicked top rudder, nosed ship up and pushed myself out. An enemy plane flew directly over me and hit my plane. The enemy pilot bailed out and passed near me with his chute stringing out but unopened. I observed the enemy pilot hit the ground with the chute unopened near the spot where I landed. I claim three E/A destroyed".*

The tide changed for the 367<sup>th</sup> FG when the 392<sup>nd</sup> and 393<sup>rd</sup> FS joined the fight. Lt. Donald Eberhardt encounter report shows that the fight was a big melee: "On August 25 I was leading Knobehole Blue Flight on a dive bombing mission near Saint Quentin and heard Decco Flight call a fight. We had finished bombing so we headed for the fight. I entered the fight at 5000 feet, climbed on a

*FW-190 and began shooting from a 10 degree angle. I closed in and got direct hits. It began to smoke and rolled over and went down. I followed him and got direct hits going straight down. He never pulled out and exploded. I went up into the fight again and climbed toward another FW-190. I got several hits and he jettisoned his canopy and began to bail out. I pulled away and he began to run again so I closed down and scored more hits. He then hit the trees and burned. I went back to the fight and began shooting a 45 degree deflection shot on another FW-190. I got hits on him but before I got the kill I was forced to break away into another FW-190 coming in on me. He came head on and I could see tracers going directly into his plane. He did not move and at the last minute I kicked rudder and just missed a head-on collision. However he tore my right wing, prop and cooling off and went directly into ground. I was forced to bail out. Several days later I returned to my crashed ship but couldn't salvage my film".*

Lt. Clark 'Doc' Livingston was leading that day one of the two other flights of the 392<sup>nd</sup> FS. He was awarded the DFC for his leadership: "For extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight against the enemy on 25 August 1944.



Marshalling yard in Tergnier. One can see on the right the canal mentioned by Lt. Dawn. (Eddie L. Rosier)





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After successfully destroying an enemy landing ground Lt. Livingston distinguished himself by fearless leadership and aerial proficiency when he vigorously led his flight to engage a superior number of enemy aircraft in an attack with friendly aircraft. Throughout the course of the engagement Lt. Livingston destroyed one enemy aircraft and severely damaged another, and by his excellent plan of attack and brilliant leadership he was instrumental in the complete rout of the enemy and the success of the mission". The other pilots who claimed victories were certainly awarded a medal but I was not able to find the related documents.

For the men of the 367<sup>th</sup> FG who bailed out, the dogfight was the beginning of their adventures. The evasion report of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Robert Dawn gave the following details: "Four of us spotted 56 FW-190 and Me-109 and we went in to engage them. We were on their level and at a great disadvantage. I knocked out one and tried to disengage from 4 who were on my tail. One hit my coolant and fire broke out. I bailed out at 2000 ft and landed safely in field just west of the canal skirting Condren 4 miles north east of Chauny. I could see Germans approaching the field so I approached the canal which was bordered by a strip wood. I crossed a small stream in the bed of which I hid my chute and ran into wood where I hid. I could hear Germans approaching me so I left wood and mounted the bank leading up to the canal. I got onto the footpath and walked unconcernedly down the side of the river. The Germans must have seen me but did not suspect me. I walked on and was passed by a French boy on a cycle who made a sign and kept on his way. I then walked passed a canal lock where a German sentry was stationed. He paid no attention to me. A few minutes later the boy, Maurice, on the cycle returned with a man and other boy. They gave me a bicycle. I rode with them to a house about a mile just south of Viry. I was clothed. I then left with the man across the fields. We entered town of Viry and through it to the graveyard where I was placed in a little house. 10 minutes later two Americans, Jim and Jack were brought in by a crippled Resistance Man. Another two came in a few minutes later. We all stayed there until the following afternoon. We were taken to various houses. I went to the house of local butcher, an evacuee from Tergnier, 1 mile North West of Viry. His name was M. Bashy (phonetic). I stayed there until the Americans came".



Lt. Robert Dawn and Albert Bachelet. Robert Dawn was not able to give the correct name of M. Bachelet in his evasion report. So he wrote the phonetic name he could recall : Bashy (Philippe Lantiez/archives 367th FG)



Lt. Robert Dawn and Mauricette Bachelet (Philippe Lantiez/archives 367th FG)





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Jean Hallade, a French writer who incidentally saw the dogfight of August 25, 1944, wrote a chapter on the dogfight in his book "Quand le ciel de l'Aisne était en feu" (When the sky of the Aisne was on fire). The part on Robert Dawn was: "While his aircraft was fallen on the bridge in Condren, close to the Saint Quentin canal, the American Lieutenant Robert Dawn, a native of Pittsburg, landed smoothly. He hastily threw away his parachute, thinking that the German patrols would rapidly search for him. At the same time, a young man, Maurice Sellier, was following, as hundreds of people, the dogfight. Seeing the fall of the Lightning of Bob Dawn, he wanted to pick up some Plexiglas to build his model aircrafts. He took his tools and headed for the crash site riding his bike on the canal bank. This bike had 'war tires' made of rubber rings fitted to the dimension of a tire and assembled with a wire. Between the lock in Viry-Nouveau and the bridge of Condren was a WWI bunker. Arriving to this place he saw a head popping out of a hedgerow. The man, dressed in kaki, did a sign to him to stop. Maurice quickly understood the situation. This man is Lt. Dawn whose aircraft crash landed 1000 feet further on the other side of the canal. Maurice Sellier did not hesitate, wanted to save this allied flyer. As nobody was looking in their direction, Bob Dawn

*sat on the frame of the bike and the two men headed for Viry-Nouveau. As they reached the bridge in Viry they ran into German railroad employees, members of the Todt organization, scanning the horizon with binoculars to find Lieutenant Dawn. The two men on the bike almost rode on the feet of the German as they passed in front of them. The German were still searching for the pilot when they reached Viry-Nouveau. Brought in a house, Lt. Dawn was given a suit to make him looking as a civilian. This suit belonged to the husband of the lady living in the house. Her husband was a war prisoner in Germany. Lt Dawn joined up the allied on September 2, 1944, the day of the liberation of the area".*

Lt. Donald Eberhardt wrote the following information in his evasion report: "My plane collided with Gerry who crashed into River and was killed. He was a full Col. My plane went into a flat spin and I bailed out at 1500 ft. Pulled cord at 200 ft and landed in a meadow a few yards away from my crashed plane ½ miles east of La Fère spraining my right ankle and left wrist. My chute collapsed over the plane which was on fire so I left it there and threw my dinghy on as well. I then ran into a nearby wood where I ditched my mae west. I went through the woods. I could hear shots. I came out on the other side of the woods where there was a river and I followed this in direction of the village. I came to a steep bank supporting a roadway on the outskirts. I crossed this and hid in some bushes on the other side. I got up and walked into clearing where I made a signal to two French who motioned me back in the bushes. I hid again and was approached by children. I got up to find a new place and ran into the Chief of police and his sister. They rushed me off an air raid shelter. Told me to strip. Gave me clothes. Hide my clothes there. Led me out and they walked me to their house. Hide in a attic during German search. At 6 PM they told me that Lt. Wilson Harrell had been picked up badly burned and was being cared for. At 8:30 the Chief and another Resistance man drove me to Beautor one mile south to home of Alfred, 38, slim, looked about 50, wife's name Jeannet. He was Resistance leader in this town and there I met Lt. Harrell. Dr. Rose went to great pains to care for Harrell who was very badly burned. Dr. Rose came out from La Fère to look after him. He took care of Resistance patients. Spoke bit of English. Stayed there about a week and then moved to concrete house about a block away where stayed until Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> of September when American armed unit came in with my brother, Lt. Harry Eberhardt".



Lt. Don "Bugs" Eberhardt, 392nd FS. He was also helped by the Resistance (Carolyn and Joe Cobb via Clyde Deavers/Archives 367th FG)





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The evasion report of Lt. Wilson Harrel continued as follows: *“Shot two planes down in combat. I was hit myself in cockpit. Fire broke out and I was severely burned before I left the plane. I bailed out, my clothes on fire, at about 1500 ft. I had dropped just before jumping and my plane crashed into the Jerry pursuing me, bringing him down. He bailed out but his chute didn’t open. I landed in a marshalling yard, spraining my ankle and severely bruising my hip. This was in La Fère. I was scarcely able to stand up. I wandered about in a daze until I heard a sharp whistle. It was a boy who motioned me to follow him. I stumbled toward him. We walked out of the yards, joined by another boy and they took me to a deserted bombed out house with no roof. They lead me in and down to the cellar. I was in pain and asked for a doctor. They did not seem to know what to do with me and as Germans were searching the area they tried to induce me to give myself up. I refused and they left. A few minutes later Germans entered the house and searched the upper house. They then left. I climbed to the attic and the Germans came back and searched the cellar then. After they were gone Frenchman and the two boys came back. They told me to wait until 6 that evening but they came back in 30 minutes with clothing and food for me. I changed clothing and awaited their return about a half hour later. They were all worker of the yards. They spread out in front of me a sort of advance guard, and escorted me into town. At one point a signal was passed on that I should hide as a German was approaching. When we had gone about 5 blocks they all stopped and argued amongst themselves what to do with me. A young handsome blond chap, a leader arrived on a bike and gave them orders. I was taken to another vacant house where I was put to bed’.*

The man, named Alfred, was the chief of the Resistance in Beautor and organized the move of Wilson Harrel to his house the same day. Lt. Eberhardt was also taken to the same house later the same day. Dr. Rose, a local doctor, took care every day of Lt. Harrel who was badly burned. The two American pilots moved to another house on August 31 where they stayed until September 2 when the American troop arrived in the town.



*Lt. Don Eberhardt, 392<sup>nd</sup> FS, and Lt. Wilson Harrel, 394<sup>th</sup> FS, the day of the liberation of the town. We can see that Lt. Harrel is severely burned on his face and arms. Dr. Rose who took care of his wounds is on the right close to him. As seen in the Dynamite Gang book, Lt. Eberhardt, is dressed as a French with his beret on his head (Philippe Lantiez/archive 367th FG)*





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The evasion report of Lt. James Johnston brings the following details: *“I bailed out at 2500 ft badly burned and wounded from 20 MM and landed in a birch wood just west of La Fère spraining my ankle. I tried to get up but impossible. I laid down for about half hours stripping chute, vest, flak suit and dingy. I then crawled away into a thicket where put milk concentrate on my burns and finally made my way to the end of the woods. I waited until about 8 o'clock and took off painfully toward a small town. On the approaches of this town, Quessy, there was a house. I approached it following hedgerow behind which I took cover. I waited here hidden until a woman came out to whom I made a sign. She looked up and down the road along the house and sent her husband out. The husband brought me out food and blanket and told me to remain hidden. The next morning they took me in the house treated my wounds and gave me civilian clothes a girl came to me. She came back two hours later with another girl and a horse cart in which they hid me and took me to the village of Faillouël to the home of the chief of the local resistance organization. Same day Jacqueline and Jeannette Dumarquez two nurses of Frières – Failleul (Aisne) came in and looked after my wounds. They then transferred me that same day to a home across the street, the home of Micheline Henot's father where I stayed about a week”.*

Jean Hallade, wrote the following note when he lead his research after the war: *“Mr Gaston Henot living in Faillouël took in Lt. Johnston in his house after his Lightning had been shot down over the village of Liez. Lt. Johnston, burned on the neck and with an injured left leg, was hidden in the house of Mr. Henot and his daughter Micheline until the liberation of the area. Two young women of the village, Jeannette and Jeannine Dumarquez, came everyday to change his bandage”.*

Next Lt. Johnston was sent to a resistance camp in the woods where he met an American P-51 Mustang pilot, two English men, Russians and F.F.Is (French Forces of Interior). He stayed with them 2 days and one night until the American forces entered the town.

Major Gardner lived a totally different evasion as the four other pilots. He was taken by the German to Chantilly for interrogation. He was added to 25 US enlisted men. This group was taken to Saint Quentin and next to Cambrais, France, each time in very bad conditions with very poor and bad food. The rest of his statement shows how the German troops were living under the pressure of the allies: *“On 31 August we were moved to Cambrai where we picked up six Canadians, and then to Charleville, where we watched the bridge being mined. There we were put into the custody of a Panzer outfit (one truck drawing three other vehicles behind it) and taken to within three miles of Sedan, where the truck broke down. It started to rain and was fairly miserable out, so I suggested to the German non commissioned in charge that we walk in to Sedan. We did and then repeated the performance of wandering all over the town looking for a jail or somewhere where they could leave us. Finally we stopped in an old German barrack at about midnight and after shaving and washing up we went to sleep. In the morning no one came to wake us, so we slept until about nine o'clock, and then being hungry, we called for some food. No one answered, so we started to pound on the door with the end of a broom. Finally at about 1100 some Frenchmen out in the street were attracted by our noise, and they came and let us out of jail. The German had gone”.*

Unfortunately, the 367<sup>th</sup> FG lost two pilots during this mission. Lt. Edward Cooney and 2nd Lt. Cyril Brownley were killed in action. They had received their wings with class 44-A in Williams Field, AZ, like a lot of replacement pilots who joined the Gang in July 1944.



Lt. James Johnston, 394<sup>th</sup> FS. He stayed hidden until the liberation of the area (Philippe Lantiez/archive 367th FG)



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Lt. Ed Conney, 394<sup>th</sup> FS, in the cockpit of a P-38. This picture had been certainly taken during transition training in California at the end of spring 1944, a short time before he left the USA for his assignment to the 367<sup>th</sup> FG (Philippe Lantiez/archive 367th FG)



Lt. Cyril Brownley, 394<sup>th</sup> FS, in the Yearly book of Class 44-A of Williams Field, AZ (archive 367th FG)

The German pilots claimed a lot more aircraft than they really shot down. The claim list based on the gun camera films, gives 14 P-38s shot down. In his book "The Luftwaffe facing the invasion", the French writer Jean-Bernard Frappé gives a list of the German pilots who claimed a victory. The total is 16 P-38s shot down. 12 pilots claimed one aircraft each and 2 pilots claimed 2 aircrafts each. As concerns Fritz Buchholtz, the only solution to make it home with his belly tank still under his "7" yellow aircraft, was to make sure that no Lightning was on his tail or in position to engage him in a dogfight. So, when he thought that it was the best moment, he left the area as fast as he could and flew at low altitude until reaching his airfield. According to Jean Hallade : "*Fritz Buchholtz landed his FW-190 at 13H30. Some pilots have already landed*". Some will land a short time later.

Thanks to the help of Eddie Rosier and Fritz Buchholtz himself, we know that as soon as the 392<sup>nd</sup> and 393<sup>rd</sup> FS joined the fray the 6<sup>th</sup> Staffel of the II/JG6 lost 4 aircraft almost immediately: Lt. Strehle in his "6" black, Lt. Schwarz in his "13" black, Uffz Roth in his "10" black and Uffz Guttler in his "11" black. In the Luftwaffe the ships of a squadron were identified by a digit and a color. Only the body of Uffz Roth was later found.

In his book, Jean-Bernard Frappé wrote that six pilots of the 8th Staffel were killed (Lts. Dassow and Nemark, FWs Seumenicht, Rascher, Eineder and Pieper). Four were never found. Only Lt. Neumark and Fw. Pieper's body were found in the wreck of their aircraft respectively the "10" and "12" blue.

The same fate happened to Fw. Kessels and Uff. Strasser of the 5<sup>th</sup> Staffel who disappeared in their FW-190 "3" and "7" white. Uff. Achenbach who was shot down in his "16" white managed to bail out but was injured. Another pilot of the 7<sup>th</sup> Staffel, Fhj. Fw. Callsen, was shot down and badly injured. He died of his injuries on Sep. 2, 1944. According to Fritz Buchholtz, Lt. Grabmair, of the 5<sup>th</sup> Staffel bailed out safely and Oblt. Praffath, of the 6<sup>th</sup> Staffel, bailed out and was injured.





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The debriefing and the analyses of the gun camera footage of the 3 squadrons of the 367<sup>th</sup> FG, gave the following results:

### 392<sup>nd</sup> FS

	Destroyed	Probable	Damaged
Maj. Joe Griffin	1		1
Lt. Clark Livingston	1	1	
Lt. Walter Kines	1		1
Lt. Sam Plotecia			1

### 393<sup>rd</sup> FS

	Destroyed	Probable	Damaged
Maj. Carrol Joy			1
Cap. Larry Blumer	5		
Lt. Stanley Pacek	2		
Lt. William Jones	1		1
Lt. Joe Dobrowolski	1	1	



*Lt. Joe Dobrowolski , 393<sup>rd</sup> FS, and his ground crew before the P-38 42-28700. Note the 'Swastika' for his victory on August 25, 1944. Joe visited the writer Jean Hallade and his wife during one trip in France (Jean-Luc Gruson/archive 367th FG)*





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### 394<sup>th</sup> FS

	Destroyed	Probable	Damaged
Cap. Charles Matheson	2		
Lt. Ross Lezie	1		1
Lt; Ray Tremblay		1	
Lt. William Lemley		1	
Lt. Sidney Platt (HQ but flew with the 394 <sup>th</sup> FS)	1		

### Total:

Destroyed	Probable	Damaged
16	3	7

This list was officially changed after the pilots who were shot down arrived in UK and claimed victories:

	Destroyed	Probable	Damaged
Maj. Grover Gardner (394 <sup>th</sup> FS)	1		
Lt. Robert Dawn (394 <sup>th</sup> FS)	1		
Lt. James Johnston (394 <sup>th</sup> FS)	1		
Lt. Richard Harrell (394 <sup>th</sup> FS)	1		
Lt. Don Eberhardt (392 <sup>nd</sup> FS)	3		



*A part of the FW-190 found in 2011. It is thought to be the aircraft flown by Uff. Karl Achenbarch and shot down by Lt. Wilson Harrell, 394<sup>th</sup> FS (Philippe Lantiez)*

It makes a total of 23 Focke-Wulf 190 destroyed, 4 probable and 6 damaged.

It is difficult to know the real number of German aircraft shot down. Depending on the source (as seen above, the research of Jean-Bernard Frappé or the list provided by the gun camera film) between 14 to 16 pilots were shot down. If we add the two other pilots who bailed out, ObLt. Paffrath and Lt. Grabmair, we have a total of 16 to 18 aircraft shot down. There is no list for the damaged aircraft but the number was certainly high, given the number of aircraft engaged in this big dogfight.

For their buddies of the II/JG6, the missing pilots went down with their aircraft either in a gravel quarry or in the mud of the swampy area along the Oise River. Eddie Rosier, Fritz Buchholtz and another German pilot tried to find their crash sites from the air some years ago, flying at low altitude over the area. They did not manage to find any sign of a crash site. In his book, Jean Hallade recalled that a FW-190 had been found during the excavation of gravel in a gravel quarry in 1970. Another FW-190 was found in 2011 by Philippe Lantiez and a team of the museum of Tergnier. This FW-190 is thought to be the one shot down by Lt. Wilson Harrell and flown by Uffz. Karl Achenbach.





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The losses of the II/JG6 were the highest ones ever seen for the Luftwaffe in one day during WWII. The Hauptmann Elstermann engaged the P-38's of the 394<sup>th</sup> FS without asking one or two "schwarms" (flights) to act as top cover. The losses of the four P-38's of the Red Flight can be explained by the fact that the German pilots concentrated their attack on them first before engaging the 2 others flights of the 394<sup>th</sup> FS. The claim of the Red Flight's pilots after they made it to the squadron later in September shows that although outnumbered they managed to face the enemy with brilliant skills. As the BOTNAFs (Buddies Of The Ninth Air Force) flew many more dive bombing and strafing missions than bomber escort missions flown by the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force jockeys they had less chance to encounter the German fighters. The total claim for the 22 and 25 August 44 for the 367<sup>th</sup> FG is 43 (20+23) enemy aircrafts. It shows that the pilots of the Dynamite Gang could do as well as their friends of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force groups and the 367<sup>th</sup> FG helped also to get the air superiority, a goal ordered by General Kepner, CO of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Fighter Command. For this victory against the Luftwaffe and the mission flown during the afternoon during which 16 enemy aircraft were destroyed on the ground, the 367<sup>th</sup> FG was awarded its first DUC (Distinguished Unit Citation). Lt. Larry Blumer became one of the few allied ace in a day. For those who knew him, he always had five cigars in his pockets...



*Larry Blumer in the 90's. He has 5 cigars in the pocket of his shirt (Eddie L. Rosier)*



*Cap. Larry Blumer, 393<sup>rd</sup> FS. The aircraft is either one of his earlier "Scrapiron" or was another he flew in as his plane was not ready for the mission (Lillian Dillon/Archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*





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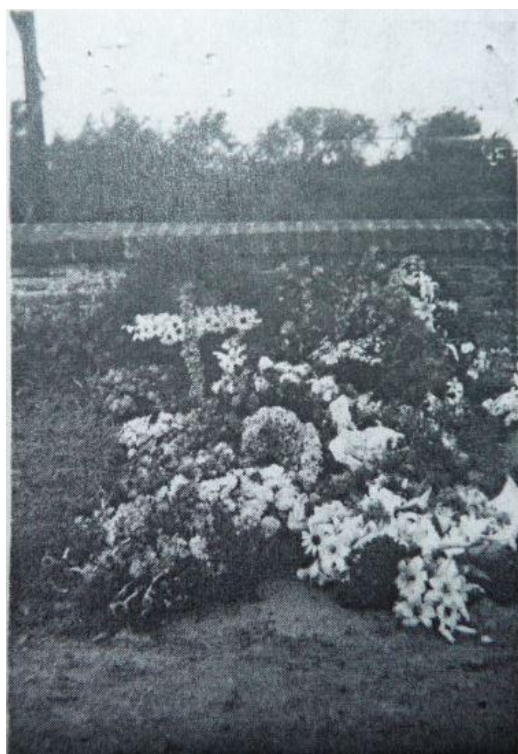
Lt. Robert Dawn, one of the 4 pilots to made it to the squadron after being shot down, was again shot down on October 20, 1944. This time again, he made it to the squadron. He was the first pilot to be shot down twice and escape the enemy each time. He was awarded the Silver Star by Maj.Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg, the Commander of the 9th AF.



*This picture was taken in Clastres. Maj. Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg, 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force CO awarded some officers and enlisted man that day. First row from left to right : Col. Young, Maj. Gen. Vandenberg, Cap. Reed and Cap. Blumer. Second row from left to right : Lt. Col. Crossen, Lt. Dawn, Maj. Joy, Maj. Rogers, Lt. Malone and Lt. Peschken., 393<sup>rd</sup> FS (Lillian Dillon/Archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*

Lts. Ed Cooney and Cyril Brownley were first buried by the French close to their crash site and next buried in a temporary American cemetery in France. They were finally buried in the American cemetery in Epinal, France, after all the temporary American cemeteries in France were closed.

The toll paid by the 367<sup>th</sup> FG could have been worse if Hpt. Elstermann would have assigned a flight acting as top cover and if the other pilots shot down would not have been helped by the Resistance. On the German side the situation was the opposite, the losses of the II/JG6 on August 25 being the highest ones suffered by the Luftwaffe during WWII. The next day the II/JG 6 was engaged in Normandy where 3 aircraft were lost. The Hauptmann Elstermann was discharged from his command and replaced by the Hauptmann Johannes Naumann who finished the war with 34 victories in 350 combat missions.



*Grave of Lts. Conney and Brownley, 394<sup>th</sup> FS, a short time after the burial service organized by the French people. Note the amount of flowers (Philippe Lantiez/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*





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On August 26, the five FW-190s of the II/JG6 in flying condition took off from Herpy l'Arlesienne to protect the retreat of the German infantry near Rouen. The last German troops were trying to cross the Seine river. They were always under the pressure of the allied fighter bombers and the II/JG 6 was sent in the area to give them some support. Fritz Buchholtz was among the pilots who flew this mission. He told to Eddie Rosier that they were jumped by P-51s Mustang and that he didn't see the one who shot him down. His wing was cut at the root forcing him to bail out which he did but with a lot of difficulties. One of his feet was stuck in the cockpit below the instrument panel. His effort helped to release his foot but he left his flying boot in the cockpit. While bailing out he hurt the vertical stabilizer, injuring his other foot. He landed on the south bank of the Seine river and was rescued and cared by the 9<sup>th</sup> SS tank division, the last unit which crossed the river.

He reached on August 28 the airfield in Juvincourt (later occupied by the 367<sup>th</sup> FG) where the units stationed there had already left the base. Nevertheless he found a damaged FW-190 and although the mechanics told him not to fly in this plane, he decided to use it to joined his unit. He had no parachute nor map nor helmet and no radio. As the landing gear of the FW-190 could not be retracted, the flew at low level to be more difficult to be seen by the allied fighters. Arriving to Namur, Belgium, the engine quit. He managed to belly land the aircraft. He said that the engine was detached from the fuselage, so preventing his aircraft to take fire and saving his life. Some people of Andenne La Seilles helped him to get out of the wreck. He was relieved when he saw German soldiers coming and not members of the Resistance. He was taken to the hospital in Namur on a cart wheel. After 6 weeks in the hospital he finally managed to join his unit in Eudenbach – Bonn. There he met only four of the pilots who made it to the airfield on August 25. Sometimes in October he became an instructor for bomber pilots who were reassigned as fighter pilots. He was an instructor until the end of the war.



Fritz Buchholtz and Eddie L. Rosier (Eddie Rosier/ archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Walter Wilde and Fritz Buchholtz. They flew with the II/ZG26. Richard Wilde holds a 500 mm shell. This kind of shell was the munitions' of the Me-410 cannon. I let you imagine the result when an allied bomber was hit by such a shell (Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)





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### HONORING THE PILOTS - 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Eugene L. Fleming, 392<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Squadron

This article is written almost 70 years day for day after the fateful mission during which 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Eugene Leroy Fleming was killed in action. The 392<sup>nd</sup> FS took off in the morning of July 31, 1944, to bomb an oil facility in Tours in the center of France, along the Loire river. It was one of the first mission flown from the Advanced Landing Ground A10 – Carentan, in the bottom of the Cotentin peninsula in Normandy.

It was a full squadron mission : 4 flights and 16 P-38s. Soon after take off, the leader, Cap. Bob 'Buck' Rogers had to come back to the airfield to land due to a mechanic problem to his front landing gear door. After having bombed the target in Tours the 15 remaining P-38s were divided in two groups to look for targets of opportunity. The group with Lt. Fleming reached Thésée, a small village of the Cher Valley, 30 miles east of Tours. A German train was stationed in the village. Lt. Fleming and his wingman, Lt. Ed Brydges, started their strafing run while the rest of the pilots were acting as top cover. On their side, the German soldiers opened fire on the 2 P-38s with the flak on the train. They hit Lt. Fleming's P-38 only with a few 20 mm rounds, showing how they were well trained. According to Lt. Brydges, Gene Fleming's ship did a barrel roll and hit the ground with a 30 degrees angle. This last was killed in the crash a hundred feet from the river.



Louise and Eugene Fleming (Marcia Crouch/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



*This picture was taken by Claude Janvier, a French young man from Thésée who swam across the Cher River with his camera protected in a towel. The picture was taken a short time after the crash. One can see a wing on the right. On the left one can see the rest of a propeller as well as a boom and a part of the tail. When the picture is enlarged, one can see the 392<sup>nd</sup> FS markings 'H5' on the boom. The trees in the background show the river bank (Claude Janvier/Archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)<sup>13</sup>*





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*This picture was also taken by Claude Janvier. The coffin made by a French carpenter is on the left. On the right is a part of the cockpit on which French people laid flowers. They tried to bring blue, white and red flowers (Claude Janvier/Archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*

Lt. Fleming was one of the original pilot of the 392<sup>nd</sup> FS who earned his wings with class 43 - I in Luke Field. He reported to Santa Rosa in October 1943. His best friend, Lt. Ray Jackson, flew also the mission but was flying with the other group of pilots which flew rather to the west of Tours. He did not see his best buddy hit the ground.

Gene Fleming was from Amarillo, TX, and was 27 years old when he was killed. He was first buried in the village of Pouillé (département of Loir-et-Cher) and next to a temporary American cemetery in France. At the request of his family, his body was sent back to the USA for his final reburial in the Llano cemetery in Amarillo. 18 days after his death, his wife, Louise, gave birth to their son, Eugene Fleming Jr.

In May 2000, a plaque with Gene's name was unveiled on an existing little monument. This monument had been erected to honor the French soldier killed by the German troops in June 1940 when the German army launched their attack to capture the bridge on the Cher river between the villages of Thésée and Pouillé.



*Dedication in May 8, 2000 to honor Lt. Fleming. A plaque with his name was added to the already existing monument. The officer on the right, close to the French flag, is the American Air Attaché who came from Paris to attend the ceremony (archive 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*





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A member of the Resistance killed by the German in 1944 is also remembered on this monument.

In October 2004, an exhibit had been also organized by the 2 villages of Thésée and Pouillé to honor Lt. Fleming. The inauguration of this exhibit was attended by Carolyn and Joe Cobb. Carolyn was the daughter of Lt. Ray Jackson, the best friend of Gene Fleming. When I took Carolyn and Joe to the crash site, we could hear the sound of fighters flying over the overcast. After a short time two Mirage of the French Air Force flew through the overcast and popped up just over the crash site. What was the probability that two fighters flew exactly over the exact place of the crash site?

After many years of research but also discouragement I managed to get in touch with Marcia Crouch, the niece of Gene Fleming. In September 2009 Marcia did the trip from Dallas and led a bouquet of flowers in front of the plaque. Judy Taylor, the cousin of Marcia did also the trip from the USA. Amazingly during the visit of the cemetery where Gene was initially buried, a Piper Cub flew over the village during all the time we stayed there.

During this fateful mission on July 31, 1944, Lt. Donald Erickson was also killed while strafing a German road convoy. More details will be given in another "Honoring the pilots" article. Lt. Clyde Deavers was also shot down while acting as top cover for Lt. Ray Jackson. He managed to bail out but was badly injured. More details will be also given in a future issue of the newsletter.



*September 23, 2009 during a private ceremony . Judy Taylor and Marcia Crouch are on each side of the monument on which a plaque was added on May 8, 2000 in memory of Marcia's nephew. Marcia is the daughter of Elaine, the sister of Gene' Fleming. Judy is Marcia's cousin. Both grew up in Amarillo like Gene (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*





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Lts Ray Jackson, Clyde Deavers and Eugene Fleming during their training with the 392<sup>nd</sup> FS probably in Sacramento Mun. Airport (Carolyn and Joe Cobb via Clyde Deavers/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



A bouquet was placed before the plaque on July, 31, 2014, for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gene's death (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



October 2004: Carolyn Cobb reads in French the speech she had prepared for the exhibit in honor of Lt. Fleming, the best friend of her father, Lt. Ray Jackson. Her husband Joe is on the left. The 2 men behind Carolyn are the 2 counselors of the region. The man on the right is Jean Epron, a former fighter pilot who earned his wings in the USA in 1953. He was the president of the association which helped to organize the exhibit (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



October 2004: Joe Cobb during the exhibit in honor of Lt. Fleming. His belt buckle with a P-38 is a present of Clyde Deavers (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)





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A bouquet was led on the grave of Gene Fleming during a trip to Amarillo in 2012 with Marcia, Judy and my family (*archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG*)

The name of Eugene Fleming is mentioned on the WWII part of the Texas Panhandle war memorial in Amarillo. The name of Lt. Jack Morgan (see “A true love story” in the Books and Links of issue # 9 of the newsletter) is also mentioned on this memorial (*archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG*)







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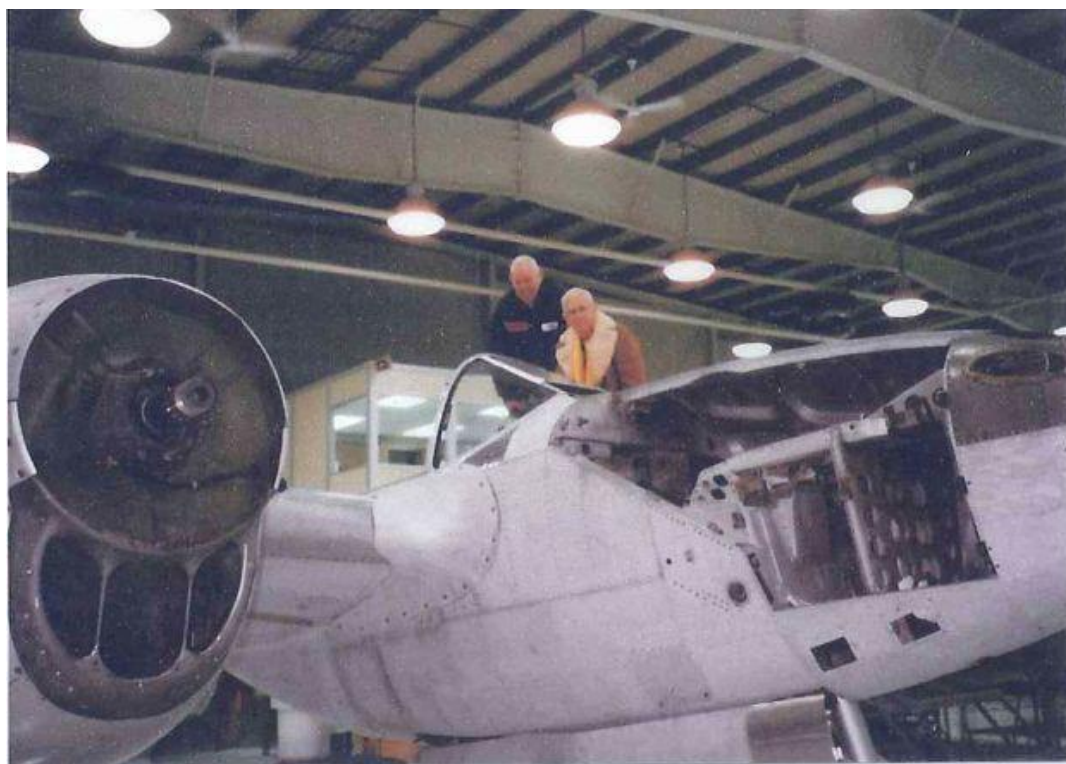
### THE BONG MUSEUM HERITAGE

On the 5th and 6th of June 2004, for the 60th anniversary of D-Day, Jack Curtis and Al Diefendorf were involved in a program at the Bong Heritage Center. They sat in the P-38 and were ready to speak with the visitors.

I imagine how great it should have been for the museum visitors to speak with Al and Jack about the P-38 and their missions.



*Al Diefendorf and Jack Curtis at the Bong heritage Center (Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*



*Al Diefendorf and Jack Curtis at the Bong heritage Center (Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*





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Jack Curtis in the 'hot seat' speaking with visitors. The visitors could climb up to the cockpit level and Jack could answer questions about the P-38 (Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



The P-38 Lightning of the Bong heritage Center (Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)





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### 367<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group missions list – November 1944

#### 1 November 44

Group: dive bombing mission, Cap. Parker leading 29 P-38s to Düren. 394<sup>th</sup> FS was top cover and 392<sup>nd</sup> and 393<sup>rd</sup> FS were armed with 2x 500 lb bomb each. Bombs were released with the use of radar after the group had been vectored to the target in the Düren area.

#### 2 November 44

Group: bomber escort mission, Maj. Matheson leading 33 P-38s to Düren. Each aircraft carried 2 belly tanks. 4 Me-109 made a pass on the B-17s but disappeared before engagement could be made.

#### 3 November 44

Group: dive bombing mission, Cap. Pieper leading 32 P-38s to Düren. The target was a rail road and marshalling yard in the vicinity of Düren – Bruhl – Bonn.

394<sup>th</sup> FS : 2 direct hits were made 6 miles SW of Euskirshen destroying 15 plus box cars and 2 near hits made in marshalling yard cut the tracks. Tracks cut in the same area by 2 direct hits. 2 direct hits in Euskirchen destroyed the rail road junction. Rails damaged 4 miles W of Euskirshen by 2 near hits.

393<sup>rd</sup> FS : marshalling yard and 25 plus freight cars bombed in the outskirt of Euskirchen, tracks cut in 2 places and approx. 8 cars destroyed. 8 bombs were dropped on marshalling yard and 75 freight cars between in Bonn but no result observed because of weather and flak. An ammunition dump in the trees was bombed in the outskirt of Euskirchen. 2 direct hits caused red flames and explosions.

392<sup>nd</sup> FS : 2 direct hits and 6 near hits split single track one mile NW of Euskirchen. 8 bombs were dropped on double track rail road and highway intersection at Euskirchen, both tracks and intersection were destroyed. Lt. Davis' P-38 acting as top cover was hit by flak and KIA.

#### 4 November 44

Group: dive bombing mission, Cap. Hartwig leading 29 P-38s in the vicinity of Düren. The 394<sup>th</sup> FS was acting as top cover, the 392<sup>nd</sup> and 393<sup>rd</sup> FS were armed with 2x 500 lb bomb each. 3 direct hits, 8 near hits and 5 misses split the single track rail road at 19 miles SW of Köln. In a marshalling yard N. of Bruhl, 4 direct hits and 2 near hits tore up tracks. 2 direct hits cut rails 6 miles S of Köln. In the same area 2 direct hits were made on a warehouse and rail road tracks were bombed, results unobserved.

#### 5 November 44

Group: dive bombing mission, Cap. Hartwig leading 30 P-38s to Bruck. The 392<sup>nd</sup> FS was acting as top cover and the 393<sup>rd</sup> and 394<sup>th</sup> FS were armed with 2x 500 lb bomb each. Military buildings were hit 6 miles SW of Bad-Neuenahr-Ahrweiler with 22 bombs and they were also strafed. At 8 miles SW of Bad-Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, 4 direct hits and 2 near hits destroyed 5 barracks. 8 bombs and strafing hits destroyed 10 barracks in the same area. 4 bombs were dropped with unobserved results in the same area.

Group: dive bombing mission, Lt. Greene leading 27 P-38s to Schmidt with 38 X 1000lbs and 16 x 500 lbs bombs. 4 bombs were dropped on a marshalling yard 9 miles SW of Bad-Neuenahr-Ahrweiler with damages undetermined. 2 bombs were dropped at 6 miles SE of Schleiden on highway. 6 direct hits were made 16 miles SW of Köln. Rail road tracks were cut in 2 places 20 miles SE of Aachen by 4 direct hits. In the town of Schmidt, 2 direct hits were made and destroyed the building and a light flak position it housed. A group of 6 buildings was destroyed by 6 direct hits 20 miles S of Köln. 16 bombs were released on target 10 miles S of Düren after being vectored by controller. No results were observed.

#### 6 November 44

Group: dive bombing mission, Cap. Hartwig leading 36 P-38s to Kall and Schleiden. The 393<sup>rd</sup> FS was acting as top cover for the 392<sup>nd</sup> and 394<sup>th</sup> FS which carried 36 x 1000 and 10 x 500 lb bombs. 2 miles from Schleiden, 14 x 1000 and 10 x 500 lb bombs were released on 4 buildings, all were destroyed. The 394<sup>th</sup> FS released 12 bombs on 12 warehouses 15 miles SW of Euskirchen. In the same place, 4 bombs were dropped on a motored transport convoy, destroying 3 and damaging railroad tracks adjoining the highway. In Schleiden, 6 bombs were dropped with results unobserved.





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### **7 November 44**

No mission.

### **8 November 44**

Group: dive bombing mission, Cap. Moody leading 35 P-38s. 11 P-38s were top cover and 24 armed with 32 X 1000 lb bombs. Due to bad weather the bombs were dropped on level flight on what was believed to be the target 22 miles NE of Saarbrücken in the area of Neunkirchen.

### **9 and 10 November 44**

No mission.

### **11 November 44**

Group : dive bombing mission, Cap. Dobrowski leading 35 P-38s, 13 being top cover. The group leader contacted Sweepstakes controller and was told to go to Marmites channel. Marmite vectored the group over Bonn. Marmite was unable to give the correct reply when challenged by the group leader so this last ordered the bombs armed. 24 X 1000 bombs were dropped 20 miles SE of Köln. 20 x 1000 lb bombs were dropped in the vicinity of Hennef.

Group : fighter sweep mission, Maj. Matheson leading 34 P-38s. Uneventful.

### **12, 13, 14 and 15 November 44**

No mission.

### **16 November 44**

Group : dive bombing mission to Aachen, Cap. Blumer leading 45 P-38s carrying 90 X 1000 lb bombs. At 7 miles E of Düren, the 392<sup>nd</sup> FS dropped 18 bombs, destroying a building at the crossroads. Barracks were bombed with 8 bombs 7 miles W of Düren but results unobserved. The 393<sup>rd</sup> expended 22 bombs on buildings in the same target area. The 394<sup>th</sup> dropped its bombs on target marked by red smoke again in the same area. 15 bombs were dropped through the overcast, no result observed. 7 bombs were released on 2 buildings 16 miles SW of Euskirchen. 2 direct hits and 5 misses were made. Lt. Vincent Boothroyd was hit by flak and seen to bail out. He became a POW.

### **17 November 44**

Group : medium bomber cover mission to Aachen, Cap. Blumer leading 22 P-38s. The Group leader tried to contact Sweepstakes controller but he was unsuccessful. Finally due to the weather becoming increasingly bad he recalled the mission.

### **18 November 44**

Group : bomber escort and area patrol mission to Aachen – Düren - Eschweiler area, Cap. Blumer leading 36 P-38s. Bomber result was excellent.

Sweepstakes ordered a scramble and 5 P-38s took to the air. Some difficulties were encountered in contacting Sweepstakes by radio after take off. When contact was made the flight was ordered to land.

### **19 November 44**

Group : fighter sweep mission , Cap. Pieper leading 39 P-38s. Group was vectored to approx. 10 miles SW of Düren where P-47s and FW-190s were engaged in fierce dogfight. The 392<sup>nd</sup> FS hovered as top cover at 17000 feet while the 393<sup>rd</sup> and 394<sup>th</sup> FS dove to the attack. It was estimated than 25 + FW-190s were left fighting when the 367<sup>th</sup> FG arrived. In a 15 minutes dogfight the 394<sup>th</sup> FS claimed 3 enemy aircraft destroyed and one damaged and the 393<sup>rd</sup> FS claimed 5 destroyed, 1 probably destroyed and 2 damaged.





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Group : armed reconnaissance mission in the Siegburg – Sieger area , Cap. Mason leading 34 P-38s. The 394<sup>th</sup> FS was acting as top cover for the 393<sup>rd</sup> and 392<sup>nd</sup> FS. The 392<sup>nd</sup> FS destroyed a railroad bridge base by 2 direct hits 3 miles NW of Bad Fredeburg. A single railroad was cut and 4 freight cars destroyed 7 miles NW of Schmallerberg. 2 direct hits on black cars believed to be passenger cars destroyed 4. The 393<sup>rd</sup> FS bombed a train of 20 to 30 cars with a locomotive at each end 3 miles N of Haiger. 8 direct hits and 4 near hits scored, destroying both locomotives and cars. In the vicinity of Haiger, a small factory was destroyed by 4 direct hits and 4 near hits.

### 20 November 44

No mission.

### 21 November 44

Group : bomber cover and area patrol mission to Leipzig area, Lt. Lemley leading 33 P-38s. The group provided top cover for 5 groups of B-17 and also patrolled the area in the vicinity of Leipzig. The mission was uneventful. Lt. Pape, 392<sup>nd</sup> FS, was MIA. He later returned to the squadron after he landed in the airfield in Tours, France, due to a mechanical problem.

### 22, 23 and 24 November 44

No mission.

### 25 November 44

Group : bomber cover and area patrol mission to the area of Greiz – Merseburg, Lt. Grosse leading 34 P-38s. Uneventful.

### 26 November 44

393<sup>rd</sup> FS : Bomber escort mission, Cap. Blumer leading 9 P-38s. Rendez-vous with bombers as briefed and were escorted near Bitburg where the bombers aborted the mission.

393<sup>rd</sup> FS : dive bombing mission, Lt. Good leading 10 P-38s in the area of Düren to bomb bridges. Bombs were released 17 miles W of Köln but results were unobserved due to overcast. 4 hits were made on railroad track 30 miles W of Köln. Lt. Alvin Beethe was observed to spin on bombing run. He did not recover from the spin and was KIA.

394<sup>th</sup> FS : dive bombing mission , Maj. Matheson leading 12 P-38s to Düren area. Bombs were released 12 miles W of Köln. 6 direct hits and 5 near misses were observed. 2 direct hits destroyed highway bridge over railroad in the same area. 8 near misses caused damage to approximately 15 railroad cars still in the same area.

392<sup>nd</sup> FS : Bomber escort mission, Lt. Slingerland leading 10 P-38s. Rendez-vous with bombers on time and they were escorted as briefed to the target area at Gesen.

### 27 November 44

No mission.

### 28 November 44

Group : Armed reconnaissance mission. Lt. Slingerland leading 24 P-38s, carrying 48 X 1000 lb bombs, in Kall – Trier – Lacher Lake area.

The 392<sup>nd</sup> FS released his bombs on a train in Blankenheim. Tracks were torn up and fires and explosions seen on the train. Railroad intersection near the wreckage was bombed but results unobserved. In Lissendorf, a marshalling yard was attacked and 6 bombs were released with 2 direct hits observed amid tracks and box cars. Rail road tracks were bombed with 4 bombs in Blankenheim but damages unobserved.

The 393<sup>rd</sup> FS released his bombs on a train of 20 box cars in a marshalling yard in Mayen. 8 bombs destroyed the locomotive, damaged the box cars and tore up tracks. At 6 miles NW of Koblenz, 8 bombs destroyed 2 buildings and severely damaged the tracks. 8 bombs were dropped in Meckenheim on a train destroying the locomotive, 6 cars and splitting tracks.





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### 29 November 44

Group : Area patrol mission. Lt. Green leading 32 P-38s in the Hanover area. The area was patrolled for one hour and twenty minutes. Mission uneventful. Lt. Goddard, 392<sup>nd</sup> FS, crash landed safely his P-38 at ALG A-90 due to mechanical problem.

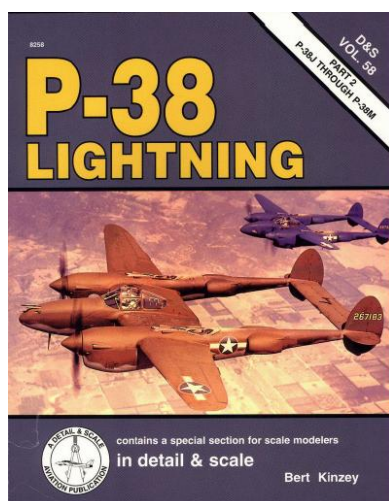
### 30 November 44

Group : Bomber area patrol mission. Cap. Platt leading 34 P-38s in Leipzig area. Mission uneventful.

### Books and Links

#### **Squadron-Signal - In Detail & Scale N°058 – Part 2 P-38 Lightning : P-38J through P-38M by Bert Kinzey**

Another interesting book on the P-38 with a lot of close-up pictures



### Tonopah

<http://www.tonopahnevada.com/CentralNevadaMuseum/taaf.html>

This web site contains a page on the Tonopah airfield. The names of the 367<sup>th</sup> FG pilots killed while flying from the airfield during winter 1943-1944 are listed in the Honor Roll.

### Coming in the next Newsletter



- Stoney Cross and Ibsley airfields
- Honoring the pilots, part 4
- Missions list, December 1944