



Newsletter 367th Fighter Group – Issue # 3, March 2012

Table of contents

- 1 - Cadet training, part 2
- 2 - Cap. Claude Cely
- 3 - Reunion pictures
- 4 - Books and URL



Dear Friends, Families and 367th Fighter Group members,

You will find in this issue the article written by John Cely dedicated to his father, Cap. Claude Cely of the 394th FS. You will also find the second and last part of the article concerning the pilot training. I would be pleased to publish the memories you can have of your training or the one of your relative.

I found in my documentation two additional pictures taken during Reunion of the 367th FG association. Some help to identify the men who attended would be welcome.

Pilot training, part 2

Basic

The cadets used the flying skills they were taught in primary to fly in formation, to navigate during cross-country rides, to do instrument take-off, climbing turns, power let down, level turns, night flying with cross-country flights, night 'shooting landings', day cross-country flights (200 to 250 miles round trip), etc. The plane used for basic was the Vultee BT-13 Valiant, 'BT' being for 'Basic Training'. The Vibrator, as nicknamed by the pilots, was a 450 HP single engine with closed cockpit, flaps, two position pitch propeller and a radio.

The days were organized as in primary, if the class had school in the morning, the afternoon was spent on the flight line and if the class spent the morning on the flight line, the afternoon was dedicated to ground

school. The calisthenics were again a good part of the program. The ground school consisted in meteorology, navigation, aircraft maintenance, radio communication, instruments and aircraft identification.

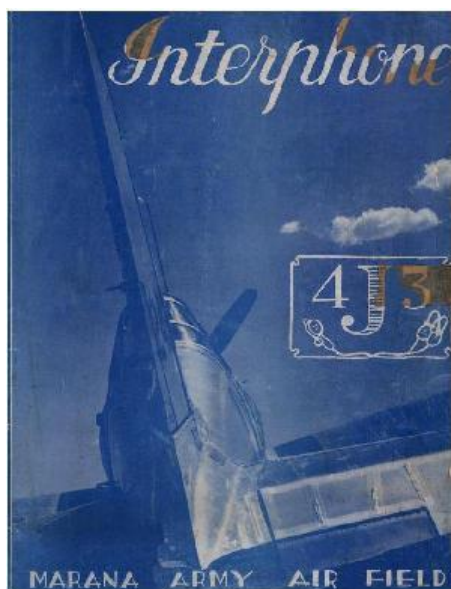
The students had to pass a 20 hours and a 40 hours check as well as the final check. This is during this stage that they had to make their choice concerning the advanced training they would receive if they would succeed in these checks and ground school tests.



Cadet Ted Parmenter before the wreck of his BT-13. He bailed out after it went into a vicious spin (Jane Parmenter)



Newsletter 367th Fighter Group – Issue # 3



Year book of Class 43J in Marana Army Air Field



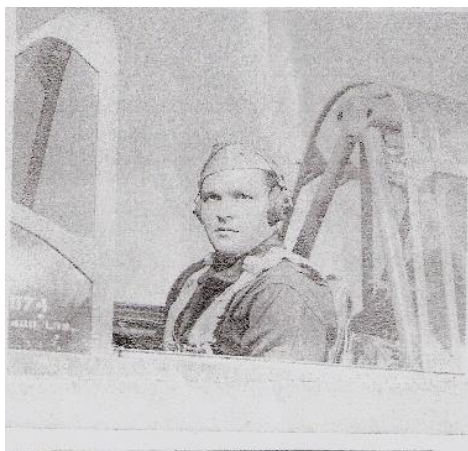
Cadet Earl Ody, 393rd FS, at the control of a BT-13 during basic training (Jean-Luc Gruson)

Advanced

During this last stage of the training, the ground school lasted 4,5 weeks in order to leave more flying time during the upper half. The night and day cross-country flights were longer and the formation flying was also more important. The plane flown was the North American AT-6 Texan, AT for Advanced Training. Its engine was a 600 HP Pratt and Whitney. Don Gelhaus recalls : 'we started formation flying at Marana (Basic) but here at Williams we did a great deal more. We practiced close fighter-type formation with 4 planes, two elements of 2 planes. The instructor would fly the lead plane, and three of us cadets would fly formation'.

Two weeks were spent to an auxiliary airfield for air to ground and air to air gunnery. For that purpose the AT-6s were fitted with .30 caliber machine guns firing through the propeller and a fighter gun sight. For the air to air gunnery the cadet fired at a target towed by an other AT-6. With 60 hits out of 400 the pilots were qualified as experts.

As concerns ground school, the topics were navigation, armament and gunnery, advanced aero equipment, medical training, tactical function of aircraft and naval vessels as well as pilot information file. Is it important to say that physical training was not forgotten by the Army ?



Cadet Aubrey York, 392nd FS, in the cockpit of a BT-13 during basic training



Newsletter 367th Fighter Group – Issue # 3

Near the end of the training the cadets had the carrot for the long hours spent in ground school, on the physical training fields as well as in the cockpit of training aircrafts. They were allowed to fly in a fighter plane. They had to log 10 hours at the control of fighters like the P-40 Warhawk and early models of P-51 Mustang or P-38 Lightning. For example the Class 43A of Williams Field flew on the Lockheed model 322 (a P-38 with no turbo-superchargers and initially ordered by the RAF).

Like is said by Lt. Thomas C. Mahoney in the Dynamite Gang book concerning his first flight in a P-40 : “Since it was a single-seater, we had to take the tricky beast solo on our first flight. On take-off the propeller torque was tremendous. When I booted the rudder to hold the ship straight on the runway, it boosted me right back ! The controls were heavy, but it wasn’t a bad-flying airplane. It had a tendency to ground-loop on landing if you weren’t on the ball. I survived ten scary hours of P-40 time”.

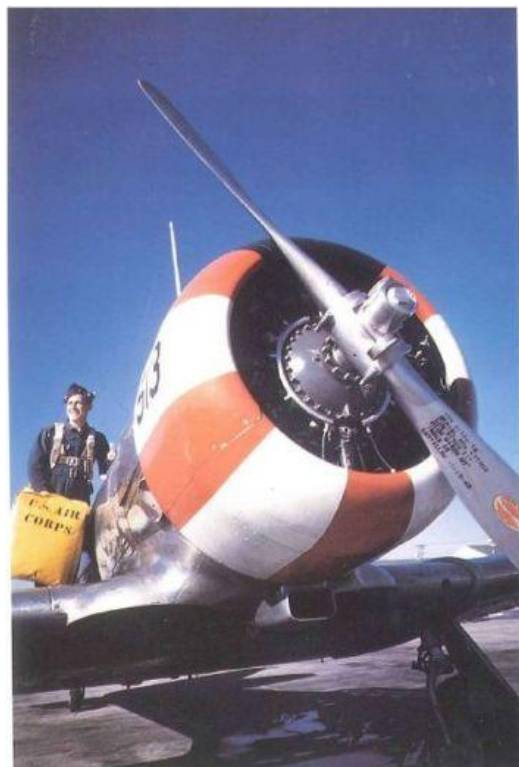
Lt. Ted Parmenter, also an old timer of the 392nd FS, explained in a letter to his parents the thrill he had the day he made his first flight in the P-40 : “Well, today I got one of the biggest thrills that I ever had in an airplane. I flew the P-40 for the first time and I put in three hours in it today. We have been studying it for a week now, and today I finally flew it. I didn’t want to tell you before that I was going to fly it, because I thought you might worry. I was plenty worried myself, and just before I gave it the throttle for the first takeoff, I was pretty scared too. It has a lot more horsepower, and is a lot hotter than anything I have ever flown before. As there is only room for one man, there can’t be anyone with you the first time you fly it. I was surprised at how easy it is to fly though, and my landings were a lot better than any I have made for a long time. It lands a lot faster than anything I have flown but it also lands a lot easier. I will get seven more hours in it before I finish flying it”.



P-40 Warhak in Luke Field, AZ ('Fighter Command' by Jeff Ethell and Robert T. Sand)

At the end of the training, a cadet had a total of approximately 240 flight hours. 80 hours would be added to this amount during the transition phase, a very important step before going overseas.

Before the Graduation the cadet had to buy their Officer uniform and were issued their new flying equipment. The day of the graduation the young men were commissioned 2nd Lieutenant or Flight Officer and received their silver wings.



Cadet ready for a flight in an AT-6 in Luke Field, AZ ('Fighter Command' by Jeff Ethell and Robert T. Sand)



Newsletter 367th Fighter Group – Issue # 3



Cadet Ed Cooney (left), 394th FS. Place unknown. The 2 other cadets are not identified (Cooney's family via Philippe Lantiez)



AT-6 formation flight in Luke Field, AZ ('Fighter Command' by Jeff Ethell and Robert T. Sand)

Transition

As already said, each stage of the training was around 9 weeks long. The next step after graduation was the transition and lasted approximately 2 months. The new commissioned pilots were sent to an airfield to receive training on the plane they would fly in once in a fighter group. Nevertheless, the pilots assigned to an outfit during its construction could fly on an other model of airplane. It was the case for the 367th FG whose pilots transitioned on the P-39 Airacobra.

Lots of pilots who graduated from Class 43-I of Luke Field were assigned to the 367th FG. They received their wings on October 1st, 1943 and had to report to Santa Rosa after their 10 days leave. Most of the earlier replacement pilots to join the outfit in UK graduated from Classes 44 A and B of Williams Field.



Ed Cooney during transition, place unknown. It might be Chico or Ontario Army Air Force Base (Cooney's family via Philippe Lantiez)



Jack T. Curtis (middle) during advanced or transition



Ed Cooney was KIA on August 25, 1944 (Cooney's family via Philippe Lantiez)



Newsletter 367th Fighter Group – Issue # 3



Initial pilots of the 'A' flight of the 392nd FS. Standing from L. to R. : Cap. Robert 'Buck' Rogers, Lts Clyde Deavers, Robert Moorhead, Ray Jackson, Hugh Hallman and James Paschall. Kneeling from L. to R. : Lts Eugene Fleming, Henry Gillespie and Ken Markley. This picture had certainly been taken at the Sacramento Municipal Airport on February 1944, a few days before the long trip to the theater of operation (Gayle Rees).



Jack T. Curtis, 394th FS, during transition in Ontario AAFB



Earl Ody, 393rd FS, in Oakland Air Base after he joined the 367th FG (Jean-Luc Gruson)



Newsletter 367th Fighter Group – Issue # 3

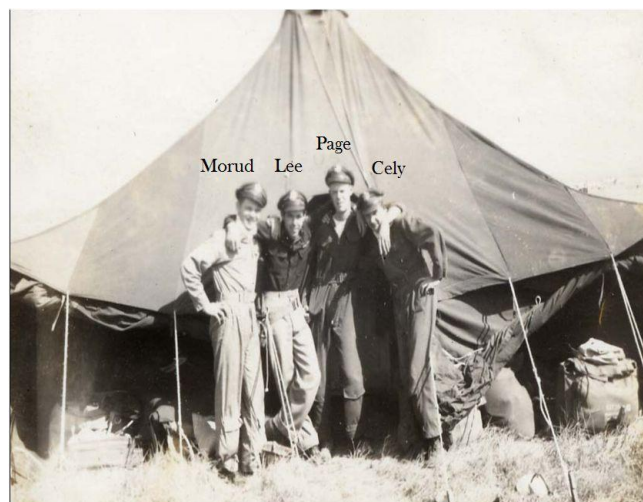
Captain Claude Cely of the 394th Fighter Squadron

Claude Cely joined the 394th Fighter Squadron, 367th Fighter Group, in August, 1944, as a replacement pilot. He was born in 1921 in the small town of Easley in upstate South Carolina. He graduated from Easley High School in 1938 and attended Purdue University for two years as an engineering student. He then transferred to the University of South Carolina and was one semester away from graduation when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Shortly after December 7, 1941, he enrolled in the aviation cadet program of the US Army Air Force. He had had some previous flying experience. He received his wings and commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in December, 1942, and was also married that month.

Rather than being shipped overseas, his orders kept him stateside as a flight instructor. This was not why he joined the Air Force. After more than a year as a flight instructor, and afraid the war would end before he could become a part of it, he began writing letters and making phone calls to request overseas duty, all without his wife's knowledge. She was quite unhappy when she found out.

After several months of letter-writing to his superiors, he finally got his wish and received orders in the spring of 1944 to join a 9th Air Force fighter bomber group in the European Theater of Operations. He left his pregnant wife behind in South Carolina and sailed on board the USS Brazil to the UK in early July, 1944. At Goxhill, England he spent three weeks getting familiar with the P-38 Lightning and practicing formation flying. On August 13 he flew aboard an overloaded C-47 to join the 367th FG, now stationed at A-2 in Cricqueville, France. His tent mates at A-2 were Stan Morud, Dwight Lee, and Charles Page.

Initially he was assigned to "C" Flight and flew his first mission on August 19, a dive-bombing run led by Captain McCarthy to break bridges over the Seine near Elbeuf. Later in September he was transferred to "B" Flight.



Claude Cely and his tent mates. From left to right : Lts Morud, Lee, Pape and Cely. Like Claude Cely, Stanley Morud and Dwight Lee survived the war (John Cely)



Claude Cely in his P-38 (John Cely)



Newsletter 367th Fighter Group – Issue # 3

The war became a reality for him on September 16 when he lost one of his tent mates, Charles Page, to an apparent mid-air collision with James Parker (he was also killed in the collision).

On September 27th his first son, Claude Merritt Cely, Jr., was born; he did not find out for more than a week. A week later, October 3rd, Cely turned twenty-three.

He was part of the dogfight on October 12 when two flights of P-38s were intercepted by thirty-six ME-109s. Although he never talked much about the war to his children, he did vividly recall some twenty-five years later the yellow flashes from the gun muzzles of two ME-109s that were very close on his tail. He was able to shake the German pilots and followed his element leader, Ken Jorgenson, down to near ground level and witnessed him shooting down a ME-109.

For much of October and early November frequent rain and heavy overcast resulted in few missions being flown. While grounded, Cely liked to play poker, a skill he acquired while a student at Purdue. During his overseas tour he won a total of \$2,671.50 and lost \$1,027.50, a net of \$1,644.00 or about \$16,000 in today's money. His single biggest winning hand was \$620 on January 9.

On November 20 Cely was made Assistant Operations Officer. Major Charles Matheson ("Mat") was now the C.O. of the 394th. By early December, the Group found out they were going to be switching over to the P-47 Thunderbolt, and like nearly all of the pilots, Cely thought this a bad idea. He made his first check flight in a Thunderbolt on December 13 but still thought the P-38 was a better plane.

On Christmas day, 1944, at the height of the Battle of the Bulge, Cely led the squadron to an armed reconnaissance mission to Trier where Harry Curtis was shot down and killed by ground fire. The 394th had just suffered the loss of two other pilots the previous day when Jesse DeFrance and James Baxter were shot down by FW-190s (Jesse DeFrance became a POW and James Baxter was MIA – his remains were recovered in 1999 near Trier, Germany).

On December 30 Cely was appointed as acting C.O. of the 394th while Major Matheson and Operations Officer William Pieper were on leave; shortly after, Cely was promoted to Captain. In February, 1945, the Group moved to A-64, St.Dizier in eastern France. He was billeted nearby in a chateau overlooking the Marne River where his roommates were William Pieper and "Doc" Ellery, the squadron flight surgeon.



Claude Cely and some goodies for the enemy (John Cely)



Cap. Claude Cely in his P-47. The goggles are an English model (John Cely)



Newsletter 367th Fighter Group – Issue # 3

On February 13 Cely received orders for “flak leave” or the “flak house,” a term airmen used to designate extended leave to the UK. When he returned later that month, the Group had lost their beloved Lightnings and were now flying Thunderbolts. Clearing skies in March resulted in Cely flying his highest monthly total of fifteen missions. In April he was granted a 30-day leave back to the states to see his wife and six-month old son for the first time. As he prepared for his return trip to the Squadron, which by now was stationed in Germany, the war in Europe ended. He had completed 61 missions and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with 8 Oak Leaf Clusters.

John Cely, son of Cap. Claude Cely



Claude Cely having some rest in front of Château Bois des Harts. This small castle was the billet of the 394th FS when the 367th FG was stationed at A94 Jarny – Doncourt-les-Conflans in the east of France (John Cely)



Newsletter 367th Fighter Group – Issue # 3

Pictures of two other Reunions of the 367th Fighter Group

Any help would be again welcome to identify the place, year and the members of the Dynamite Gang (the P-38 is the 'Joltin Josie', see next page) :



(Picture Jean-Luc Gruson)

Any help too for this picture would be welcome to identify the place and the members of the Dynamite Gang. The year was 1999 :



(Picture Jean-Luc Gruson)



Newsletter 367th Fighter Group – Issue # 3

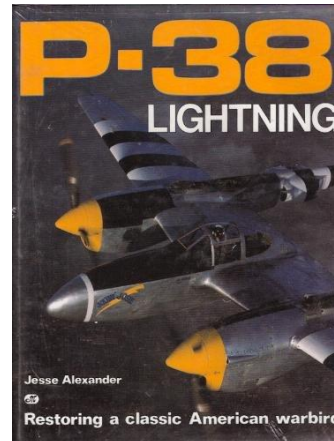
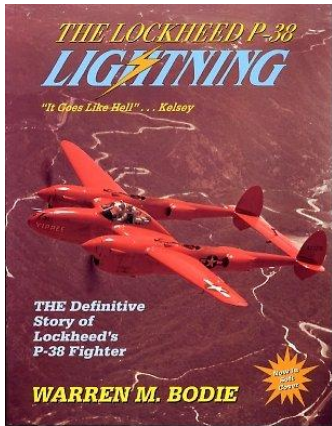
Books and Links

The Lockheed P-38 Lightning: The Definitive Story of Lockheed's P-38 Fighter by Warren Bodie.

This book is 'THE' book on the P-38. You will know the story of its conception, the models, the production, the testing, etc.

P-38 Lightning Restoring a classic American warbird by Jesse Alexander

Some of you certainly know who is Steve Hinton and even saw him fly in a restored P-38, the Joltin Josie. He is certainly the most experienced civilian pilot of warbirds and especially the P-38. This book shows the restoration of this P-38 by Steve and his company.



The following site is a WWII oral history project. The historians interviewed a few years ago Cap. Owen Fincher. So, you can watch this interview but also some pictures of Owen and some pilots of the 392nd FS :

http://www.intheirwords.org/the_veterans/wwii_vets/vet0037?SQ_DESIGN_NAME=air_corp_no_flag

This web site tells the story of the research and the excavation of the remains Lt Estill, a pilot of the 474th FG. This outfit was one of the 2 other P-38 Lightning Group of the 9th Air Force. Lt Estill's daughter, Sharon, has created a wonderful web site and I think that you can all appreciate her story : <http://myphantomfather.com/>

On this video you can see 2 P-38 of the 394th F staxiing and taking off from an advanced landing ground in France thought to be A6 La Londe near Sainte-Mère-Eglise in Normandy. It is more than likely that the P-38 with '500' on the nose be the 44-23500 of LtL Ken Jorgensen :

http://www.criticalpast.com/video/65675068868_C-47-Skytrain_Waco-CG-4-glider_P-47-Thunderbolt_Martin-B-26-Marauder_Lockheed-P-38-Lightning

You can see on this second video the P-38 Vicking I of Lt. Jimmy Paschall, 392nd FS, after Lt. Delbert Schmid crash landed the aircraft on an advanced landing ground in France. See Dynamite Gang book, page 47 :

http://www.criticalpast.com/video/65675068865_wrecked-gliders_Martin-B-26-Marauder_Lockheed-P-38-Lightning_wrecked-Horsa-glider

Coming in the next Newsletter



- the first missions of the 367th FG
- crash of Lt. Kenneth Markley, part 1

