



## 367<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group newsletter – Issue # 17 - NOVEMBER 2020

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

In this new issue of the 367<sup>th</sup> fighter group's newsletter, we will discover additional information on one of the advanced landing grounds used by the outfit in the east of France. I have used again some pictures taken from low altitude by Eddie L. Rosier and others provided by personnel of the 367<sup>th</sup> FG themselves or by their relatives.

We will also see the transition to the P-47 Thunderbolt after more than eight months of missions flown in the P-38 Lightning. This was a difficult transition for the pilots with, at this time of the war, a lot of experience under their belt. It was difficult to see their Lightning leave the stage.

I HOPE YOU ENJOY READING ABOUT IT

Olivier Le Floch

### The advanced landing grounds in France, part 5

As fall reached western Europe the life of the men of the 367<sup>th</sup> FG became more difficult with the inclement weather. The men had to spend long hours in the cold, rain and the dark. With that inclement weather came a more vivid homesickness. Each move to another airfield pushed the men farther to the east of France and farther to their beloved America. On the other side, these moves kept the men on the heels of the enemy and made the men of the 367<sup>th</sup> FG think that the final battle on the German soil was close.

These moves became kind of routine for the unit and each squadron's monthly report only spend no more than one paragraph speaking about them.

For the 392<sup>nd</sup> FS: *"There was a time that the announcement of a proposed move would stir a multitude of emotions in the heart of the men but when Captain Glotsbach announced that we were going to move, the men received the news with bored acknowledgement. On the 28<sup>th</sup> (October 1944), with no fuss, bother or trouble, we moved and in record time we were set up for operations. Our new field, located at Juvincourt reminded us of the flat plains of Idaho and although the move was eastward, we knew it was one move closer to home".*



Chester Swain, engine specialist of the 394<sup>th</sup> FS in an advanced landing ground in France (Linda Tjepkes/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)

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Don Huling, the youngest member of the CNS (Communication Network System) department described the arrival in Juvincourt: *"I'VE GOT ME a new home, and it's really something this time. The Germans used this field, and when they did something they did it good. Dan (Morris), Griff (Toxie Griffith), and Edge (Egburt Caudle) went ahead of us this time, and when we arrived here at the field we could tell where the gang was living as we could see the 75-foot antenna sticking up in the air. They met us and proudly showed us their home. From the truck all we could see was some steps going down into the ground. But once we got to the bottom, there was a wooden shack complete with door, brick, chimney, and windows that open. The reason we couldn't see it from above was that it is set in a 10-foot pit and there are timbers overhead with camouflage. There were only two rooms, and the boys announced that their hut would only accommodate three more fellows, but added that there was a similar hut nearby. So, Al (Keim), George (Roman), Ray (Abeta), and I made a dash for it and laid claim to it. One of the boys from the other squadron said he was saving it for his boys, but there were four of us and only one of him, so we moved right in. It wasn't in quite as good condition as Dan's since the windows were out of it. We all got busy like beavers, and before it was dark we had: 1 – the windows boarded up; 2 – the floor swept; 3 - the stove and pipe in place; 4 – two lights up and working; 5 – a nice fire going. I was really tired so I hit the sack early and had a good sleep. .../...Our home consists of two rooms, so George, Ray and I live in one and Al sleeps in the other with the stove, wood box, and cabinet for companions. It's really comfortable in here this morning. The fire went out last night as it was only wood we were burning, so when we got up it was really cold. George and I got up and started the gasoline generator for our equipment and lights, then we started a fire in the stove. We are out here about two miles from the squadron, right in the middle of the field and on a little hill. A swell spot for our radio trucks".*



*Man of the 393rd FS in front of a wooden shack as described by Don Huling probably in A-68 Juvincourt (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*



*Lt. E. W. Williams, Assistant Intelligence Officer (S-2), and 1st Lt. Harold P. "Carter" Glass, Personal equipment officer, of the 393rd FS cutting wood for their stove in one Advanced landing Ground, probably A-71 Clastres or A-68 Juvincourt (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*

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For the 393<sup>rd</sup> FS, the monthly report is also small: *“On the afternoon of the 27<sup>th</sup> of October twenty-four officers and 112 enlisted men departed from A-71 to A-68 at Juvincourt. The following day 29 officers and 61 enlisted men of the flight and air echelon followed to our new base, after sending 12 P-38s on a mission, which landed at A-68 upon their return”.*

Lieutenant Don Gelhaus, a replacement pilot of the 393<sup>rd</sup> FS, in his book « Lightning Bolt » gives a statement of his arrival to Juvincourt after a trip from the staging area close to Paris in a GI truck a cold morning of November 1st, 1944 : *« In the morning we awakened to a chilly late fall day so we donned our heaviest flying gears knowing that GI truck travel hadn't been designed with warmth in mind and we were facing a hundred mile ride to A-68 .../...we found the cold penetrating even our warm flying clothes so that the seven of us replacement fighter pilots were about half frozen when we finally reached A-68 at Juvincourt .../....The Group and the squadrons were themselves just settling in, for they had just completed the move to A-68 on October 28th. Because of the move and the inclement weather, they hadn't flown any missions for several days.../...*

*Mark Halphide and Piuz Kuntz were assigned to the 392<sup>nd</sup> squadron. The other five of us, Leon Baumier, Larry Chapman, Chuck Dawson, Eddie Fritz and I were assigned to the 393<sup>rd</sup> squadron. We were issued a folding cot and taken to our quarters, a barrack that had been occupied by Luftwaffe officers just a short time ago .../...Our new home had part of one wall blown out, which defect was corrected by covering the gaping hole with a tarp ».*

At this time of the war a bunch of the original pilots of the outfit had already finished or were soon at the end of their tour of operation. The replacement pilots like Don Gelhaus with their impressive amount of flying time in the USA in the P-38 were really welcomed.

He gives also some information on the runway: *« Our squadron parking area at Juvincourt was some distance from the runway. We were thankful for the good taxiing characteristics of the P-38 ! It was very much like driving a car down the highway. We taxi « miles » an hour. Juvincourt had a narrow runway, so we took off singly ».*



Lieutenant Don Gelhaus, 393<sup>rd</sup> FS. This picture was probably taken around the end of the war (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Aerial picture of A-68 Juvincourt (C IWM)

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*Four aerial view of A-68 Juvincourt from around 1000 feet in the beginning of the 2000's (Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*



*Lieutenants Horace « Twig » Hartwig and Owen Fincher in front of a Me 109 in ALG A-71 Clastres or A-68 Juvincourt (Lillian Dillon/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*



*Lieutenants Clyde Box, James « Pink's » Pinkerton and Don Packham examining a Me 109 in ALG A-71 Clastres or A-68 Juvincourt (Don Packham /archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*

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In this picture taken at the beginning of the 2000's, one can see what is left from the control tower (left) and Ops (right) in A-68 Juvincourt. It is now a restaurant « Le relais Sainte Marie » (Eddie Rosier / archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



P-38 of the 392nd FS taxiing on a snowy day in January 1945 at A-68 Juvincourt. This aircraft is probably the P-38J25 44-23677 « Little Buckaroo » flown by Cap Robert Rogers, the CO of the 392nd FS (Fred Koed/ archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



P-38 flown by Lt Jack T. Curtis, 394th FS, behind the ops and control tower building A-68 Juvincourt (Jack Curtis/ archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Lt Duane Tjomsland in front of his P-38 « Scruffy Jean » behind the ops and control tower building A-68 Juvincourt (Bryan Tjomsland /archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Lt Charles Crocker behind the ops and control tower building at A-68 Juvincourt (John Cely/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Same place as on the three pictures with the three P-38s behind the restaurant « Le relais Sainte Marie » in June 2020. This is now a parking lot for the trucks when the drivers stop for lunch (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)

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Cap. Claude Cely back from a mission during the Battle of the Bulge. He has just stopped his engines behind the ops and control tower building A-68 Juvincourt (John Cely/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



The picture on the left of Cap. Claude Cely was probably taken at the corner of the parking lot behind the restaurant « Le relais Sainte Marie ». (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Same place parking lot as above but seen from the other direction (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



The two pictures above and the one on the right were taken with the restaurant « Le relais Sainte Marie » in the back. There is no trace of the airfield from the ground (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)

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Living quarter of the enlisted men of the 393rd FS in ALG A-68 Juvincourt (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Room of lieutenant Jack T. Curtis, 394th FG in ALG A-68 Juvincourt (Jack Curtis via Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Bed of lieutenant Jack T. Curtis, 394th FG in ALG A-68 Juvincourt. The man on the right is not identified (Jack Curtis via Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)

On its side, the 394<sup>th</sup> FS gives a more detailed report on the settlement in A-68: *“By the end of October, the month the [UNREADABLE] generals claimed the European war would end, the squadron was looking forward to holing up for the winter. Eventually we would move again but Juvincourt looked good. Flying only nineteen days of October left the boys time to grab a little personal comfort: tents took on a more permanent look, floor replaced moocher earth, and fuel was a big item. A hangar, a sight not often seen in France was available for maintenance so things really looked good. The officers were lodged in old German barracks and had a consolidated mess and club; and the men had also their club as a source of diversion, an all important factor when nights are long and days dreary and unoperational.*

*.../...*

*The enlisted men quickly improved their living conditions. On November 2<sup>nd</sup> their bar was already operational: That night T/Sgt Jarvis Peterson opened the enlisted mens’ bar. Built by Sgt John Apgar and Sgt Truman Hammond from lumbar in a German dugout and decorated by S/Sgt Harold Bierbusse with a stainless steel toy, it was an object of rare beauty.*

*Major Matheson (Commanding Officer), Major Buck (Executive Officer), Captain Berman (adjutant), Lt Hopson (supply officer), and Lt Brennan were invited to the bar’s christening. Major Matheson ably started the barrel rolling by toasting our speedy return to the far shore, and later to the club’s pleased surprise stepped behind the bar and did an excellent job of bartending. The bar, tangible evidence of the club’s potentiality, may become a morale booster of the highest order during the ensuing months”.*

Even lieutenant Dick Brennan gave less information on the move to Juvincourt in his diary: *“October 30: Moving to new quarters tomorrow. Huge building with very nice room. Best I have had in the service. Brick building with plastered walls and big window, stove and all. Whole group in one building. October 31: Constructed double deck bunks in the room. Electric lights but no shower as yet. A lot warmer and more comfortable”.*

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Ernie Snow, the propeller specialist of the 394<sup>th</sup> FS wrote some comments on the move to Juvincourt in his diary: "we moved to a field near Reims it is Juvincourt Strip A-68. It has a couple of hangars, but not very good ones. Lot of wrecked German bombers on field. We fix up the hangars a bit and also tent for our specialists. We also set up a club tent and spend our evenings a bit nice now. Not many missions being flown as weather is rainy and cold, this is Oct and winter is near.../...The taxi strips are very slick and now and then a pilot will put on one brake and do a spin around, real sport. We hear rumors of us getting P-47 planes, we have had good luck with the P-38 but they are hard to work on, you have two of units."



Above and left, American soldiers and young French ladies working for the Red Cross. One can see the brick building as described by Dick Brennan (Miss Herbert)



Above, Lt Horace « Twig » Hartwig, 392nd FS, inspecting a FW-190 with some fellow pilots and below Lt Peschken, 393rd FS, on the wing of a Me-110. These pictures were taken either in A-71 Clastres or in A-68 Juvincourt (Lillian Dillon/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



This AT-6 with « JOY » in its cowling in A-68 Juvincourt was more than probably an aircraft of the 367th FG as a P-38 Lightning can be seen on the right of the picture (Miss Herbert)



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Mess hall at A-68 Juvincourt in November 1988 (Jack T. Curtis via Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



End of the « Ops quarter» at A-68 Juvincourt in November 1944 (Jack T. Curtis via Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



What was left from mess hall at A-68 Juvincourt in September 1988 (Jack T. Curtis via Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Men of the 394<sup>th</sup> FS with their bottle of champagne. The second man from left is lieutenant Dick Brennan. Juvincourt was close to the Reims-Eperney area, the center of the Champagne industry in France. Several world famous wineries were close to the base and champagne could be obtained for \$1.00 a bottle (Jack Curtis/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Young French ladies and men working for the Red Cross with an American soldier on the top left of the stairs of the Red Cross aero club in A-68 Juvincourt. The two ladies in front are holding a plate full of doughnuts. The doughnuts were made from powder coming from the USA and mixed with water at the aero club. They were served with coffee to the pilots and crews flying from A-68 after they were back for their missions (Miss Herbert)

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## The transition to the P-47 Thunderbolt

When the 367th FG arrived to Stoney Cross in the beginning of April 1944, it was thought that the outfit would be assigned P-51s Mustang and assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. The pilots were too all hoping to find them on the hardstands. But their wish has not been granted. What was their surprise when they saw that P-38s Lightning were already proudly awaiting their pilot and ground crews. The pilots were trained on the single engine P-39 before leaving the USA and just a few had a twin-engine experience. After a hard training for both pilots and ground crews, and unfortunately with accidents, they became ready for their first mission. With time, they became more and more familiar with their new plane. Some pilots were really pleased to fly the P-38 and for some of them their dream has come true as they wanted to fly this aircraft since the beginning of their pilot's training.

I found a document on the build up of the US Army Air Force in England telling that the 367th FG was scheduled to be equipped with the P-51 Mustang. But in the same document Lieutenant General Carl Spaatz in a letter to Lieutenant General F. F. Morgan, explains that even if the 8th Air Force needed three P-38 groups for long-range escort, the transfer to the U.K. of three P-38 Lightning groups of the 15th Air Force could not be done. These groups were already involved in operations SHINGLE and they would be still in demand in the Mediterranean theater.

367 to be equipped with 113 P-51B, Project 92421 to depart home station 1 March, 3 aircraft shipped, balance to be shipped next few days.

References: Our K3301, 26 January 1944. (No Record)

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"EDITED LITERAL TEXT"

Interior Addresses: To : Arnold  
Signed : Spaatz

Scheduled for this Theater to be equipped with P 51 type Airplanes are, Fighter Groups 371, 367, 404, 50 and 339. Information requested: What type Airplanes are being used by these groups in their training there? If more than one type airplane employed what is the principle type they are using?

In order to implement Fighter Group allocations which our K3301, 26 January 1944 set fourth, this information is urgently needed.

Rec'd : FEB 032008A Security: SECRET

"EDITED LITERAL TEXT"

Interior Addresses: To : Arnold  
From : Bruneton  
From : Spaatz  
Signed: Eisenhower

Resulting from re-allocation of aircraft to Fighter Groups in this Theater is the decision that 3 of the following listed Fighter Groups will be equipped with P-47 type aircraft and 1 with P-38 type aircraft:

48th Fighter Group	*	*
367th	*	*
404th	*	*
339th	*	*

Request that in the United States prior to departure for this Theater, but without delay in departure 3 of above mentioned groups be converted to P-47 training and 1 to P-38 training from both flying and maintenance point of view.

The 367th FG was first scheduled to be equipped with 113 P-51B, with the aircraft to be shipped to U.K. in March 1944 almost at the same time as the men would leave California for their trip to the European theater of operation. The 367th FG, 370th FG and 474th FG were reassigned to the P-38 after that three P-38 groups in Italy would not move to England as they were still in high demand

FROM : AGWAR SIGNED ARNOLD  
TO : SHAEF, TO EISENHOWER FOR SPAATZ AND BRUNETON  
REF NO : 343, 20 MARCH 1944

Available information here indicates that the 370, 367, and 1 other Single-Engine Fighter Group have been or will be equipped by you with P-38 type aircraft.

Squadrons assigned to these groups are now organized under table of organization and equipment 1-27 dated 22 December 43.

Like the 367th FG, the 370th FG was assigned to the long-range duty and the third group to join them for this role was the 474th FG. These 3 outfits flew escort missions before the invasion in Normandy but soon after they would be assigned to the fighter bomber role until the end of the war in Europe

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In 1944 the Lightning was in high demand. It was flown by fighter groups in all theaters of operation. At one time the 8th Air Force had 5 Lightning groups, the 12th and 15th Air Force had 3 groups in Africa and then in Italy. Other groups were in the Burma India China theater of Operation, one was in Alaska and 8 in the Pacific. The 367<sup>th</sup> FG was one of the 3 fighter groups of the Ninth Air Force to fly the P-38, the two other ones being the 370<sup>th</sup> and 474<sup>th</sup> FG. Even if all the 8th AF groups had changed for the Mustang or Thunderbolt by the end of September of 1944, the need of a twin-engine fighter with a long range was in great demand in the Pacific. It can be also explained by the fact that as the Lightning were built in the factory of Lockheed in Burbank in California, it was far easier to ship them to the Pacific than to Europe. The majority of the Thunderbolt was built in Long Island, NY. It was therefore easier and quicker to send the aircrafts and spare parts to the European theater of operation. The logistic was also easier accordingly.

The cost of the P-38 could have been also an important parameter. In 1944, the cost of single P-38 was around 97,000 \$ and the cost of a P-51 Mustang and a P-47 Thunderbolt was respectively around 50,000 and 83,000 \$.

At the end of the summer of 1944, it became difficult for the ground crews in Europe to maintain the P-38s as the spare parts were difficult to have. The 367<sup>th</sup> FG was scheduled by the higher ups to change its mount. The Republic P-47 Thunderbolt was already the mount of almost all the fighter groups of the 9th Air Force so the new mount would be the big « Thud ».

This aircraft was a big aircraft compared to the P-51 Mustang or to the German Messerschmitt 109 or Focke-Wulf 190. It is hard to compare it with the Lightning which had 2 engines, a gondola (with armament and cockpit) and a twin-boom configuration.



*Lieutenant Jack Curtis, 394th FS, in the « mouth » of his P-47 Thunderbolt (Jack Curtis via Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*



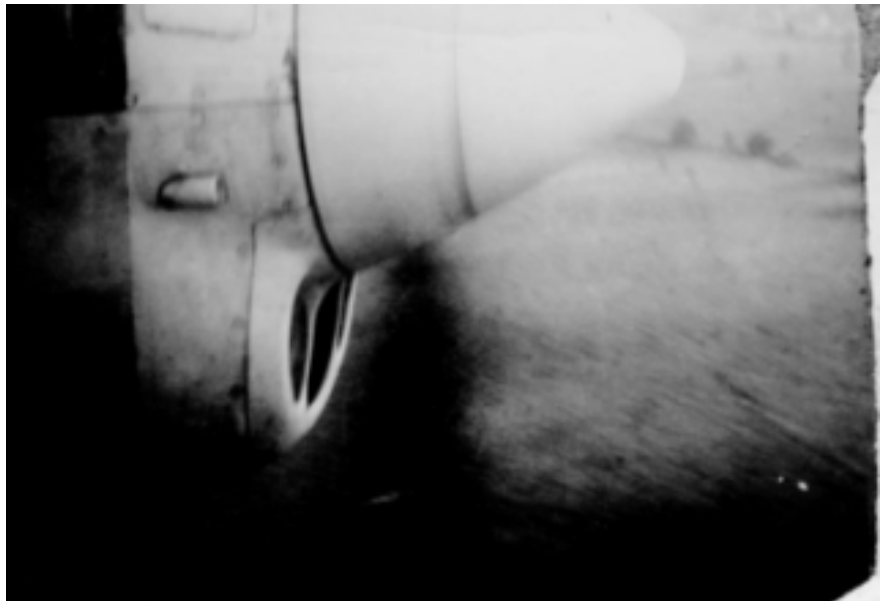
*Unidentified pilot of the 393rd FS in France, probably A-68 Juvincourt. Note that some P-47s nose in the background on the right (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*

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The Lightning had a powerful armament with four 0.50 caliber machine guns with 500 rounds each and one 20 mm cannon with 150 rounds. It had also a high rate of climb, a good radius of turn thanks to the combat flaps (or maneuvering flaps corresponding to the first level of flap) and for the late models (from the J25 and all subsequent L models) boosted ailerons and recovery dive flap. It had a great versatility that made the Lightning a great fighter plane. A full squadron with 16 P-38s loaded with two 1000 Lb. bombs each could do a lot of punishment. Let's imagine a full group mission with 48 Lightning...

On the pilot side, the P-38 had a very poor heating system. A long escort mission high in the sky could make a pilot frozen to the bones. The two big engine nacelles were also a problem for the lateral view in combat. The Allison engines and their liquid cooled system could be easily knocked out by the anti-aircraft fire or the enemy aircraft fire. A hit in the cooling system and the engine was lost. The twin-engine configuration made the P-38 easy to identify by the enemy pilots and anti-aircraft units.

This twin-boom configuration with the two rudders and fin and the big horizontal stabilizer and its two weight balances did not help to evacuate the aircraft.



*This photo was taken from the cockpit of a P-38 of the 367th FG, probably by Lt Robert Dillon. Note how that big engine nacelle and spinner could affect the lateral visibility (Lillian Dillon/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*



*P-38 of the 393rd FS being maintained by the ground crew. Note all the tubing (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*

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And for the ground crews and other aircraft specialists it had 2 of everything: engine, propeller, supercharger, cooling systems, pumps, hydraulic systems, tubing for the petrol, etc. The maintenance of the aircraft was very demanding, letting a few times for rest. It explains why some P-38s had the nose art « Double Trouble ». The P-38 flown by lieutenant Don Eberhardt of the 392nd FS was named « Double Trouble ».

Although the P-38 seemed to have a long list of shortcomings, many pilots of the outfit really liked to fly it. After 9 months of combat in the P-38, they knew how to have the best use of their fighter. They became very efficient in strafing, dive bombing, combat air fighting and escort. They were really disappointed to let it go. Even if an engine was knocked out, there was still another one to take them to the airfield.

Lieutenant Owen Fincher of the 392nd Fighter Squadron gave me the following statement: « *When we were near the end of our tour as you know they put us in P-47 (Thunderbolt). We called it the « JUG ». It looked like one and flew like one. Here is my test run with it. I got to 1000 feet and down in a slow dive, opened the throttle wide open, levelled off about 100 feet and shot the water injection to it – speed, I mean tops 325-330 MPH. It was good for strafing, dive bombing and extra hard to shoot down. I really did like the P-38. Climbed like a home sick angel ».*

Don Gelhaus explains how the announcement of the transition to the P-47 was first received: « *We were all long-faced and reluctant to see ourselves taken out of the P-38s, which we had to prize as superbly maneuverable aircraft. Many of the guys threatened to 'quit', but of course it had to be just talk at this point* ».



Lt Don Eberhardt, 392nd FS and his Lightning P-38J « Double Trouble » (Family of Junior Squires/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Chester Swain, engine specialist of the 394th FS with the big engine of a P-47 (Linda Tjepkes/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Even with its engine removed, this P-47 of the 394th FS is still a big aircraft (Linda Tjepkes/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Engine change or engine maintenance of a P-47 of the 394th FS. Note the 2 rows of cylinders (Linda Tjepkes/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)

DIEFENDORF, A. J.  
392<sup>nd</sup> C FT.  
Dec 1944

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE P-47 AIRCRAFT

- What items on P-47 are hydraulically operated?  
Landing gear, flaps, cowling flaps
- Give a brief description of the engine including:
  - Horsepower - 2000 HP
  - Make - Pratt & Whitney
  - Cylinders - 18
  - How cooled - Air-cooled
  - Supercharged - gear & turbine driven superchargers
  - Series - R-2800-21
  - Water injection - prevents detonation during operation of Emergency Military Power
- Give a brief description of the airplane -  
Single engine low wing monoplane
- What kind of propeller is installed?  
Curtiss Electric propeller 4 bladed propeller
- What trim tab controls are provided and where are they located?
  - Elevator - left hand side of cockpit behind fuselage
  - Rudder - left hand side of cockpit behind the aileron trim
  - Aileron - left hand side of cockpit forward of rudder
- What two methods are used for operating the landing gear?
  - engine driven hydraulic pump
  - Emergency hand pump
- In event of hydraulic failure can the flaps be lowered?  
Yes, by hand pump - use reserve fluid in accumulator
- What is the purpose of the hydraulic equalizer valve and where is it located?  
To equalize pressure on flaps so both go down simultaneously. Located on lower right of side of cockpit.
- How is the tail wheel locked?  
Push tail wheel lock handle forward
- Is it possible to land with an unlocked tail wheel?  
No - it comes down in the lock position
- Draw the fuel system showing tanks and capacities.  
MAIN 205 GAL. AUXILIARY 100 GAL.

- What size wing and belly tanks can the P-47 carry?  
BELLY TANK - 75 GAL OR 150 GAL.  
WING TANKS - 150 GAL OR 300 GAL.
- What octane gasoline is used for the engine?  
100 OCTANE
- What is the total capacity and the normal capacity of the oil tank?  
28 GALLONS - 19 GALLONS NORMAL CAPACITY
- How are the oil coolers operated and controlled?  
ELECTRICALLY OPERATED AND CONTROLLED FROM THE COCKPIT
- What is the purpose of the intercoolers?  
REMOVE HEAT OF COMPRESSION DUE TO TURBINE SUPERCHARGER FROM INLET CARBURATOR AIR.

- 1 -

Written test performed by Lt Al J. Diefendorf, 392nd FS, on the P-47 (David Diefendorf/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)

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Lieutenant Rufus Dye of the 392nd FS speaks about the P-47 Thunderbolt during an interview : « *It was like flying a bathtub ! I don't think I could have pushed the throttle all the way forward and hold on to the stick with both hands. I only weighted about 120 pounds, I was just a little guy.* »

He also speaks about a funny story : « *I was a squadron's operation officer by that time (when the 367th FG transition to the P-47) and while I was gone (he left the outfit for 30 days of R&R, rest & recreation, in the USA) they assigned me a brand new airplane. One of the guys from Panama that had been flying P-39s flew my airplane and he pulled out too late and he bounced back that airplane through a pile of horse manure. Drove the supercharger, whirled up end the fuselage, filled up all the .50 caliber full of horse manure, turned one of the prop blades completely around, and bounced back in the air and landed that thing in home base. By the time I got home, or got back over there, it was ready for me to test op, and I flew the rest of my tour in that airplane and it was one of the fastest in the unit.* »

Cap. Claude Cely, 394th FS, wrote the following comment in his diary on his transition to the Thunderbolt: "We are going to change over to P-47s and it gripes me no damn end – in fact I hate it. We'll also be going into combat with very little time in P-47 and that's no good. They are taking the far better plane out. ...checked out in 47 and it's not so damn hot. Did stalls, slow rolls, etc. It's fair but no combat ship.

Feb. 6, 1945. Dad flies his last mission in a P-38. Pilots continue to mourn for the loss of their Lightnings, but grudgingly begin to appreciate the qualities of the P-47 that make it a good close-air support fighter-bomber.

The P-47 Thunderbolt was a terrific aircraft for the job asked to the pilots of the 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force: support the troops on the ground. It had eight 0.50 caliber machine guns with between 350 to 425 rounds each depending on the model and could



S/Sgt Bertel Koed, 392nd FS, has painted a lot of the nose arts of the 367th FG. Lt Dick Brennan, 394th FS, painted also some nose arts on the P-38s and P-47s of the 367th FG . Both the P-38 and the P-47 were good platforms to paint large nose arts (Fred Koed/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



Armorer of the 393rd FS installing or removing one of the machine gun of a P-47 of the unit. The eight 0.5 caliber machine guns of the P-47 could send a terrific amount of lead to against the enemy targets (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)



P-47 serial 44-32947 « Ain't Misbehavin » after bouncing off the ground with lieutenant Jack B. Quick during a strafing run as described by lieutenant Rufus Dye. Note the letter « S » just under the engine. It could be the individual letter of the aircraft (Fred Koed/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)

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send a big amount of lead and inflict a lot of damage to ground targets or enemy aircraft. It was also a rugged aircraft and its engine, air cooled, could still run even with a few cylinders shot out. Its rugged construction helped also to save the life of its pilot doing a belly landing.

The Thunderbolt was also easier to maintain. Its engine was easier to work on when the cowling panel was removed.

The first P-47 of the 367<sup>th</sup> FG were aircraft from the 354<sup>th</sup> FG. The first flights were done still with the markings of this unit.

The monthly report 393<sup>rd</sup> FS for February 1945 gives the following statement: “On the 28<sup>th</sup> of the month the squadron went operational in P-47’s. Captain Slingerland led the first mission in this type of aircraft, which was a B-26 escort to Herborn area.”

The P-38s of the 367<sup>th</sup> FG were given to the 370<sup>th</sup> and 474<sup>th</sup> FG. Only this last flew the P-38 until the end of the war while the 370<sup>th</sup> FG transitioned to the P-51 Mustang in March 1945 and so gave its P-38s to the 474<sup>th</sup> FG. The P-38s “Little Buckaroo” of Major “Buck » Rogers, the Droop Snoot “Bomba-Dear” of the 392<sup>nd</sup> FS and “Patsy” flown by Ervin “Brownie” Brown are known to have been flown by the 470<sup>th</sup> FG.



First P-47 assigned to the 392<sup>nd</sup> FS, according to Bert Koed, going for a test hop. Note the crew chief on the wing to help the pilot to reach the runway (Fred Koed, 367<sup>th</sup> FG association)



Lightning P-38J-25, 44-23627, « KOZY KOZA », 392<sup>nd</sup> FS, flown by Lt Sam Plotecia. The crew chief, Francis Pecora, is on the left (367<sup>th</sup> FG association)



Above and right, same aircraft after it has been transferred to the 474<sup>th</sup> FG. Note that it has been renamed « Minnie II » and that the nose has been painted (Gary Koch, historian of the 474<sup>th</sup> FG)







*Lightning P-38-J20 « Droop Snoot» , 44-23627, TrailBlazer of the 394th FS. It is The Droop Snoots of the 367th FG were not assigned immediatly to the 474th Fg or 370th FG like the other P-38s after the 367th FG became fully operational in the P-47 (Linda Tjepkes/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*



*Lieutenant Jack Curtis, 394th FS, in front of TrailBlazer in one Advanced Landing Ground in the east of France, probably Doncourt les Conflans/Jarny (Eddie Rosier/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*



*Above right and below : same aircraft after it has been transferred to the 474th FG (Gary Koch, historian of the 474th FG)*





*Lightning P-38L-1, 44-24630, Gung Ho flown by Col. Chickering, C.O. of the 367th FG G (archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*



*Same aircraft after it has been transferred to the 428th FS, 474th FG. Note this time again the tubing and that the dragon has been removed and that the name of Col. Chickering and his ground crew have been recovered by a black paint. This aircraft was damaged in a landing accident in Germany on 3 June 1945 while being flown with the 428th FS (Gary Koch, historian of the 474th FG).*



*A P-47 Thunderbolt and a P-38 Lightning of the 367th FG taxiing before or after a mission probably in A-68 Juvincourt . During the transition to the P-47, the missions were flown with the two types of aircraft at the same time(Lillian Dillon/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*



*Above and below : P-47sThunderbolt of the 367th FG ready to take off for a new mission (Lillian Dillon/archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*





*P-38J-20 44-23511 of the 392nd FS flown by Lt Owen Fincher (Lillian Dillon/ archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*



*Same aircraft after it has been transferred to the 474th FG. Note that the painting on the nose goes up to the middle of the name of the nose art (Gary Koch, historian of the 474th FG).*

## HONORING THE PILOTS – Captain Joseph Edward Rettig (392<sup>nd</sup> FS)

Captain Joe Rettig was among a batch of more experienced pilots of the 369th FG who were assigned to the outfit when Col. Charles Young took command of the 367th FG. Joe Rettig was assigned to the 392<sup>nd</sup> FS as the Operation Officer and flight leader.

On 18 June 1944, 13 P-38s of the 393<sup>rd</sup> FS, 17 P-38s of the 392<sup>nd</sup> FS and 16 P-38s of the 394<sup>th</sup> FS took off respectively at 06H20, 06H26 and 06H33 from Stoney Cross to bomb targets of opportunity in a given area in north west of France. It was also called an armed reconnaissance mission. The P-38s were all carrying one 1000 lb general purpose bomb.

The 3 squadrons bombed and strafed targets in the area of La Roche sur Yon, the assigned area, and targets of opportunity in Brittany on the way home. Cap. Rettig, in his P-38 42-104065, was the leader of the 392<sup>nd</sup> FS. He spotted with his red flight a convoy of 6 to 8 trucks on a highway at 09H30 in the vicinity of Rennes, the capital of Brittany in the north west of France. Unfortunately his P-38 was hit by the flak during his strafing run. Lieutenant Eugene Fleming, his wing man, observed Cap. Rettig's ship to go into the ground and explode. In fact, Capt. Rettig managed to bail out but too low for his chute to open. His body was found two days later a few hundred yards from the wreck of his plane in a field of the town of Cesson-Cevigné. He was buried in the cemetery of the town on 21 June. He was next buried in the American cemetery in Saint James in Brittany before being returned to his home town in Mont-Calvary, in Kansas in 1948.



*Captain Joe Rettig in front of a P-39 in Santa Rosa or Sacramento before the move to the European Theater of Operation (Carolyn and Joe Cobb via Clyde Deavers archives 367<sup>th</sup> FG)*



*Right and above right, monument and plaque in honor of Captain Joe Rettig and lieutenant Richard Berry in Cesson Cevigné, France. Lt Berry, of the 370th FG, was killed in action in his P-38 in the same town the day after Cap. Rettig's death. The monument was unveiled for the 50th anniversary of D-Day in 1994 (Marc Moussard)*



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## Books, DVDs and Links

### Plane of Fames's P38

Just a few P-38s have been saved out of almost 10 000 built. And less are maintained in flying condition. One of them is in the Planes of Fames museum in Chino in California. I had the chance in July 2015 to visit this museum with my friend Wayne Pecora, the son of Francis Pecora, crew chief of the 392nd FS. We saw many great planes but one of the greatest ones was for me their P-38 « Skidoo ». Gary and I had the chance to run into Steve Hinton, the president of the museum and one of the most qualified warbird pilot in the world. I asked Steve to sign my Dynamite Gang book.

You can see a new video of Steve at the control of « Skidoo ». Note the big canopy and big control wheel. You can also see the big engine nacelles of the P-38.

[https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=1642854232686664&\\_rdr](https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=1642854232686664&_rdr) or write "Around the patch in the P-38J with Steve Hinton" in a search engine.

### 367<sup>th</sup> FG web site

This newsletter will certainly go up to issue # 18 as I have no much material left to write additional articles.

I have worked on a web site which will be used to publish some of the articles of the previous issues of the newsletter or to add new articles if I can find new material or if some of you give me the authorization to use their documentations and pictures.

The url of my web site is : <https://www.the367thfg.com>

You will see that this site is really simple and that it looks like the newsletter. It was the easiest and quickest way to built that website.

### Coming in the next Newsletter



- The advanced landing grounds in France, part 6
- On the way home
- Honoring the pilots, part 11