



Newsletter 367th Fighter Group – Issue # 1



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Dear 367th Fighter Group members, Families and Friends,

This newsletter is made to keep alive the memory of the 367th Fighter Group (FG) personnel but also to exchange information, feelings, pictures, etc, related to this outfit we all have in great esteem in our heart. This is not an official newsletter of the 367th FG association but it is hoped that you will appreciate to receive, on a regular basis, some articles related to the Dynamite Gang.

Any comment, idea or even critics will be welcomed as well as any subject you would like to be treated or you would like to write. The materiel used for the articles are the reports (monthly reports, operation reports, missing air crew reports, etc), diaries, email or letters with some 367th FG members or their families and books. I hope that you will pardon all my misspelling and any other kind of mistakes that I could write, English is not my mother language.

Olivier Le Floch

The first article is dedicated to an outstanding pilot and officer, Lt. Col. Morris “Mo” Crossen, Deputy Group Commander.

While looking for some new information related to the 367th FG on the internet two years ago, I found an article written by Stacy Roberts, for the AWON (American WWII Orphans Network), concerning her father, Morris Crossen.

I knew the story of Lt. Col. Crossen and knew that he had been killed in

action in Germany on October 20, 1944. After having found Stacy’s email address we began to exchange some mails. She told me that she was preparing a trip to the American Cemetery in Belgium to see for the first time the grave of her beloved dad.

What Stacy and her family have

undergone is typical of the toll paid by the American families but also allied families. Too many children never met or have no memories of their father. Too many wives lost a beloved husband and too many mothers and fathers lost a cherish son. The loss of their relative changed their life forever.

This photo was taken on October 13, 1944, in ALG A71 Clastres.

Standing from left to right :
Lt. Col. Crossen, Lt. Blumer, X, Maj. Matheson, Maj. Joy, Maj. Reed

First row from left to right :
Maj. Rogers, Lt. Malone, Lt. Peschken





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Morris Charles Crossen was born in 1916 in Canton, Ohio, to Ezra Dean and Elisabeth Morris Crossen and received his education at Ohio State University. He was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant upon graduation in the Officers Reserve Corps, Field Artillery. He entered flying school on June 26, 1939 and was awarded his wings at Kelly Field, Texas, on March 23, 1940. After assignment as an Observer during the Georgia Maneuvers during 1940 of the 1st and 2nd Divisions, he reported to the Commanding Officer of the 31st Pursuit Group where he assumed various duties.

In spring of 1941, he reported to the Commanding Officer of 50th Pursuit Group and received the command of the 12th Pursuit Squadron. Promotion to 1st Lieutenant was followed by a new assignment as Group Material and Engineering Officer.

In spring 1942, Lt Crossen was transferred to the 313th Pursuit Squadron. He was also promoted to the grade of Captain. In July he was again promoted to the rank of Major. Four months later he assumed command of the 355th Fighter Group.

On June 1, 1943, he became the Commanding Officer of the 66th Fighter Group but soon he was sent to the Aleutians. There, he served as Executive Officer of the 343rd Fighter Squadron. Although his combat missions were only three in number, Major Crossen engaged in strafing and dive bombing tactics and acted as

escort to bombers.

Returning to the United States on September 28, 1943, he was assigned to the San Francisco Fighter Wing. A few days before Thanksgiving he was relieved and ordered to assume command of the 367th Fighter Group. It was on Thanksgiving Day that he took command of the Group.



On January 22, 1944, Major Crossen was appointed Group Executive Officer when Lt. Col. Charles M. Young assumed command of the 367th Fighter Group.

Before Lt. Col. Charles Young took control of the Group, Maj. Crossen had influenced the men by explaining to them during meetings what he would expect from them. He managed to build an esprit de corps to the Group.

On May 17, 1944, he was promoted to Lt. Colonel and soon left California with the advanced party. He had the task to

prepare the arrival of the 367th FG to its theater of operation and especially to its future air base on the English soil.

He and Cap. Joe Griffin flew some missions with the 55th Fighter Group, a 8th Air Force outfit. The first mission was successful for Lt. Col. Crossen. He shot down two jerries. He was not the kind of officer leading his men behind a desk. He flew many missions at the head of the Group or a Squadron until the fateful day of October 20, 1944.

According to the statement in his MACR (Missing Air Crew Report) written by Lt. Edwin Brydges: "On 20 October I was flying wingman to Col. Crossen, who was leading the 392nd FS on a dive mission near Koln, Germany. After completing our bomb run we pulled up, reformed and set course for home. At this point bandits were reported on our left so we closed to attack. Col Crossen got the tail of a 190 which rolled, split 'Sd and then hit the deck. We followed and were closing rapidly on the 190 when flack hit Col. Crossen's right engine. The engine burst to flame and Col. Crossen pulled into a climb (our altitude was about 1000 feet). Due to my high speed, I passed Col. Crossen and was unable to observe anything else. I then continued on after the 190."

Lt. Col Crossen left two very young daughters, Stacy and Nancy. He is buried in the American cemetery in the Ardennes, Belgium.



Lt. Col. Crossen and ground crew in front of his P-38 Lightning serial 44-22521 (a J-20 model)



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The Birth of the 367th FIGHTER GROUP

The 367th FG was activated on July 15, 1943 at Hamilton Field, CA, per General Order and was assigned to the IV Fighter Command of the 4th Air Force. The subordinate units were :

- 392nd Fighter Squadron
- 393rd Fighter Squadron
- 394th Fighter Squadron

The source of cadres was furnished by the 328th FG already in Hamilton Field.

→ The Group Headquarter

The Group Headquarter was made of 6 officers and 18 enlisted men on July 21. Additional men joined the Headquarter during the following months :

- 1 October 1943 --> 19 officers and 35 enlisted
- 31 December 1943 --> 24 officers, 1 Warrent Officer and 40 enlisted
- 31 January 1944 --> 31 officers, 1 Warrent Officer and 61 enlisted
- 8 March 1944 --> 24 officers, 1 Warrent Officer and 50 enlisted

The first aircraft was delivered to the Group in Hamilton Field on August 26. This plane was the P-39 model Q-10 # 42-20757. She was assigned to the 393rd FS.

The Commanding Officer has changed several times from the activation until the appointment of Col. Charles M. Young :

- Maj. Teuvo Ahola from July 17 to August 11, 1943, 1943
- Lt. Col. John Allison from August 11 to October 22, 1943
- Maj. A. Tuevo Ahola from October 22 to November 25, 1943
- Maj. Morris Crossen from November 25 to January 22, 1944

Not only the Commanding Officer has changed but the location has changed too. The Group moved from Hamilton Field to Santa Rosa Army Airfield on October 11 , 1943, and to Oakland Municipal Airfield on December 10.



P-39 of the 367th FG over the Pacific Ocean in February 1944



P-39 of the 367th FG



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P-39 of Cap Harold Stuart while being the C.O. of the 392nd FS

→ The 392nd Fighter Squadron

The 392nd FS was made of 1 officer and 59 enlisted men on July 15, 1943. Next :

- 1st August 1943, 1 officer and 62 enlisted
- 1st September 1943, 7 officers and 93 enlisted
- 1st October 1943, 8 officers and 138 enlisted
- 1st November 1943, 43 officers and 144 enlisted
- 1st January 1944, 42 officers, 1 Warrent Officer and 195 enlisted
- 8 March 1944, 39 officers and 252 enlisted

Moves of the 392ns FS States side :

- From Hamilton Field to Santa Rosa on October 11, 1943
- From Santa Rosa to Sacramento Municipal Airport on December 10, 1943
- On 11 December 1943, 36 officers and 92 enlisted moved to Tonopah
- From Sacramento to Camp Shanks on March 8, 1944

Commanding Officers of the 392nd FS and dates of assignment :

- Cap. Grover J. Gardner on July 15, 1943
- Cap. Harold K. Stuart on August 9, 1943
- Maj. Teuvo Arvi Ahola on November 25, 1943
- Maj. Carroll H. Joy on January 7, 1944
- Maj. Wendell J. Kelley On January 25, 1944

→ The 393rd Fighter Squadron

The 393rd FS was made of 1 officer and 55 enlisted men on July 15, 1943. Next :

- 31st December 1943, 45 officers and 192 enlisted
- 26th February 1944, 39 officers and 255 enlisted
- 8 March 1944, 33 officers and 250 enlisted

Moves of the 393rd FS States side :

- From Hamilton Field to Santa Rosa on October 11, 1943
- From Santa Rosa to Oakland Municipal Airport on December 6, 1943
- On 11 December 1943, 36 officers and 92 enlisted partent à Tonopah
- From Oakland Municipal Airport to Camp Shanks on March 8, 1944

Commanding Officers of the 393rd FS and dates of assignment :

- Cap. Charles W. Hoffman on July 15, 1943
- Cap. Joseph H. Griffin on August 6, 1943
- Maj. William A. Jones on January 23, 1944

The first aircraft was delivered to the 393rd FS on August 27, 1943. This plane was the P-39 model Q-10 # serial 42-20757.

→ The 394th Fighter Squadron

The 394th FS was made of 1 officer and 53 enlisted men on July 15, 1943. Next :

- 31st December 1943, 42 officers and 189 enlisted
- 31st January 1944, 39 officers and 238 enlisted
- 8 March 1944, 39 officers and 252 enlisted

P-39 of the 392nd FS in Sacramento in February 1944





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Moves of the 394th FS States side :

- From Hamilton Field to Santa Rosa on October 11, 1943
- From Santa Rosa to Hayward Municipal Airport on December 8, 1943
- From Hayward Municipal Airport to Tonopah on 27 December 1943
- From Tonopah to Hayward Municipal Airport on 13 January 1944
- From Hayward Municipal Airport to Camp Shanks on March 8, 1944

Commanding Officers of the 394th FS and dates of assignment :

- Cap. James E. Peck on July 15, 1943
- Cap. Robert E. Smith on November 23, 1943

The first aircraft was delivered to the 394th FS on October 4, 1943. This plane was the P-39 model Q-10 # serial 42-20864.

→ Going overseas

The month of February saw the last phases of preparation and the completion of training for combat duty but also the final POM (Preparation for Overseas Movement) inspection.



Inspection of the 392nd FS men in Sacramento

On March 8, 1944, the Group Headquarters and the 393rd FS began entrainment (according to Cap. Jack Reed, the two other squadrons entrained in a different train, the 392nd FS the day before and the 394th FS behind the 393rd FS). At 2 PM the train left Oakland and the journey was underway. After 6 days of travelling at a very slow speed, the train arrived at Camp Shanks, New York. On March 22, after a week of additional training and inspection the Headquarters and the 3 squadrons boarded the train to reach the pier of embarkation and embarked the Duchess of Bedford where the men received lectures about life jackets, emergency procedures, etc.

On March 24 the ship left the pier of New-York city harbor and went his way on the Hudson river. The ship passed Manhattan, the Statue of Liberty and Governors Island. Lots of men certainly had special thoughts at this moment. They certainly remembered all the hard steps they went through during their hard training. Even the most eager pilot had his own feeling for his family and was certainly thinking to what would be ahead. After 11 days at sea the Duchess of Bedford arrived at Greenock, Scotland. The next and last step of the trip was made by train again. The men with their B-4 bags entrained in Greenock station. The train slowly went through the country. As they left the station at night, the men discovered the English green countryside, the houses made of old stones, the farms and pastures only the next morning. After 14 hours of travel the train finally arrived at Linhurst station. On April 15, 1944, the 367th FG finally arrived to Stoney Cross, England. The pilots discovered that they would fly the Lockheed P-38 Lightning. Many of them made the wish to fly the North American P-51 Mustang but the Mustang were assigned mainly to the outfits of the 8th Air Force for the long range escort job. The Lightning with his 4 machine guns and his cannon concentrated on the nose but also with his two engines was a good plane for ground support. With its huge fire power it could afflict a lot of punishment to the enemy and it could bring his pilot back to the base on single engine. The 367th FG was assigned to the 9th Air Force. 25 P-38 were assigned to each squadron. Some were brand new but some were transferred from the 8th Air Force Groups. On April 15, the same day as its arrival in Stoney Cross, the Group was transferred from the 100th Fighter Wing to the 70th Fighter Wing of the IX Tactical Air Command whose Commanding Officer was General Elwood 'Pete' Quesada.



Major General 'Pete' Quesada while on visit to 367th FG in Stoney Cross



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Once in Stoney Cross the pilots received additional ground training on topics like weather, geography, procedures and also aircraft recognition. The mechanics and other aircraft specialists also began to learn how to maintain the Lightning. They also have to perform on field modifications specified by Lockheed before the ship be considered on commission.

The pilots had to check out in the P-38 and next to add some flight hours.

At the end of April 1944, the group received mock Field Orders for practice briefings. After some practice missions the Group got operational on May 9th. The first two missions were flown over France but that's an other story.



P-38 Lightning of Lt Ray Jackson of the 392nd FS in Stoney Cross between D-DAY and the move to Ibsley in the beginning of July 1944

Pictures of the first Reunion of the 367th Fighter Group

Some years ago my friend Jack Curtis sent me the following picture. He told me that it had been taken during the first Reunion of the 367th FG in Mc Allen, TX, in 1964.



First row kneeling from left to right : Killer Cain and Jack T. Curtis
 Second row from left to right : Bruce, Heath, Brown, Raiti, Brooks, Kephart and Tjomsland



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Buzz job by a P-38 during the first Reunion. The nose had received the nose art of Cap. Larry 'Scrappy' Blumer 'SCRAPIRON IV'



The same 'SCRAPIRON IV'

Any help would be welcomed to identify the members of this first Reunion on the following picture (Jack Curtis is second from the left and Raiti fourth).



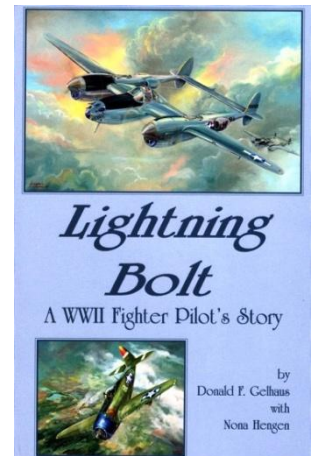
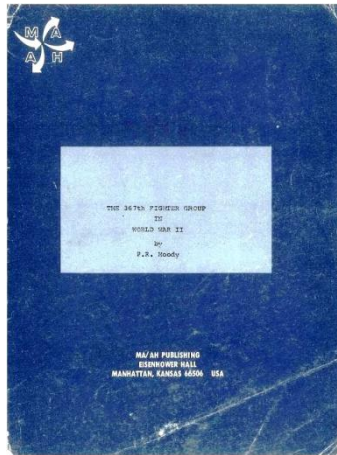
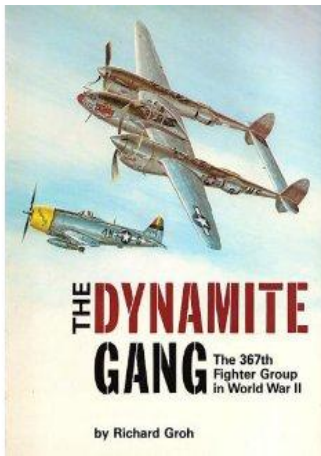


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Books and Links

I think that everybody knows 'The Dynamite Gang' book from Richard Groh and certainly the book written by Major Peter Moody, 'The 367th Fighter Group in WWII'.

It is possible that you have not heard of the book written by Don Gelhaus, a pilot of the 394th FS : 'Lightning Bolt'. I was given the name of this book by John Cely, the son of Cap. Claude Cely of the 394th FS also. Thank you John for letting us know this great book.



For more information about Stacy and Nancy Crossen's trip you can read the following article :
<http://www.boiseweekly.com/boise/memorial-day-visiting-a-fathers-grave/Content?oid=1624253>

To find the Lightning Bolt : email to Pat Holmes Voge → pvoge@aol.com
Pat owns the shop 'Pats books' in the hometown of Don Gelhaus in Washington State.

The following web site honors the millions of men who served during the WWII. You can add a comment to honor a friend or a member of your family :

<http://www.wwiimemorial.com/default.asp?page=registry.asp&subpage=search>

Coming in the next Newsletter



- the first missions of the 367th FG
- 367th FG airfields in UK
- cadet training