

to open his account. One rolled over and exploded as it hit the ground, while the other crashed after the pilot bailed out. Crenshaw then destroyed a single-engined aircraft on the same field that Parsons and Mejaski had just hit. Lt Robert S Gaines Jr claimed a Bf 109 as a probable and a second damaged during a brief dogfight, while Lt Thomas J Klem damaged a Bf 109 by scoring hits on its left wing.

Blue Flight of the 370th had also seen some action when, at 1145 hrs, south of Gotha, its pilots spotted Bf 109s taking off from an airfield. Four German fighters were destroyed in the air by Lt Cyril Jones Jr, making him an ace. Lt William E Buchannon claimed a fifth Bf 109 kill. The flight then strafed the field, where Jones destroyed a Ju 88 and an He 177, and damaged two Ju 88s and two 'Me 210s'. Lt Wallace C Murray was also credited with two Ju 88s destroyed on the ground.

As this was going on, the 368th's Blue Flight encountered bandits near Halberstadt just before the bombers dropped their loads on Merseburg. Lt George F Baker 'bagged' two Fw 190s before heading home, low on fuel.

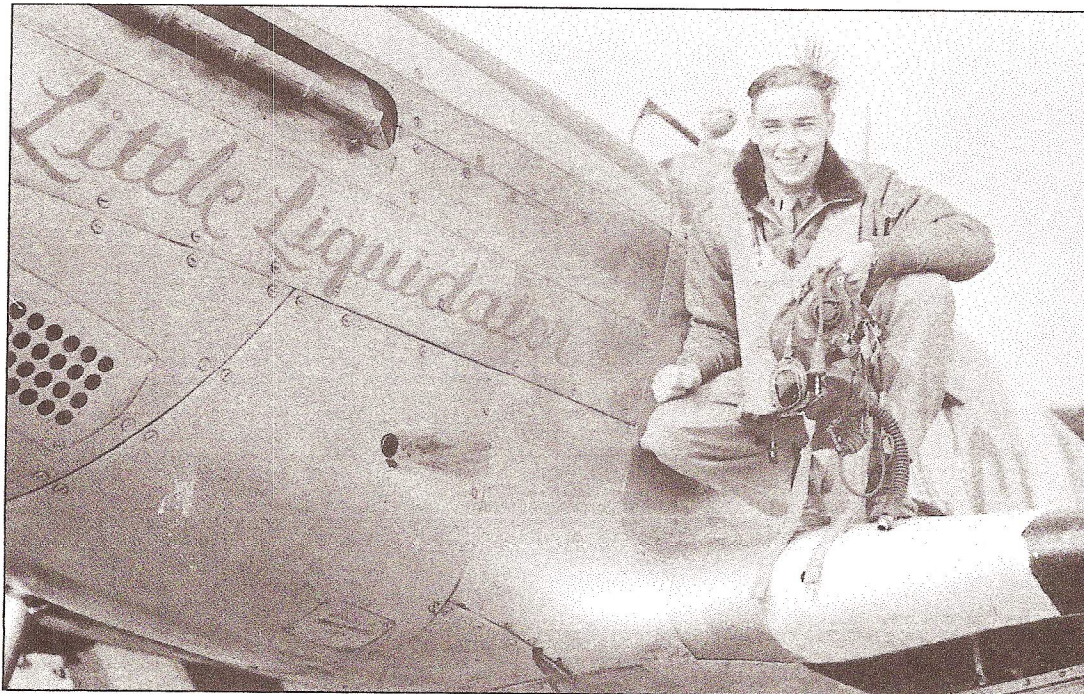
Lt Ivan B Hollomon, who was leading the 369th's Red Flight, experienced a loss of power at high altitude during the major engagement near Köllda, forcing him to 'drop to the deck' in search of targets as he headed out. Hollomon destroyed a locomotive and damaged another, along with three wagons, near Kassel. However, he passed near an airfield and ground fire struck an oil line in his Mustang (P-51D-5 44-13689), causing the Merlin to seize near Utrecht, in the Netherlands, where he bailed out safely, evaded capture and later returned to England.

At 1202 hrs, near Eisleben, Capt Benjamin King, who was leading the 368th's Red Flight, spotted 50 fighters preparing to attack a group of B-17s from the rear. Copying the German tactics, King bounced the fighters from behind and quickly downed a Bf 109 and two Fw 190s. Two



369th FS pilot Lt Joseph W 'shoot everything that moves' Mejaski finished his 75-mission, 300-hour, tour in February 1945 with two ground kills, as well as having shared in the destruction of nine locomotives

Lt George F Baker Jr of the 368th FS and his P-51B-15 *Little Liquidator* (42-106809). Baker came tantalizingly close to 'making ace', destroying 4.5 enemy aircraft in the air, damaging another and being awarded 0.5 of a strafing kill! He completed his tour



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