

369TH FIGHTER SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST 1944

The month of August

___ missions consisting of __ escort, __ strafing and __ bombing.

The new pilots are especially noticeable in the _____ of claims against strafing ___ etc. While a major problem of replacement for Group, Squadron and flight leader _____, the presence of eager young blood, _____ too many uneventful missions is to be ___ired.

The War Bond drive in connection with _____ Bond Loan set a quota of _____ for ___ month under the supervision _____.

On 20 August the EM's softball team

Group championship by a victory over the _____ EM team_____. The score of

a slight misunderstanding, to put it mildly,

by an agreement made before the time to play only _____. Lt. Payton, empire, and Sgt. Bonetti, manager stood firm against the violent protests of the loyal softball players.

The morale of the enlisted men continued high. Return of 48 hour passes and furloughs was the monthly _____urch that kept it up. Movies, Aero Club, weekly dances and the very popular "coke" bar continued their valuable functions.

On 1 August under command of Captain Lester G. Taylor the squadron strength was 250 EM and 52 Officers.

The first 10 days saw us participate in as many missions. The first an escort to B-17's dropping supplies to Maquis Forces in France near the Swiss border.

On the 2nd during take off for an uneventful escort mission around Paris, Lt. Ivan B. Holloman as a result of a slight mid-air collision was unable to get his left landing gear door down. His wheel fairing doors being down caused him to return early. Preparing for landing he discovered his difficulty. In spite of aerobatics and even cutting the hydraulic line the gear still resisted all effort to lower it. The cutting of the hydraulic line, to do this he used the small saw contained in his escape purse, caused a large quantity of fluid to slosh around the cockpit. This soaked into his chute and was the determining factor in his decision to try a one wheel landing upon exhaustion of his fuel supply. Landing on Runway 04 Lt. Holloman's masterful handling of the situation brought the comment, which best described it, from Capt. Taylor that "he didn't care if he every saw a better job".

Major Chauncey S. Irvine on the same day returned to duty assuming command of the squadron.

The first batch of our new pilots were assigned and joined on 2 August. They were:

2nd Lt. William F. Collins, 0-822108
2nd Lt. John E. Hughes, 0-824634
2nd Lt. Lawrence A. Bearden, 0-823914
2nd Lt. Rene L. Burtner, Jr., 0-822094
2nd Lt. Robert S. Gaines, Jr., 0-824016

Escort missions on the 3rd and 4th were uneventful. On the 4th the following named Officers were assigned to us and joined; to assume duties as pilots:

2nd Lt. Raymond E. McGee, 0-704700
2nd Lt. Kenneth L. Hobson, 0-704677
2nd Lt. John J. Kelly, 0-704683

On the 5th during an escort mission to Halberstadt, Capt. Edwin F. Pezda, Capt. Lester G. Taylor and Lts. Edwin L. Sjoblad, and Harold R. Burt broke into the scoring column with individual claims of Me 109's destroyed. Lt. Frank A. Holliday damaged an Me 109 on the same mission. Capt. Pezda and Lts. Crenshaw, Hutton and Majeski shared in the destruction of a locomotive and the Railroad line Minden to Oaslinger.

On this day Lt. Claude Crenshaw, Grove C. Deen and Ivan B. Hollomon were promoted to 1st Lt.

The next day an escort mission to Berlin gave Capt. Thacker, Lts. Kruger and McCluskey and F/O Bur the opportunity to destroy a locomotive and damage 55 goods wagons in the vicinity of Bucaals.

1st Lt. Alma R. Smith upon the completion of 80 missions and 300 hours on the 1st of August received an assignment of D.S. to the Zone of the Interior for a leave of 30 days. During his operational tour Lt. Smith accumulated 128 sortie credits.

On 7 August 1st Lt. Charles W. Staley was assigned to Casual Pool, 12th R.C.D. During his operation period he participated in 74 missions receiving 111 sortie credits during 245 hours and 25 minutes.

On the 8th after an uneventful escort mission the previous day Lt. Sjoblad while engage in area support in the vicinity of Caen damaged 6 Tank cars in a M/Y at Gisors.

The following day we escorted to Munich. Lt. Crenshaw destroyed a locomotive in the vicinity of Subourg and F/O Breuning destroyed one near Saarbrucken. During this mission, while

flying top cover, we encountered 30 Me 109's with 15 more as top cover. An attempt to join combat with the top cover was unsuccessful as they immediately split-essed.

Our 1st bombing mission of the month took place on the 10th. Lt. Paul E. McCluskey was hit by flak just after his bombing run on a Railroad target in the vicinity of Wingen at 1120. He was believed to be at an altitude of 5,000 feet when he was last heard to say he was hit and was going home as his coolant was leaking. Claims on this mission were as follows:

2-0-2 Locos by Maj. Pezda, Lts. Buniowski, Crenshaw and Keur.
0-0-3 Locos by Lts. Stevens, Mejaski and Perrin.
0-0-3 Locos by Capt. Taylor Lts. Suttle, Thorne, Melrose, Cuzner and Deen.
3-0-0 Goods Wagons by Lts. Cuzner and Deen.

Best bombing M/Y vicinity Saverne; cut tracks and hits among box cars also Train vicinity of Wingen.

While on a training flight in the evening Lt. Lawrence A. Bearden crashed East of the field. Having been to 30,000 ft. he was descending with rest of the flight. A dive to about 8,000 ft. from 16,000 ft. was successfully completed by the others. He however continued straight in. His death was the 3rd in the Squadron from non-operation causes.

Lt. John H. Oliphint rejoined the squadron after successfully evading from France. Our first evader, his story was commensurate with the reputation for dashing gallantry he had acquired. Crash-landing near Le Mans, France after successfully bombing a target despite a dead engine, a tree deflected his course and turned the plane over. While imprisoned in the cockpit he was burned by gasoline pouring out of the tanks. He lost consciousness from the fumes and was consequently taken for dead by local inhabitants. Four hours later when the investigating Germans, thinking him dead, pulled him out they added to his difficulties by dislocating his shoulder. A short stay in a hospital in the vicinity of Le Mans afforded him the opportunity to escape. Despite the agony of walking with his burned legs he persisted and finally reached shelter where stayed until his wounds were healed. From here he stayed under the protection and guidance of the organization.

Missions on the 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th were uneventful except for claims of 3-0-10 Goods Wagons by Lts. Cuzner, Burt, Deen and Porter, 16 German soldiers by Lt. Kruger and 2 trucks destroyed, 25 goods wagons damaged by Lts. Kruger, Mettel, Crenshaw and Melrose, all on the 12th and a locomotive destroyed by Capt. Pezda, Lts. Hughes and Buniowski in the vicinity of Maubeuge on the 14th.

On the 14th Lt. Lawrence H. Bouchard who had been grounded for ear trouble since flying two missions around D-Day was transferred to Hq. and Hq. Sq. VIII Fighter Command. A sparkplug and hard worker his absence will be felt.

During an escort mission to Bohlens on the 16th Blue Flight was bounced from front and rear by Me 109's forming part of a gaggle of 20 plus E/A. Fortunately there was no loss as the E/A broke down before getting into real scoring range. Major Niven K. Cranfill claimed 1 Me 109 destroyed as a result of this engagement.

Our 2nd bombing mission of the month, on the 17th, was directed against transportation targets from Rouen to Amiens. Bomb results in M/Y at Fleury Sur A, Marseille En B and Gisor were good. Strafing claims as follows were made:

- 2 Ammo trucks destroyed by Lt. Perrin at Amiens.
- 6 Locos damaged by Lt. Perrin NW of Amiens.
- 1 Loco and 10 Wagons damaged by Lt. Hutton at St. Omer.
- 1 Loco destroyed by Lt. Campbell at Lille.
- Truck-Trailer and Flak Tower destroyed by Lt. Campbell at Gisor.

On the same day two new pilots, 2nd Lts. Vernon T. Judkins, 0-714429, and Thomas J. Klem, 0-824651 were assigned and joined the squadron.

On the 18th, during an escort mission directed against St. Dizier A/F Maj. Pezda, just after the bombers finished, seeing 7 E/A on the northern corner led his flight down to strafe. The first pass was made without any flak appearing. The second pass however had allowed sufficient time for the enemy flak gunners to reorganize. Lt. Burtner's plane was hit as he pulled up. Losing coolant he bailed out from 3,000 ft. in the vicinity of Sompins. He was last seen at 1,600 ft. by Maj. Pezda to hit the ground and run away. Lt. Melrose who was also MIA was last seen just prior to the first strafing pass. Nothing was heard from him or seen after that.

Lt. Crenshaw claimed 1 Ju 52 and 1 Ju 88 destroyed and 1 Ju 88 damage. Maj. Pezda claimed 2 Ju 88's damaged.

There were no missions during the next 5 days as bad weather set in.

The 19th saw Lts. Charles H. Kruger and Arthur H. Horowitz promoted to Captain as of the 15th.

On the 20th Capt. Herbert C. Burton was transferred to the Casual Pool, 12th R.C.D. Capt. Burton after spending 17 months in Iceland and 7 months with us richly deserved this assignment. While operational with us he flew 49 missions during 200 hours and acquired 55 sortie credits.

From the 21st to the 27th Captain Lester G. Taylor was in command while Major Chauncey S. Irvine attended Gas School.

2nd Lts. Edward J. Thorne, John E. Keur, Grant M. Perrin, Edwin J. Sjoblad and Don S. Melrose were promoted to 1st Lt. on the 22nd.

Capt. James W. Parsons, 0-43211 was assigned to and joined the squadron on the 27th. The 24th, 25th and 26th saw uneventful Bomber Escort missions.

On the 27th the bombers, scheduled for Berlin were unable to get through a frontal area, attacked targets of Opportunity in the vicinity of Hamburg. This afforded us an opportunity to strafe and claims as follows were made:

1 Loco destroyed by Maj. Pezda
1 Loco destroyed by Lt. Hutton
2 Locos destroyed (shared) by Lts. Campbell, Hobson and Burt.
1 Tug and 3 Barges damaged (shared) by Maj. Pezda, Lts. Crenshaw, Porter and Hutton.

The 28th saw the squadron partaking in a rharb mission directed against transportation in the vicinity of Saarbrucken. Our assigned target was the Railroad lines from Saarbrucken to Bar Le Duc. The entire Fighter Command was employed on similar tasks. The resulting claims, the highest ever entered for 1 day, were aided by our splendid results. The following claims were made:

1-0-0 Locos, 2-0-5 box cars, 0-0-1 Locos by Capt. Taylor, Lts. Deen, Holliday and Gaines.
3-0-2 Locos, 2-0-35 Goods Wagons, 1-0-0 Truck and Trailer by Lts. Crenshaw, Mejaski and Magee.
1-0-0 Locos, Radio Tower and Gun Emplacement, 0-0-1 Loco and 0-0-10 Goods Wagons by Lts. Ralston, Perrin, Hughes and Cannon.
4-0-0 Locos, 5-0-10 Goods Wagons, 8-0-7 Trucks, 1-0-0 Staff Car, and 1-0-0 Flak Gun by Lts. Campbell, Suttle, Parsons and F/O Bur.

Lt. Ferris G. Suttle who was MIA after the mission was last seen while making a strafing attack on a train in the vicinity of Nancy at 0940.

Captain Charles H. Kruger the same day was transferred to the Casual Pool, 12th R.C.D. The next day Lt. John H. Oliphint who received his promotion to Captain on the 30th was transferred out for duty in the United States.

The 30th say the close of operational activity for the month with an uneventful bomber escort mission to Kiel.

This day saw us lose the last of "Bill's Buzz Boys". Orders effective that day assigned Captain Robert L. Thacker to Hq. and Hq. Squadron 67th Fighter Wing. Having finished his operational tour of 301 hours on the 25th of August. During that period he participated in 75 missions receiving 121 sortie credits. The closing words of the Distinguished Flying Cross citation were especially merited "The courage, skill, devotion to duty and utter disregard for personal safety displayed by Lt. Thacker on these occasions were an inspiration to all members of this command and reflect the highest credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States".

At the close of the month Major Chauncey S. Irvine was in command of a strength of 249 EM and 52 Officers.

FRANK G. HAHN,
Captain, Air Corps,
Squadron Historian