

## 369TH FIGHTER SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER 1944

During the month of September we participated in 21 bomber escort and Area Support missions. During these missions claims of 14-3-2 aircraft in the air and 4-0-9 aircraft on the ground were made. Loss of nine pilots however made it the most disastrous month to date.

1st Lt. Harry F. Cuzner Jr. finished his operational tour and on 6 Sept left the 496th Fighter Training Group at Goxhill. 1st Lt. Robert W. Campbell finished and left on 11 Sept. for the Zone of Interior to be followed within four days by Capt. Lester G. Taylor Jr.

During the month 1st Lts. Robert W. Davison, Robert M. Francis and 2nd Lts. Robert D. Erwin, Maurice M. Haines, Ralph R. Klaver were assigned and joined on the 8th. Capt. Fred S. Hodges joined the squadron on the 24th and 2nd Lts. Bryce H. Thomson, Robert T. Lancaster, Warner C. Jennings were assigned and joined on the 29th. Major James A. Howard was assigned and joined on the 30th. All of the above named Officers reported for duty as pilots.

Capt. John H. Oliphint who had just received his promotion returned to the United States on 1 September. The same day we received word that 2 more evaders were returning. 1st Lt. Virgal E. Sansing and 2nd Lt. Rene L. Burtner had managed to evade capture until they were overrun by our advancing ground forces. Lt. Sansing on the 18th returned to the United States, Lt. Burtner electing to become operational again was reassigned to the squadron for duty. On the 24th Capt. Charles C. Ettlesen after spending 4 months with the resistance movement in southeast France returned. His request to be returned to duty was granted and he assumed the position of Operations Office but was immediately assigned to the 368th Fighter Squadron.

The month opened with uneventful escort missions on the 1st, 3rd and 5th. On the 8th we served as escort to the 78th Fighter Group which was directed to attack transportation targets in the vicinity of Coblenz. The weather consisting of 9/10 clouds and a great deal of haze prevented them from going down. The squadron manage to find some holes and let down. Claims of 5-0-0 locomotives and 0-0-2 trucks were entered by Lts. Crenshaw, Magee, Jenner and Majeski shared, 1-0-0 locos and 0-0-5 goods wagons shared by Lts. Prewitt, Keur and Buniowski and 1-0-0 locos and 0-0-3 trucks and 1 radar station damaged by F/O Breuning and Lt. Mettel.

Furloughs for Ground Officers and EM were authorized on the 3rd.

An uneventful escort mission to Weisbaden was made on the 9th followed by a similar one to Stuttgart the next day. During this mission 2nd Lt. Kenneth L. Hobson destroyed one and damaged one U/I S/E E/A. His description of the encounter left everyone puzzled when he said that he had been in combat with a single-engine, twin-ruddered A/C having a fuselage like a P-51 but with a scoop under the nose like a P-40. The markings on the plane were white crosses on a red background. 2nd Lt. Harold R. Burt claimed 1 loco destroyed in the vicinity of Bretten.

On the 11th during an escort mission to Merseberg, the squadron encountered 2 gaggles of 50 E/A each in the vicinity of Kolledo. Blue Flight led by Lt. Ralston engaged. The enemy tactics consisted of going into a Luftberry which was also entered by Lts. Perrin and Ralston.

Other E/A were destroyed in single encounters in the vicinity. Lts. Parsons and Mejaski made 5 passes at an Airfield south of the target. Claims for the day are as follows:

Air S/E 9-2-1 Ground T/E 5-0-9

Air S/E:

- 2 Me 109's destroyed by 1st Lt. Gilbert R. Ralston Jr.
- 2 FW 190's destroyed by 1st Lt. Grant M. Perrin
- 1 FW 190 probably destroyed by 1st Lt. Grant M. Perrin
- 1 Me 109 destroyed by 1st Lt. John E. Keur.
- 1 Me 109 destroyed by 2nd Lt. Frank W. Holliday.
- 2 Me 109's destroyed by 1st Lt. Claude J. Crenshaw.
- 1 Me 109 destroyed by Capt. James W. Parsons.
- 1 Me 109 probably destroyed by 2nd Lt. Robert S. Gaines Jr.
- 1 Me 109 damaged by 2nd Lt. Robert S. Gaines Jr.

Ground T/E:

- 1 Ju 188 destroyed, 1 Ju 88 destroyed, 3 Ju 188's damaged and 2 Ju 88's damaged by 2nd Lt. James R. Parsons.
- 2 Ju 88's destroyed and 4 Ju 88's damaged by 2nd Lt. Joseph W. Mejaski
- 1 U/I S/E A/C destroyed by 1st Lt. Claude J. Crenshaw.

2nd Lt. James F. Hutton, 2nd Lt. Frank W. Holliday and F/O Charles R. Breuning were NYR last being seen in the vicinity of Kolledo at the time the encounter took place. 1st Lt. Ivan B. Hollomon was heard at 1340 to say he was going to bail out somewhere West of Frankfurt.

Capt. James W. Parsons was also MIA but on the 19th returned to duty having landed at Bordeaux. His plane required repairing due to battle damage. This plus lack of gasoline caused his late return.

The following day during our only escort mission to Berlin 30 to 35 E/A were encountered in the vicinity of Ludwigslust. Claims as follows were made:

- 1 FW 190 destroyed and Me 410 damaged by 1st Lt. Grover C. Deen.
- 1 FW 190 destroyed by 2nd Lt. Harold R. Burt,
- 1 locomotive destroyed by 2nd Lt. John E. Hughes.

We had 2 NYR's as a result of the mission. 2nd Lt. John E. Hughes was last seen at about 2,000 ft. after strafing a loco in the vicinity of Wittenberg. 2nd Lt. Kenneth L. Hobson was last seen at the time of the encounter.

Uneventful missions on the 13th and 16th followed. On the 17th we engaged in our first area support mission under Market Operation. This was the air cover being given to the landing of the Airborne Army in Holland. 2nd Lt. Harold R. Burt bailed out 8 miles NW Antwerp from 6,000 ft. The cause given over the R/T was coolant failure.

The following day during another area support mission Blue and Red flights encountered an Me 262. They gave chase and were immediately bounced by 35 FW 190's. Claims were 1 FW 190 destroyed by 2nd Lt. James R. Parsons, 1 Me 109 destroyed by 1st Lt. Claude J. Crenshaw and 1 Me 109 destroyed (shared) by 1st Lt. John E. Keur and F/O Thomas G. Bur.

1st Lt. Grover C. Deen and 2nd Lt. Edwin L. Sjoblad were last seen at the time of encounter and failed to return.

Three Area Support missions on the 19th, 20th and 21st were uneventful except for weather causing return prior to completion of mission. 1st Lt. John E. Keur, because of engine trouble, bailed out over the channel 3 miles due East of Lowestoft from 1,000 ft. He opened his dinghy and was picked up by Air Sea Rescue in about 30 minutes.

On the 22nd 1st Lt. Jack D. Stevens was promoted to Captain and 2nd Lts. Roger W. Porter and Joseph W. Mejaski to 1st Lt.

On the 28th we received word that Capt. Eugene R. Orwig Jr. and 1st Lt. Alma R. Smith, who were on DS to the Zone of the Interior, were transferred out of the squadron.

The missions for the remainder of the month proved uneventful.

The squadron strength on 1 September was 249 EM and 40 Officers and 2 Flight Officers. On 30 September the squadron strength was 248 EM and 41 Officers and 1 Flight Officer.

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