# World War II Summary

I've been asked to summarize my experiences in World War II by several people in the past and I've always put it off. Since I don't have much of anything that I can brag about I've always thought that it was futile effort. But when I reflect on the past, I have to admit that I've had a helluva lot of fun and some things have left an impact.

## INTRODUCTION

I think that I need to begin at the beginning to make any sense out of this at all.

I was born on a ranch in north central S.Dak. My Dad was running cattle, horses and doing some farming to provide feed for the stock. Dad started out well and Mom said that his barns were cleaner than most homes. He was a big, good-looking Norwegian and was naturally popular with everybody.

Only a few years into his ranch/farm endeavor, he became disillusioned with it all due to prairie fires, hail-out and drought. We moved to the little town, Wetonka, where my grandparents ran the post office and my grandfather also taught seventh grade. (My grandfather also enjoyed a reputation as an Irish wit and poet; he became poet laureate of South Dakota). Dad continued his farming activities by doing contract plowing, seeding, and harvesting since he had the equipment left over from his own operation. And I spent a lot of time with him even as a very young boy on threshing and planting activities.

Before she was married my mother (then Inez Friel) had gained her teaching certificate at Aberdeen Normal and taught country school. After

marriage to Dad, she taught when ever she was free of pregnancies and new babies. This went on until the late 20's when depression, drought and Dad's own problems with alcohol forced us to leave the little town and move to Spearfish, SD in the Black Hills where Dad got work in construction. He was naturally good with equipment and was generally employed until the depression intensified.

## GROWING UP

I had spent the first five grades and part of the sixth at the Wetonka school . I was a fairly good student in grade school, with some aptitude for spelling, English grammar and history. (I frequently won spelling contests in school and several in County competition through 8th grade.). Sixth through eighth grades were spent at the Spearfish Normal Training School which was part of Spearfish Normal College

Because of the debilitating depression economy the family truly suffered. We were Catholic and had become a family of nine with me the oldest. By now, Dad was getting work on WPA and other work as well when it became available. And of course, everybody worked part time when they became old enough. Sisters baby-sat; my youngest brother, John, was a super salesman selling magazines and papers. Summer jobs kept us fully employed.

I started Spearfish High School in 1933 but after my freshman year I joined the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1934. I was not yet fifteen but I was reasonably big and strong. I spent the next fifteen months in the Camp Lodge CCC canp (Civillian Conversation Camp) near Custer, SD. There were about 30 of us that joined up that summer so I had a lot of friends and enjoyed their companionship. The work was good experience, and my money coming home was most helpful. Initially we lived in tents, but that summer barracks and administrative buildings were built some of which still exist and provide a summer play house for the University of SD. In the next fifteen months we built from scratch a dam over Grace Coolidge Creek

that formed a beautiful lake that is now a popular sport fishing and camping area..

I came back to high school in 1935 and graduated in 1938. High school was a pleasant time for me. I made a lot of friends, was Jr. year class president and had a great girl friend, Virginia Brakke, whom I had planned to marry after college if I was able to matriculate. I played football for 3 years, was captain of the team in 1937, and that year we were conference champions. Mrs. Miller turned me on to English literature stories of the ancient knights and I was forever hooked on them. I particularly enjoyed the math courses under Joe Rygg and the science and chemistry courses under Mr. James Running. He was a super teacher, a no non-sense Norwegian, and also the coach of debate team. He invited me to join his debate team, but I just wasn't smart enough to take him up on the invitation. I've always regretted it.

Mr. Ed Coleman who taught General Science and Biology became one of my best friends. Not as a pal but as a man who straightened out a smart aleck student and changed my attitude for the better. As a sophomore I was discharged from his class for some foolish indiscretion trying to be a hot dog for the benefit of the girls. In my junior year it finally became clear even to me that I couldn't graduate without the credits from Mr. Coleman's class. I appealed for reinstatement and he said "why sure Ed, I'd be glad to have you. But your are going to have to formally state that your behavior would be of such a nature as to bring credit to yourself." So I signed such a document and became one of Ed's star students. (All A's.) On the night of graduation, after receiving my diploma and coming off the podium, Ed met me in the aisle and returned the little "promissory note" that I had given him two years before. We stayed friends until his death.

During my last two years of high school and the first two years of college I had attended the summer Civilian Military Training Camp in Bismarck, ND. This was a one-month affair, and we were largely motivated because of the mileage compensation we got for coming to camp. For us, in the Black Hills, we netted about 75 bucks. That provided a lot of hay in those days

and by carefully marshalling our expenses we made out ok. Our transportation to Bismarck and back was part hitch hiking and railroading (one year we did ride up in a Ford coupe.) By railroading I mean box-car hopping. (Incidentally, the CMTC training provided us with the basis for becoming reserve Army officers. After four years of training and then finishing a correspondence course, assuming you passed everything, you could become a commissioned reserve second lieutenant. I had started this program.)

After graduating high school, and because of economic problems, I assumed that I would just go to work to help the family along.

That summer the new coach at Spearfish Normal made a strong request that I attend the college for his football program and my mother was particularly anxious that I do this in spite of our bleak income situation.

I started Spearfish Normal in 1938, a two-year school, which became a four-year school in 1940. and renamed Black Hills Teachers College. It is now know as Black Hills State University boasting a beautiful campus. I practice-taught first grade reading for one quarter and seventh grade literature for another. (These practice teaching activities were conducted under the strict surveillance of permanent staff teachers.). Our football team was conference champions for the year 1940.

During the summer of 1940, the College was granted an aviation contract by the Federal Government to teach aviation ground school and to run a flying training course at the local airport. This was called the Civilian Pilot Training Program. The flying portion was under the supervision of Clyde Ice who also ran the airport and who was a nationally famous barnstorm pilot Entire books could be written about him alone. Magnificent man! He employed a young (nineteen) flight instructor by the name of Evelyn Sharp. She was good looking and sharp as hell. (I have a delightful book written by a Nebraska schoolteacher who years later did her thesis project on Evelyn.) Everybody loved Evelyn including me, but there were so many suitors ahead of me I didn't even try. I received my private pilot's license through Evelyn's instruction and was hooked on flying. Without a nickel to my name and a hankering for flying, my buddy's Dad, Cap Young, said "heck, I'll get you guys in the Air Corps." He went down to the post office, got two application blanks for the Army Air Corps and both his son I.H. Young and I were accepted into the Corps. (We both stayed in and retired from the USAF. How is that for coming through? Thanks, Cap.)

I got the first call from the Army Air Corps in early 1941. I was told to report to Lowry Field in Denver for a "64" flight physical. I hitch hiked a local

freight delivery truck that made regular trips between Denver and the Black Hills. I still remember the driver's name: Frosty Schuster. Since I was so nervous about passing the eye test, I spent the next 2 days in a hotel room in almost total darkness fearful that strong sunlight would hamper my chance to pass the physical. This was a juvenile solution that I dreamed up because of the experience that I had had the summer before when I rode up to Bismarck, ND in the rumble seat of a Ford coupe to attend the CMTC camp. Because of the intense exposure to the sun and without sunglasses, I failed to pass the 20/20 eye test. (I should have explained that I passed the eye test for the Civilian Pilot training program in the fall before because I had a chance to memorize the eye chart. I still had not fully recovered from the summer blitz.)

Back to Denver. I passed the physical ok, and I was next ordered to report to Fort Snelling, MN in April, 1941.

Five of us, Hank Jennings, Merle Bryan, Sy Burke, and Sam Blair were inducted into the Army Air Corps on 28 April and were on our way to Primary School in Pine Bluff, AR. We flew PT-19s and graduated primary in June of '41. We were ordered to Randolph Fld. TX.

On the way, we made a magnificent visit to New Orleans. Merle and I joined classmates Jim Angel and WW (name forgotten) in a Buick convertible. Jim owned the convertible. Both Jim and WW were Iowa boys, a little older, with a lot more worldly experience than Merle and I had. WW was very impressive and sophisticated; he had had graduated Iowa U. and had gone to New York to fame and fortune. The only fame we got from WW was getting him out of jail in New Orleans for drunkenness and misbehavior in one of the Bourbon street bars. Jim had also graduated Iowa U. and was working for some firm when he joined the Corps. He had graduated from the ROTC program so he became a cadet "big dog" right away.

Merle, from Stickney, SD, and I roomed together at Pine Bluff and Randolph Fld. We were in "G" company and we flew BT-14s. The most terrifying experience that I had until I got to combat was the night my instructor on my initial night mission said, "you got it" and got out of the airplane. After graduating Randolph, Merle went to Kelly to train in multi-engine and I went to Foster Fld, TX to train for fighters. We were great friends and drinking buddies and spent every off-post opportunity we had to try to drink out the bars in Pine Bluff and San Antonio. I got to see Merle briefly upon our graduation from flying school but never saw him again. I understand that he got out of the Service after the war and became a big wheel in the banking industry.

Foster was a great training experience. First of all, we didn't have an upper class to contend with. We were the first class to open the new field. In fact the runways weren't even finished when we reported and checked out in AT-6's . (Now days, cadets start out in more sophisticated airplanes than we had when we were finishing training.) We flew off the hangar line ramp. And on days when the wind didn't favor us we landed on grass strips. But, oh, the flying! Those 6's were just what an ambitious fighter pilot wanted. The school encouraged us to be a little wild-ass (without breaking any rules). They wanted us to be fighter pilots. We also had the benefit of one of the Royal Air Forces premier aces that had finished his tour during the Battle of Britain. Boy, did he inject the fighter pilot spirit! The first time we saw him fly was when he came over the hangars upside down.

We graduated from Foster on 12 December 1941, five days after Pearl Harbor! This was a chaotic time. The nation didn't have much of anything in real fighting equipment. And the surprise that was inflicted by the Pearl Harbor attack just couldn't be imagined.

In December, our entire class was assigned to the 56th Pursuit Group then at Charleston, SC camped in tents.

It was rainy and cold and for an old South Dakota boy who had endured 40 below winters with less discomfort this was a lousy few weeks. The Citadel provided us with showers and Charlestonites treated us royally, inviting us to all their holiday events. I remember several of us being invited by a prominent Charleston family to dinner and hearing the elderly head of family remark, "these are critical times, I hope that we are ready for it this time." Little did he know how poorly prepared we were. (The gentleman was remembering our state of preparedness in WWI.) We checked out in P-40's and thought we had attained the utmost in life!

In January we transferred to Stratford, CN and shared the civilian field with Chance Vought. At that time CV was testing its new little amphib, a helicopter and the F4U. The town of Stratford provided us with sleeping quarters in the second story of one of the churches; the fire department invited us to their quarters for showers. We had mess facilities in downtown Stratford. We were there until July and in that time, the Engineers constructed barracks and administrative facilities. Things moved. We had some magnificent flying experience in that we flew so many different fighters. We got in a lot of individual flying or in flights of two because aircraft availability was limited; so we didn't have a lot of training in combat flights. As a result I got in a lot of acrobatic practice.

The stress that the Nation was under at the time was reflected in the equipment changes the Air Corps was going through. From January to July we checked out and flew P-36's, P-38"s, P-39's, P-40's, and P-47's. I think that I am right in that we (61st Pursuit Sqdn.) were one of the first in the Air Corps to get P-38's and then almost immediately have them transferred out and then become the first squadron to get the new P-47's.

There were so many great flying experiences in those brief six months. One of the most delightful memories that I have was when we still had P-36's and the days getting longer. Bob Hoke (Foster Fld. classmate) and I

would grab a couple of P-36's and spend the early evening in two ship dog fighting. We would go at it until we were exhausted. I loved that airplane.

During our tour at Stratford we also had an occasion to spend two weeks in down town Manhattan (Church St.) where the a defense information center, manned by civilians, kept watch over movement of every aircraft in the New York area. These centers were positioned up and down the East Coast. We spent the time as fighter advisors to the permanent staff. This facility was copied after the British system developed during the Battle of Britain. Information was telephoned into the center from observation posts throughout the area by people with good eye sight and strong magnifying glasses. Radar was not yet available. It wasn't bad duty because we were billeted in the New Yorker hotel and had access to all the good shows in New York free. I was a big fan of Helen Oconnell of J. Dorseys band then playing at the Pennsylvania hotel which I managed to get to nightly.

I alsO had a good friend (Renee) down at the Commodore Hotel (Vaughn Monroe was playing there.) who ran the USO desk. She provided me with all the free show -tickets that I needed.

Our stay in Connecticut was brief. Because of the critical situation in the Mediterranean, Churchill and Roosevelt agreed to beef up the British 8th Army with American Air. Late June,1942 ten of us in the 61st Sqdn. were alerted to join the 57th Fighter Group. (Pursuit Groups became Fighter Groups.) We were selected because ostensibly we had gained all this experience! The fact was, we had a mere hundred hours of fighter time and those hours could not be considered very selective due to the several changes of aircraft and the fact that we had had very little actual training in combat tactics. We had practically no gunnery training.

We reported to Mitchell Fld.. Bob Hoke and I were the only two of our Squadron that joined the 65th Fighter Sqdn of the 57th Fighter Group. Our other pals went to the 64th and 66th Sqdns. One reason that I got into the 65th was due to an earlier incident when three of us, an upper classman, Jones, and my classmate, Jerry Brandon and I were semt up to Groton CN to pick up three P-40s from the 65th and ferry them back to our sqdn at Stratford. Groton had a very short strip with a high levee at the end of the runway. The Operations Officer, Capt. Art Salisbury, and his assistant, Capt. GordonThomas, briefed us to be extremely aware of that levee because of its height and the shortness of the field. The 65th had already lost some planes on it. Jerry took off, but he didn't quite become airborne and bellied it in on the levee. Jones ground looped when we landed at Stratford. I was the only one to deliver a flyable airplane. That's how I got into the 65th when we reported in at Mitchell Fld.

The experience in joining the 65th Fighter Sqdn. is one never to forget. The original CO was Phil Cochran famous in Terry and the Pirates comic strip. Phil was an Ohio State pal and class mate of the cartoonist, Milton Caniff ,

who wrote Terry and the Pirates, so Phil appeared regularly as Flip Corkin in the strip. Phil was famous in his own right as a squadron commander. All the pilots and men loved him and 65 was one "going Jessie" of a squadron. When I mentioned that we had practically no gunnery training at Stratord that was not the case with 65. Cochran had managed to get tow aircraft and we would see them on mission after mission making actual firing runs on towed targets over Long Island Sound. Phil Cochran, was just a strong, innovative, individual who had a superb relationship with his pilots and enlisted men. And because of his already legendary reputation and the gung-ho attitude of his people we new "sports" (as our CO, Art Salisbury called us. Phil Cochran did not take his outfit to Africa. Salisbury took over the squadron when the Group was alerted to go to Africa. Salisbury, also a buddy of Caniff, became "Art Solitary" in the cartoon strip) were expected to absorb and conform to the spirit of 65 and think "fighter pilot." One of our initial briefings at Mitchell Fld was done by Gil Wymond who was from the same class as I (41-I). Gil was immersed in the Cochran religion. He told us new sports how things were done in 65 and that we had better damn well get with the program if we wanted to remain in that outfit. (More about Gil later. We became real good friends.)

In our initial briefings at Mitchell Fld., we weren't told any more than they felt that we needed to know. The "wheels" were extremely sensitive about a any possible leak relative to our destination or our means of getting there. But we did get to know that we had 72 brand new P-40F's waiting for us at Mitchell Fld all painted in a camouflaged desert pink. We practiced short field takeoffs for a couple of days and then were told to tell our folks so- long for now and that we would be in touch. We were reduced to as few belongings as we could pack in the baggage compartment of a P-40 and into the gun bays in the wings. These were all our earthly belongings.

We were briefed on the morning of our departure that we would be flying to Quansett Pt. RI.,and that we would be boarding a carrier after landing. Seventy two of us flew up there as directed and landed. I remember taxiing

off the end of the runway and up beside this huge ship (I had never seen one before.). Accustomed to filling our the Form-1 after landing, I began this little administrative chore when sailors draped my P-40 with a big net and before I even got started on that Form 1, I was being hoisted aboard that carrier. Wow!

The Navy stored those 72 P-40s in the most imaginable ways. Many were stored in the hangar deck. Many were installed pointing straight up and cable secured to the ceiling. Room was critical. The rest were stored on the flight deck but in an area that still allowed the Navy recce planes to get off. We were on the U.S. Aircraft Carrier Ranger accompanied by seven destroyers and the Cruiser, Juneau.

We took a very circuitous route to avoid as much as possible the German U-boats. Our first stop for refueling was in Trinidad. Then we headed across the Atlantic to Accra, Africa. But we weren't free of the subs. On 4 July we had our fireworks and I don't think they were celebrating our Revolution. A German wolf pack was most aggressive, but so were the destroyers. We came out unscathed. But Axis Sally of the German radio broadcast reported that the U.S. Ranger had been sunk!

A little over a hundred miles west of Accra, the Ranger headed into the wind and with full steam ahead we got about 30 knots over the bow. They restricted our aircraft roll to 300 feet, which was just abreast of the control center (they didn't trust us aft of it.). But with that distance and the 30 knots we all made it off even though there were some tense moments when the bow of the ship dipped down just as the aircraft began to break free.

All of us landed in Accra, although Buck Bilby a great pilot and super man landed short and trashed his P-40. Some of us stayed the night at this first stop while others were led to the next stop lead by British pilots in Lockheed Hudsons or other twins. Six-Five Squadron left the next day. This turned out to be fairly hairy for me because that day we were flying in and out of cloud cover. At one point I became hopelessly vertiginous. This is a feeling that I am unable to describe well other than to say that one becomes totally disoriented. Up is down and down is up. And it is scary as hell. The only thing I could do that day was to cling and I mean cling to the wing of the element leader I was flying on. Finally after many minutes

(seemed like an eternity) of this we broke out into the clear and things returned to normal. But then, we would encounter similar circumstances a bit later.

Our first stop was Lagos. This was a primitive strip with no taxiway. The practice was to land and then taxi back up the strip to parking. But with so many planes landing, the leader chose to take us off a perimeter dirt road so other planes could land behind. Trying to be careful about what was ahead, I angled off the narrow road and the right gear dropped out from under me in a soft shoulder. Of course, I got the prop with this maneuver. This was the first of my debacles.

Jeeter Yates, a huge man and a great gentleman (later to become our Group Commander) was in charge of a maintenance crew following along in a C-47. Among his crew was one Sergeant Galagher who was just short of a genius. They had an extra prop and Skeets Gallagher and his crew had me whole again in a matter of hours.

But now I am behind the rest of my mates and stuck in Lagos. Some days later a British crew came through escorting British Hurricanes and Spitfires. I joined with them and I stayed with this group until we get to Kano. There a similar situation occurred with aircraft landing and aircraft having landed, taxiing up the same strip. I am trying to be careful as a whole flight of B-25's are landing and my flight of Hurricanes is taxiing back. After completing one of my clearing turns, I am suddenly ready to cut the tail off a stranded Hurricane. Oops, slam on the brakes the nose goes down and the tail comes up. I get the prop again. I don't enjoy gaining this kind of fame.

So Jeeter Yates and his crew show up once more, but now they don't have any more props. The innovative sergeant, Skeets Gallagher, just saws off a portion of each blade and hammers the balance to straighten. I test the

plane and we determine that we can go on. But now I am alone again, and have to wait for a suitable escort.

While I am awaiting escort at Kano, a flight of American piloted Lockheed Hudsons readies for takeoff. The strip at Kano is still under construction and the work is all done with native manual labor. There were hundreds of workers out on the runway with tamping rods packing down the runway material to make a hard surface. When planes were readying for takeoff, the lead native ordered a clearing signal. One of the natives with a long cylindrical type horn blew the alert and the workers cleared the runway. Several hundred took haven atop hundreds of 50 gallon barrels of gasoline stored alongside the runway. As I watched, this particular Hudson got up about 100 feet and suddenly stalled, fell off left and crashed right into the accumulation of barrels and workers. The ship exploded on contact. Following the smoke and fire, hundreds of American bills of currency came floating down after being blown into the air. All of us who participated in these flights across Africa were appointed as our own finance officers and were given several months salary. I am sure that the Hudson crew had all their cash in a single container and when the ship crashed the explosion drove the bills up with the smoke and fire. I describe this incident, where all the crew perished and many of the native workers as well, because it was one of the gravest I saw during the war. I did see others but none as gruesome.

I finally muddled my way to the last stop prior to Khartoum, Sudan. (I hope that I can identify some of these stops before I finish this report.) There I had my battery go bad, and I had to wait for a replacement. I finally got the battery, but then I am alone again. Finally one day, a Pan American pilot flying a C-47 came through and I had a chance to talk over my plight with him. He said, "hell, I'll take you to Khartoum." So, he did and I spent the next 300 miles on the wing of a C-47. It's not the most comfortable kind of flying but I was grateful for someone to lead the way. I finally got to Khartoum where all my mates were waiting for me and a few others who

had had difficulty getting across. We partied a couple of nights and headed north along the Nile to Cairo. One of our first stops after Khartoum was at Wadi Halfa. The desert heat was intense. We were landing against a sand background. It was virtually impossible to judge distance on landing and there wasn't a one of us that didn't level off high, stall and drop the plane in on landing. Fortunately, no one banged up an airplane there.

Well, we had other stops along the Nile and we had a chance to get our first glimpse of the famous pyramids as well. We stopped at a base in Cairo and then flew on to Maquebelia, Palestine. Six-Four and Six-Six squadrons stayed there for training with the British. Six-Five flew on to our own strip in Cyprus. I loved the brief period we had there–swimming in the Mediterranean, night clubs were active, flying was great, but I can't say the same for the food we were provided. We were completely supported by the British Royal Air Force. And all meals, billeting, gas, etc. were provided by the British. Remember, they had spent several years over there under the direst of situations and their logistics were poor at best. Our own Country had only recently come aboard as active participants. Just to give you some idea of the rations, we virtually lived on soup, tea, bully beef, hard biscuits and bread. Now, the bread—this was baked somewhere, god knows where, and had been stored for ages. It had become wormy. The British learned to cope with these circumstances having been there for years. They simply "pre-flighted" the bread, removed the worms and went on from there. We Americans learned to cope too!

Well, our little vacation in Cyprus had to come to an end and we were alerted for our return to Palestine to join with the rest of the Group. The day before I met with another of my disasters. I was trying to become one of the hottest pilots in 65, trying to learn the really tight landing pattern that a good fighter pilot mastered. I was really tight and in my roll out, a cross-wind picked up my right wing causing a damaged wing tip to the left. Oh, is me. I am really famous now. My buddies from my previous 61st Sqdn had

been coming to my defense saying, "look this guy can fly." But I wasn't proving it.

So, I am delayed again while this modest fix gets done and the rest of the Squadron returns to Palestine. A few days later, I am ready to go, and my flight leader and another pilot come over from Palestine to escort me back. (They didn't encourage solo flights over water.) Just as we get to the Cypriot coast my engine fails. Cypress is rough country, but I found some kind of field that looked suitable for a wheels-up landing. I dropped my belly tank as I prepared to set the plane down, and made a successful, but rough as hell, landing. ( I have made two wheels-up landings and they are not pleasant experiences.) It was level terrain, but since it was summer, it was dry and hard. As I got out of my plane I kicked its side ( it had become my nemesis), and started to pull my personal effects from the luggage compartment. Then I saw a horde of Cypriots armed with pitch forks closing in on me. I didn't know what the hell to do, so I just stood there and tried to make them understand that I wasn't a German. Apparently they had seen me drop that belly tank and were sure that I was bombing the place. Trying my best to mollify this crowd, I was relieved to see a British weapons carrier racing toward me and coming to my rescue.

I finally got back to Palestine.. We were there for a few more days, training with the British and then we were alerted to go to our first combat base in the desert. This was labeled LG-174. When I reported to my squadron, Art Salisbury, now a major, said, "damn, Duke, you've had a tough time, I hope that you get the first 109." I can't tell anybody how much that meant to me at the time and how much it has stuck with me all these years. Many commanders would have tied a tin can on me and sent me on my way. But from that day on, peers and superiors alike respected my flying in the squadron. Thanks Art.

I got a replacement airplane when we got to LG-174 and we were assigned temporarily to a South African Sqdn. that had been battling the Germans

for years, so the members were veteran combat pilots. My first mission with them wasn't a howling success either. When we got the signal to start up, my plane wouldn't start. So the squadron consisting of three flights took off minus one Yank pilot. Finally I got this bird started and tried to catch the others. Brand new, and inexperienced, I couldn't find them and returned to the landing strip. After the mission the South African squadron CO was debriefing the flight and asked what had happened to me. I explained; and when I told him that I had gotten off late and tried to catch them I caught holy hell. The idea that I would scamper off by myself into enemy territory was just too foolhardy to understand. The British and the South Africans were incomparably articulate when it came to "chewing you out."

Our early missions in the Western Desert consisted mostly of escorting American B-25's and British piloted A-20's. And our early dog-fights with 109's were usually associated with these missions. I had been assigned a new plane with the number 41. I was in Leo Margolian's "A" Flight. Leo had also been transferred from an East Coast Squadron to the 57th when we met at Mitchel Field. My crew chief was Sgt Royball a most loyal, capable man. My armament crew was headed by Bill Hahn a handsome young man smart as hell. His buddy Bob Furman crewed another plane and helped our crew whenever he was needed. Bill became the head of the squadron armament section and would have been a squadron CO if he had been a pilot.

My first encounter with 109 activity occurred after we strafed a German air strip at dawn and got quite a few 109's on the ground. The after math of that mission was a bit exciting. I refer you to the attached report (Attachment No.1.) that I had submitted to a Dr. Molesworth who was writing a book on P-40 wartime activities. That report also describes a couple of other 109 encounters and one hellish encounter with ground fire. (Also see Moon Maloneys letter (Attachment No. 3.) sent to me years after the war, enclosing a copy of the public release that describes the later

mission. Moon was, in addition to being a combat pilot, our public relations officer.)

A lot of our missions consisted of dive-bomber (five hundred pound bombs) and strafing (50 cal.) missions. We would be assigned to attack a certain area of the bomb line where troops, tanks, Or vehicles had been reported. Some times these missions were very fruitful and sometimes they were just duds where we found nothing from our search effort but usually got a hell of a lot of ground fire from small arms if we were low and from 88 millimeter guns if were higher. I realize that it is questionable as to how you could receive so much ground fire without having a target to go after. You just have to credit the Germans with a very savvy ability to conceal these arms.

The desert is a unique environment. In many ways, if one has to go to war, it is the ideal arena. You do little damage to anything but the enemy. Usually the weather is ideal, but it can also be a virtual hell when you are trying to survive during a dust storm. These can go on for days. Visibility is nil. You can get lost just navigating from one tent to another. The fine sand permeates every part of your living, eating, and equipment. One of the virtues of the old P-40 was its superior insensitivity to blowing sand. But it was not immune. The crews had to spend a lot of time after one of these storms cleaning sand out of every corner and niche of the plane.

I have not given the British 8th Army the due it deserves. I mentioned that we were assigned to the Desert Air Force under the command of General Montgomery. The Germans had almost overcome the 8th Army in its pursuit to take Cairo and then the Suez Canal. The Germans stopped just short of Cairo because they had outrun their support. Apparently Hitler had decided not to invest more in the Afrika Korps because of higher priorities. This gave the British, now supported by Americans, a chance to revitalize the 8th. And this they surely did. American support in the way of

planes and especially Sherman tanks was vital to the build-up of the 8th. General Montgomery was a careful and imaginative commander. So, the 8th Army became a formidable force. Air operations were conducted under the direction of the British 211 Group. This was an experienced, super-capable entity. All of our missions emanated from the 211 center and the now-effective use of radar gave controllers the ability to vector us to specific targets and to keep us informed of enemy aircraft operations. I have nothing but total respect for the 8th Army. And when one considers that many of these men had been in this desert fracas for years, you really have to take off your hat to the courage and endurance of British people.

There are many stories to tell about the year we spent in the desert. Living conditions were Spartan at best, but there were great times too. Incidents come to mind that are not necessarily in time sequence.

For some reason this one registers: We had been in the desert for months and we had progressed to an area I believe up around Marble Arch. There was a report that there were some gazelle in the area, and fresh meat was a rarity to us at this point. So six of us took off in a weapons carrier driven by Tom Clark our operations officer. We came upon a small group of three gazelle and the chase began. Now the desert isn't like a freeway. It's rough. There are mounds, sage brush and other flora that I don't recall a name for. Gazelle can move. So did Tom in this weapons carrier. We careened about for a mile or so chasing this one gazelle. Finally the gazelle began to tire and we got close enough to take a shot. We were all armed with carbines. My buddy, and room mate, Harry Stanford, got a shot that broke theGazelle's spine . The poor animal just dropped down to his knees helpless. We came upon him and with his pleading soft brown eyes I was no longer a gallant hunter. Stan had a .45 cal with him and I said,"Stan, put this poor beast out." Stan let go from hip-high range that flat missed with two shots and a third that put a slug through the gazelle's jaw. The gazelle is still looking up, pleadingly. "God, I said, Stan, kill it."

With that Stan put the barrel on the animal's head and pulled the trigger. That gazelle didn't taste so good to me when we cooked it up.

Gil Wymond was a mover-shaker among us. I mentioned him earlier. Well we were down in the desert with very limited maintenance facilities and equipment. We had very little aluminum to patch small arms damage and if the holes were small, we'd just let them go. But we did have two or three sheets of aluminum in the travelling shop. And Gil got this idea for a bar. I should digress enough to admit that fighter pilots did relish a touch of the coveted spirits. In fact, when we could, we got drunk as hell. So, the idea of a bar was prescient. When Gil, came up with this sheet of 6 x 8 aluminum adorned with the name of every officer in the squadron and our famous squadron emblem, The Fighting Cock, lovingly known as "Uncle Bud", emblazoned in red in the middle of the sheet, some of us were stunned. I personally gave Gil hell for using aluminum so blatantly when we had planes with holes in them. That only proves how shortsighted I was. That bar became our rallying point—morale center. After missions or after any other excuse we could come up with we assembled at the bar. We moved frequently and the first tent to go up contained the "O Club" bar. To this day, almost 60 years later, it is still a morale symbol for those of use that still remain. (The Fighting Cock emblem was the creation of Milton Caniff who designed it for his friend, Phil Cochran, the first commander of 65.)

A side light to this story must include the eventual fate of the bar. Gil was instrumental in getting the Smithsonian to accept the bar when our 57th Group inactivated on our arrival in the States in 1945. It presently is on loan to the New England Air Museum in Hartford, Ct. The bar will never die. Gil had vision.

Well, we flew hard, we drank hard, we played hard and we had some memorable visits to Alexandria and Cairo in the months that we spent in the desert. After about 30 missions, 9th Air Force (our American

Headquarters) had a policy to give pilots a few days leave in either of these two cities. I may relate some stories about these visits, but I am considering putting them in an aside.

Going back to my buddy Bob Hoke. When we were in Cairo for our firfst relief from combat I talked to Bob about my concern about our longevity in this conflict. It wasn't looking so good. Bob had been transferred to 66 Sqdn. shortly after we started operations in the desert. Six-six had been beefed up to perform some special missions that to this day I never understood. Bob and Dick Paulsen were taken from 65 and sent to 66 commanded by Dick Fairlamb. (Also see Attachment No. 2.)

Well, I had began to feel insecure about "my making it." We had about 30 missions then and we had lost several pilots. It was clear that the Germans were serious about knocking us out. So, during our leave, I said, Bob, this damn war is getting scary. Do you think there is any way we can get out of it?" We kicked this thing around without any resolution. I shamefully write about this, but I justify the admission of it because I think it is fairly typical of combat pilots to experience a period of "chicken-shit" and then recover. I know others who had similar experiences. I think that it might be good counsel for any new pilot heading for combat that he or she be advised that there will be a period of doubt and fear and that it can be overcome. After I hit 50 missions, I don't deny that I was scared as hell at times but I became fairly immune to the "clank" factor, and it became a matter of "lets go."

I think it is worthy to note something about the attitude and character of the 57th personnel. Initially we were pretty well stuck with the personal items that we had brought over in our P-40's. We really didn't have the kind of clothing that was suitable for desert conditions—either for the intense heat, the cold nights in the fall, or the footwear that was so accommodating to sand conditions. The British, having been there for years, had mastered all of this. So, we adopted their style, clothing, footwear and especially their

desert tents. I mention this because we were not models of military decorum with respect to appearance. People grew beards, wore sun hats, bought desert boots, etc We became a pretty raunchy outift. But respect for rank and MISSION virtue were never compromised. Mission integrity was foremost. You didn't abort a mission if humanly possible. You were always on time. You maintained formation discipline. On the ground we were a sight. So much so that one of 9th Air Force's senior commanders dubbed us "Salisbury's Gang." But boy did they respect us.

In early 1943 we had moved into Northern Tunisia There are several incidents involving that location that come to mind. With the American invasion of Africa under General Patton, we had begun to pinch the German forces drastically. We were at El Djem and I had become a flight commander. We received an intelligence briefing that there might be a large German force bringing support to the forces in the Tunis area. I scheduled myself for the dawn mission as that was expected to be time of the invasion. Nothing occurred and I charged it up to typical intelligence error. The next mission went out and met scores of JU-52's escorted by ME-109's. It was dubbed the Palm Sunday Massacre, occurring on April xx 1943. I believe we claimed some 72 planes shot down! Some of the replacement pilots that I had trained in the preceding weeks were on this mission and secured victories. Some were on there first or second missions! There is a lot of existing literature on this famous effort so I won't try to go on further with it other than to say that it is to this day, that I missed it, is one of my most disappointing experiences.

Incidentally, the night following the devastation to German forces we were visited by several JU-88 bombers. They came over our strip, dropped flares and spent the next hour dropping bombs up and down the strip. They had to contend with British anti-aircraft Boffer guns but they of course had no fear of fighter interception. I believe that we only lost one pilot due to this raid, but we did have some wounded and my personal tent was riddled with holes. I had taken evasive action in a trench which we

usually tried to have excavated next to our tents whenever we set up at a new location.. We also excavated desert trenches throughout our bivouac areas for latrine purposes. One could make a mistake in a panic (The one that I chose that night in my panic just happened to be the wrong trench) In Wayne Dodd's excellent history of the our Group "The 57th Fighter Group" there is a picture of me standing beside my riddled tent.

I have written about an episode involving the rebuilding and flying abandoned German BF109's. Since I had become so respectful of those planes all I wanted to have in the way of a souvenir was to get my hands on one of those aircraft. Just north of us there was a strip commanded by the British and there had been some 109's and Macchi 202's that had been abandoned by the Axis forces when they were forced to leave hurriedly. We got wind of these and we sent up some of our good mechanics to get one ready to fly. A few days later, our line chief told me that "my" bird was ready to fly. So up we go and there is one 109 and one 202. Bill Bennedict of 66 Sqdn. is personally working on the 202. When the line chief and I get to our 109, there is a British guard and his CO, a Wing Commander, who proceeds to chew hell out of me for daring to remove a plane from his command and literally runs me off the strip. This man was so articulate an ass-chewer and I so young that I had no comeback whatsoever other than to salute smartly and get the hell out of there. Bennedict listened to all of this and after I left and the CO departed, Bennedict went over to the British guard and sweet-talked him into sitting in the 109. I should note that Bennedict had transferred to our outfit from the RAF where he had been stationed in Britain. He knew how to talk to that guard. But Bennedict had other plans than to just sit in the airplane. He actually got the guard to help him start it up and with that he flew it out of there and back to our strip at El Djem. A few days later he bellied it in because of engine failure. A note on Bill Bennedict. He was always in to something. He was a superb pilot and I used to say to people, "you can't imagine any incident however extreme or fanciful that Bennedict has not exceeded in real life." (This is not the end of my 109 stories.)

Soon after this episode the Germans forces capitulated in Africa. We had some minor operations on the Island of Panteleria and into Malta at the end of the African campaign. At this point nearly all the original pilots were scheduled to return to the States. A few of us were retained in each of the squadrons to help train new replacement pilots. Gil Wymond became the 65th Sqdn. CO and I became his operations officer

With the fall of Africa, the 57th moved back down the coast to Sfax where we were camped on a really nice beach. We spent a week or two there, I've forgotten how long, but it was a nice interruption to our operations. Among the other things we acquired were a couple of fairly good staff cars that the Germans had left behind so we got to do a bit of touring while we rested up.

Our next move was to Malta after it had been secured. We were there briefly. After the British 8th Army secured the southern side of Sicily we went in as soon as the engineers had prepared a strip at the town of Pecino. We operated daily against the German transport and other targets of opportunity.

The big deal in my life there was the acquisition of six M.E. 109/s. Soon after we got to Pecino we learned that the Luftwaffe had departed a strip fairly close to our Pecino area in a real hurry and left several aircraft in various states of repair. As I have previously noted, the 109 was my mission in life. So I got Sgt. Fred Symank and his crew together to go down and see what they could make out of what was there. Fred Symank was a magnificent mechanic and a wondrous person. He could just do anything. Well, Fred went down with his handpicked crew and in a few days he called me and said he had a 109 that was flyable. After I got there, Fred gave me a cockpit check and interpreted all the German instruments for me. He advised me that the propeller control, flaps, and gear were all electrically operated. He also advised me that the alternator did not work,



(missing pp 26 & 27)

orders were Major Jim Curl, Major Glade Bilby, 64th , Edward Fletcher, 64th and and Capt Edward Ellington, 65 th."

"When the C-47 courier came in a few days later to take the above pilots back to Cairo and then to the U.S. we all showed up at Group Operations in Class A uniforms; blouses, pinks, garrison caps – spit and polish. But Duke Ellington was missing. Suddenly an ambulance drove up, and the attendant personnel slowly unloaded a coffin which was evidently going back to Cairo on our plane. The British gun crews (anti-aircraft) nearby snapped to attention in respect for the dead. As the coffin was placed beside the awaiting C-47 aircraft, the coffin lid flew off. A body, naked from the waist up and dressed with Indian war paint and head feathers emerged with a spear and shouted 'on to Spearfish.' That really rattled our cages and broke us up. Duke is really part Indian, and his home town is Spearfish, S.D."

Comment: I think Dale may have used a little imagination abut the Indian apparel because I don't remember all that, but many did think I was part Indian. I believe that Dale still does. That got started early in my Air Corps career. I was from South Dakota. That's where the Indians come from, right? Even Ohioans back then had very little concept of our great country. Also, I was lean and brown, so I just must be Indian. I carried along with this fantasy and when we were aboard the Ranger, after taking some kidding about being Indian, one day I went to the ships barber and said "Ok, give me an Iroquois haircut." Boy, did he take me at my word! And of course, for weeks, I really did look like and Iroquois. But the rest of Dales' story is pretty accurate.

The men mentioned in those orders eventually arrived back in the States Buck Bilby and I reported to 1st AF Headquarters in Manhattan and I was assigned to Richmond Virginia for familiarization in P-47's. We were granted liberal leaves. I got to see all of my relatives and my dear folks in Spearfish. I reported back to Richmond and spent several weeks there

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doing some happy flying. All of us were regular attendants at the local USO officers club and many patriotic Richmond girls were steady hostesses.

After our training period at Richmond I was assigned to a training squadron at Wendover, Utah. This was a great assignment and provided a lot of flying. Our mission was to train new graduates from flying schools in combat tactics in the P-47. They would then be assigned to an overseas combat unit in Europe. This was now early 1944.

Wendover, Utah is just inside the Nevada line and just outside the gate to our base was an active casino. We spent a lot of time there and on weekends we motored to Elko and Ely Nevada for further adventure. It was petty good duty. But I was getting itchy. A lot of my colleagues were returnees from Europe and the Pacific. The Europeans returnees had big tales about fighter victories and since I had none, I was ready to go back. So, I flew back to Colorado Springs where our old Group Commander, Frank Mears , headed up Operations at 2nd Air Force. I told Frank that I wanted to go back over. He was very accommodating and said, "ok, and you can be the escort officer for the two squadrons graduating at Wendover." But this assingment had to await graduation of the two squadrons of new pilots.

I don't suppose that I need to mention that we returnees spent a lot of time at the bar and so I had several good drinking buddies. One of them was Frank Gaunt that I mention here because he is part of a tale I want to spin later. As a matter of fact I could spent as many pages as I have already written about activities at Wendover, but one I 'd like to relate is one involving a WASP (Womens Auxiliary Service Pilot) pilot. Occasionally we would get replacement planes and some were flown in by WASP pilots One day, a couple of P-47's came in and one of the pilots made one of the hottest approaches to the landing strip that we had seen. (All of us were thinking "hot" when we put a P-47 aircraft in the landing pattern; we would

come down to the deck, break sharply up and then to the left trying to make the tightest circular pattern the aircraft could maintain, then just a few feet off the deck, level off and set the bird down.) Well, this woman (we didn't know it until after she landed) really impressed us. So, we invited her to the Officers club. Well, we had pool tables in there and somehow she got challenged to play. The upshot of this was that she took everybody! Some woman.!

It is funny why some stories seem to stick to your memory. As I am writing this one on the WASP another occurs to me that is totally insignificant but I think funny. Charley Mize was a young lieutenant and another of my "bar advocates." We spent a lot of time at the bar or on some week end venture to Salt Lake City or some other venue in search of adventure. Anyhow, Charley was a non-flyer but he had come into the Air Force as a specialist in communications. He had been associated with the entertainment industry in some capacity as a "wire expert." He was sharp and entertaining. He was also a better than average magician. His specialty was card tricks and we enjoyed his art. One night in the bar Charley was going through some routine and one of our less personality-endowed associates was heckling him. This kept going on and our heckler would say things like, "oh, I bet I know how you did that." Charley could do this stuff half snockered. But he finally had had enough heckling --so, over emphasizing his indulgence with the spirits "accidentally" dropped the deck of cards down in front of the heckler. Well, the heckler quickly came to Charley's aid recovering the cards. While the heckler was engaged picking up cards, Charely slipped an Ace of spades behind his collar. Of course all the audience saw Charley's careful insert. But he went on with more tricks receiving more heckling.

Finally, Charley (wearing a short sleeve uniform shirt) stretched out both hands in front of the heckler so he would see that there was absolutely nothing in them and no sleeves to hide anything. Then he reached carefully behind the heckler's head and retrieved the Ace of spades placing

it full before him. That brought down the house and no further kibitzing from the heckler. He never knew.

I escorted the graduates of the two training squadrons via train to first Harding Fld. LA. where we spent a couple weeks preparing for the overseas caper; shots, clothing, etc. Then we were sent to Ft McHenry, VA (check) for eventual boarding of troop ships for our voyage to Italy. I could go on about this, and tell war stories about submarine threats and destroyer action, but that is pretty standard.

We got to Naples, Italy in Oct., 1944 where our group, about 130 pilots, reported to the 12th Air Force personnel center for assignment to the various P-47 Groups in the Theater. Since I had been with the 57th, which was now at Grosseto, Italy, I wanted to go back to my old outfit. But the assigning sergeant wasn't sympathetic with my preferences. So, I was pretty cocky, and I said, "sergeant, who is the Commanding General of this Air Force?. He told me, and I said, "can we get him on the phone?" I was bluffing all the way, but the sergeant wasn't sure, so he said, "Capt, would you like to pick all the replacement pilots going to the 57th? I said "I sure would." And that's how the bluff worked out and I got to pick about 30 plus of the pilots going to my old Group. Worked out pretty good, and I got to my old Squadron. (There is a good book that details the operations of this phase of the war written by one of the pilots that I brought from Wendover. He kept a daily diary, an excellent work, which he reproduced in the book and then commented on the entries that he had made during the war. One of the significant points of the book is his identifying how many of his contemporaries were casualties in the period from November 1944 until cessation of hostilities in April 1945. [Grandpa's War" by Ken Lewis])

When, I got back to the old outfit, many of the crew that I had had a hand in training as replacement pilots in N. Africa were now in positions of authority. Spank Manda, a marvelous pilot and super guy was the squadron operations officer. Dick Hunziker was now the Group

Operations Officer. MY old friend, Gil Wymond, the squadron commander, for whom I was squadron operations officer in N. Africa and Sicily, was now a Lt. Colonel. I was just a captain replacement pilot. That was ok with me, I just wanted to fly. And I started getting in a lot of missions. These were nearly all in the PO Valley as the German Army had dug into the Appenine Mts. And our work was to destroy any support we could find for his army forces. We had countless missions to the Brenner Pass which was Jerry's only rail line from Germany to Italy. I would guess that I had a mission to the Brenner Pass at least once a week and sometimes oftener. Of, course the pass was filled with anti -aircraft weapons and it was a deadly place because our focus was so narrow that guns would be concentrated on our diving approaches. But it could be a lucrative target because of train and motor transport in the pass or approaching the pass.

I should not pass over this phase of the Italian campaign too quickly. It was in the early stages of my return to combat that I met Dorothy Knauer. She was a nurse with the 105th Station Hospital. One-0-Five occupied one of Mussolini's modern hospital buildings adjacent to our air strip. I first met Dottie when she was escorted by Gil Wymond to one of our squadron parties. I was truly impressed! Some how I cut in on Gil's relationship and began dating Dottie regularly. In January of '43, we were together and I "borrowed" Dick Hunziker's jeep so that we could go out to the Group's beach house. This was a pleasant venue; good food, nice furnishings, fireplaces and in January it made for a cozy retreat. We were bound out in darkness. Hunz's jeep was a poor contraption, but it motored and furthermore we mostly traveled with minimum lights which was the practice so as not to encourage any marauding German aircraft. We had had several days of hard rain and some flooding was prevalent. Dottie and I came to a bridge that had been knocked out when the army routed the Germans from this area. Our Corps of Engineers had put in a temporary bridge that served well. However, this night the flooding had taken the bridge out and when we approached all we faced was a deep gorge with the remaining slabs of concrete from the permanent bridge at the bottom. I

don't know what would have happened to us if we had gone in there, but I know that it wouldn't have been healthy. I slammed on the brakes and the old jeep jack-knifed to the right into the concrete rail. Dottie was seriously injured. She suffered a broken right knee, broken right arm and severe damage to the right ankle which was caught between the controls for the four-wheel drive. This was in area where there were no residents or other military encampments. I started to run for help when an army 2 1/2 ton truck approached from the other side. They could see our jeep and of course the open chasm before them. They went off cross-c0untry with their four wheel truck and eventually found a place up stream that they could fiord. It seemed like it took hours, but they came to our rescue and got us both to Dottie's hospital. A fine doctor performed the surgery on Dottie's knee, placed a silver pin to stabilize it and did such a great job that barely a scar remained. She was hospitalized for several weeks at a general hospital in xxx. While she was at xxx, I had access to an L-5 airplane (one of our Group's many acquisitions). So, I made frequent trips up north to see her and continue our courtship. The army, very conveniently, had a landing strip next door to the hospital. Dottie returned to the States in a patient hospital ship in April of 1945 and was recovering at Crile General Hospital in Cleveland when I got back in September and married her five days later! I jumped ahead there a bit but that is a most important part of my story and I had to tell it all.

Back to the war. We inherited a concept from earlier operations that was called "Operation Strangle." The 57th operated out of Corsica and could be behind the German army within minutes because of the Corsica advantage. The order was "shoot everything that moves." This might include mule driven carts, trucks of course, and especially trains. (The movie, "Thunderbolt", an excellent documentary, is about the campaign while the Group was stationed in Corsica. I was not present for any of the Corsican operations.)

Sometimes the implementation of this concept was overly aggressive. On at least three occasions I've had to pull off my attacking fighters that were coming down on targets that were civilian or friendly and not enemy

I became the Squadron Operations officer again when my good friend Spank Manda was shot down in the PO Valley and captured. A few months later my old friend and Squadron CO, Gil Wymond decided to return to the States and marry his long time sweet heart. I then became the squadron commander.

To better pursue the retreating German Army our Group was moved to a strip just south of Lake Garda. We had some very long missions from there into the northern most parts of Italy. This was a matter of a few weeks and then the war ended. We were then returned to our old strip at Grosseto Italy.

There we learned that the 57th was scheduled to go to the Philippines to participate in the war against Japan. As we prepared to go the Pacific, it was necessary to take all of our P-47's down to Naples for preparation for sea voyage. We were then without airplanes and furthermore we had time on our hands.

Dick Johnson, the CO of 66 Squadron, and I had become very good friends. Dick was/is an incomparable pilot. He built airplanes before the war and had been an aeronautical engineer student at Minnesota. We were totally different in many ways, He was smart. He didn't drink. He didn't party. He enjoyed a good time, had a great sense of humor, but he didn't need the companionship of bar patrons. Airplanes were his love. But he liked my style of flying—which was a little wild-ass.. As I mentioned we had this L-5 and Dick and a sergeant had scrounged the elements for another airplane, an L-2. So, I got to fly the L-2. But, as I mentioned, we had time on our hands. Dick suggested that we go down to Naples where there was a British Depot and a huge bone yard of damaged airplanes—all types. We

took crews from both our squadrons and left them there to work on the parts that Dick identified in the bone pile. Well, that turned out to become an almost new Fairchild C-61. Dick knew how to repair work, but we couldn't stay in Naples, so our crews did all the major rebuild. But Dick did all the dope and fabric work on the damaged parts of the fuselage and wings.

The C-61 had been used solely by the British. Dick, being a persuasive kind of person, was able to talk them out of a virtually new engine and propeller. And when our guys got all this loot together we had a new airplane. Dick and I ferried it back to Grosseto and our fun began.

We did a lot of flying together and as well as individually. I probably shouldn't tell this tale, but it is no secret anyhow. One night in my squadron bar we were having one of our usual nights. In a conversation with one of my new pilots, he revealed that he had never done any acrobatics. I couldn't believe that I had heard such a thing from a fighter pilot. So, I said, "get your helmet." We went down to the flight line and cranked up our C-61. Off we went and climbed over the city of Grosseto. There we began a series of loops and immelmans and associated maneuvers. I'll admit that we both had several refills at the bar. But after about 30 minutes, I noticed a whole gang of cars lining the airstrip. Remember, it is totally dark. But with the intrusion of the cars along the runway, I knew we were in trouble. So, we had to get the plane on the ground. We really didn't need the cars. The plane had a landing light and that was all we needed. But the Group Commander, Jeeter Yates, my old friend from 1942, had ordered the "new lighting system." Well, we landed and I parked the plane in its spot and Jeeter met me at the cabin door. "Major Ellington, I am relieving you of your command, and I am ordering a blood alcohol as soon as you can get to the doctor's office." Jeeter was so mad he was white and if you remember he was a giant of a man. He could strike fear! Capt. Dr. Fonda, my squadron doctor, was standing by to take

me to the clinic. (According to Dick, we had a little exchange of blood samples that evening.)

This incident blew over and things returned to normal. One of the things 12th Air Force did while we were stood down was provide access for in P-47's in a unit over on the Adriactic side of Italy where the 322 Fighter Group was stationed so that we could keep our hand in flying P47's. (The 322nd was slated to go to Germany to be a part of the occupational forces.) So, when my turn came to get in some P-47 flying time, I got permission to fly down to the 325 Fighter Group, also on the Adriatic side, that was equipped with P-51's. Remember my old friend, Frank Gaunt, from Wendover? Well, Frank was an operations officer in this outfit. Like me he had gotten an assignment back to Italy but he got 51's!

Anyway, I had called Frank and asked him if I /could fly a 51. So when I got down, it was a Sunday, and Frank was medical OD (earlier civilian pursuit). I met Frank at operations and he very hospitably invited me into the operations tent and knowing that I was a devoted Scotch drinker asked if I would like a little drink. Well, of course. But then one led to another and I assumed that the flight business was over and that Frank had decided not to give me a bird. Well, we polished off his bottle. Then most surprisingly, Frank asked, "are you ready to fly?" Well, hell yes, I couldn't chicken out now. So we go out to a nice p-51D and Frank gives me a complete cockpit check. I assume that he is going to take off in another airplane and take me around the area. But he says, "Duke, I am not feeling all that well, you just go on." I spent a little time familiarizing myself with the cockpit and then I started it up and taxied out. I lined up, gave it the goose and was just barely airborne when I got the buzz of my life right over the top of my airplane. Frank had gone down, gotten in his plane and was already airborne when I staggered into the air. We spent the next 30 minutes in the damndest dog fight I had ever been in. We were right on the deck and performing every maneuver we knew to get on each other's tail. After a

while, Frank really did become ill and so we both landed. It was a helluva flight.

With that I asked Frank to let me take plane back to Grosseto. We gassed it up and I flew it back. There I got hold of Dick Johnson and checked old Dick out in a P-51! This didn't go down too well with Jeeter either. He came down after Dick landed and without any "ers or ahs" hesitations or doubt said, "you get that g.d. airplane back over there as fast as you can get it off."

It wasn't too long after this incident that we were slated to go to Naples to prepare for our departure for the Philippines. After we got our squadron duties attended to and the transport of our men to Naples, Dick and I had two airplanes to ferry down. Dick got a pilot from 66 to fly the L-2 and he and I went down in the C-61.

Now one must gain some perspective about the Naples area at this stage of war. Naples was headquarters for 12th Airforce and I don't remember how many Army Hq's. But by now things are spit and polish. A lot of arm chair warriors were occupying positions of authority and justifying their positions in a combat zone. Why we even had control towers! (For an old desert veteran who had operated in the minimalists of conditions, operations now were just too much!.)

Anyhow, we had no radio in the bird. So when we get to Ciampino we just decided to land into the wind. (It's an old habit.) So Dick landed following the L-2. Knowing that the L-2 would pull off very shortly he just landed over the top of him. It was perfectly safe and he knew what he was doing. Well, the tower came apart and filed a flight violations report on us that became the biggest thing in 12th Air Force (that is until later when Dick buzzed General McNarney's HQ tent on the beach!). For the flight to Naples, I took off from Ciampino and the report further describes my failure to file, etc (Just to verify this story, I'll attach the formal correspondence that

describes these "felonies.") We didn't get off the hook for this fracas until we appeared before the Chief of Staff of 12th Air Force. We got the wire brush treatment but slid off without any real damage or injury. We had good war records and I suppose that may have been taken into account since after all even the weenies in Hq were aware that their mission was combat.

I did mention that spit and polish had become the day. Back in Grosetto we didn't pay much attention to speed and other minor things when operating motor vehicles. But they did in Naples and they had Military Police to enforce it. One day, Dick, in his jeep, was assuming a little too many prerogatives when the MP nailed him. I've forgotten the script of that conversation between Dick and the MP, but suffice to say that Dick wound up in jail with his jeep impounded. He called me and I came down and got him out of jail. And I can't for the life of me remember what I had to tell the compound to free Dick. But nevertheless we left free.

Well, that's not the end of the story. After our confrontation with the tower in Ciampino our C-61 had also been impounded and sat on the strip in Naples. They probably were in the middle of a staff study as to what to do with an airplane that had no connections with the U.S. Army Air Corps, had no proper markings, and that was piloted by a couple of felons. So while they were pondering this, Dick decided to go up and take a look at our old airplane. This led to a flight off the strip (he commandeered it) and a little recce of the area which ended up with an aggressive buzz job down at the beach. That area just happened to be General McNarney's (who was CG of all army forces in Italy) beach house. General Mc was not pleased with this demonstration and now we are really in deep doo dool. I'm so hazy about the details of many of these incidents and especially this one, since I was not a party, I will run all this by Dick Johnson and have him refine the commentary. Maybe it was after this episode that we "got to visit 12th Air Force Headquarters."(Our little episode with the tower violation is a part of official correspondence included here as Attachment 3.)

I should add to this a historical note on Dick Johnson. Immediately after the war he was assigned to Wright Field as a test pilot. He became the operations officer of the unit and top of the line test pilot. When General Dynamics got into trouble in the development of the F-102, Dick was asked to join General Dynamics and do the test work on the X model. The airplane had not performed well before Dick got there. Within a year he had helped develop a good airplane. He became the chief test pilot and was at GD through the development of the F-106 and the F-16.

We did head for the Philippines. It was a long boat trip that had us just outside of the Panama Canal, when President Truman ordered the bomb drops on Japan. There is now substantial controversy about the decision, but some of us are grateful. If we had gotten to the Philippines and participated in the Asian war maybe things would not have turned out so well individually.

We were turned around and debarked at Boston Harbor. We took the train from Boston to Tampa, FL where the squadron was to be deactivated. I got leave and headed for Crile General Hospital in Cleveland. You know the rest of the story.

ATTACHMENT 1
(Response to Dr. Molesworth)

ATTACHMENT NO. 1

2/5/00

Dear Dr. Molesworth,

I hope that you will recognize that you have posed questions to one who is now 80 years old, whose memory is poor, never was very good, and on top of that never kept any records of any kind including a complete log book.

I joined the 65th Fighter Sqdn. at Mitchell Field, Long Island in June of 1942. Information was portioned out in a meager fashion, but we did finally realize that we were going to be flying off an aircraft carrier after a few brief days of practice at Mitchell.

So, to answer your first question about flying a P-40 off an aircraft carrier. I think most of us looked upon this as an exciting adventure. After all, most of us got into the Army Air Corps in 1941 because the excitement of flying was uppermost. I would qualify this somewhat for those who were married recognizing the risk that they may not return to a loved one. Single pilots were freer of these constraints. As far as flying off the carrier was concerned, I think most of us never questioned the concept. We were too young and trusting to doubt it. I emphasize: it was an adventure.

I may get a bit windy here in answering your question about the relative merits of Allison and Merlin engines. We, in the 61st Pursuit Sqdn of the 56th Pursuit Grpth, at Stratford Conn. (near Bridgeport) were flying off a short runway jointly used by the Vought-Sikorsky Co. then testing the Navy Corsair. Because of the chaotic circumstances of the early days of 1941 we went through transitioning in P-36's, P-38's (we were the first Sqdn. to get them), P-39's, P-40's, and finally P-47's (we were also the first Sqdn. to get them). All that from January 1942 until June 1942. I mention this to explain our experience with Allison engines. We had them in P-40's, P-38's and P-39's. I can't give you specific instances of engine failure, but I can only say we were distrustful of the Allison. We had enough stories and personal experiences with problems with that engine that I can say we were genuinely pleased to get the new P-40F's with Merlin engines when we joined the 57th in July. And, I can add, our faith in the Merlin was confirmed, especially with the conditions we encountered in the Western Desert. I flew 116 missions without an engine failure while abusing the engine at times with extreme power settings. (I did lose the P-40 that I flew off the carrier when returning from Cyprus to Palestine prior to combat operations. That was not the fault of the engine but rather because of a modification—a sand screen that was installed for ground operation that inadveratently closed in flight shutting down the engine.)

Yes, there were some memorable experiences. The first, and I do not have dates, but in October of 1942, were still flying out of Landing Ground 174,

our first desert combat assignment. Our then Squadron Commander, Major Art Salisbury (later Group Co and Col.), lead an attack mission designed to hit a German airstrip on the coast at El Daba (I believe) just before daylight. Your questions seem to indicate a curiosity about the emotional reactions to mission situations, so I'm stressing these aspects for this mission. Remember, at this point, we are really brand new. We've just been reconstituted as an American unit after spending some weeks with the British. We are assigned this early morning raid. Speaking for myself, the anticipation and tension are at extreme levels--taking off at night, joining up a (3) squadron formation, maintaining total radio silence, flying on the deck out to sea. I don't remember our flight time to target, but it was about 45 minutes of high adrenaline flying. Salisbury brought us right in on target hitting the airport totally surprising the Germans with their 109's on the ground, shooting up everything we saw in one pass, turning back east in a wild scramble to avoid interception. But that is not the end of the story. German 109's were scrambled, perhaps some even that we missed, and we were intercepted within about ten minutes. We were flat on the desert deck. I was falling behind my element leader because we were at such high power settings. I heard a frantic radio transition screaming. "ship flying straight, turn, turn, turn!" I looked back; there was nothing behind me. Then I heard the same frantic call, "ship flying straight ahead, turn, turn, turn!" Then I looked straight up above. A 109 was diving straight down with a deadly bead on me. I made a panic turn and looked down behind me as I turned, watching 20mm cannon bursts impact in the sand on the desert floor. As it turned out, my savior in this case was Pudge Wheeler, the CO of 64 Sqdn., who was leading the squadron behind us. Since we couldn't cope with 109's in this situation, our only resource was to stay on the deck as we headed for safety in the bowels of the Qutarrah depression and out of range of 109's. We lost two pilots that day.

Another memorable occasion, again early in our combat phase, was a morning escorting B-25's I believe. I was flying in Gordon Thomas' (our Sqdn Co after Art Salisbury became Grp. CO) top cover flight. We were in the Matruh or Sidi Barani area when we a small flight of 109's began a harassment from above (always). They would dive down and we would turn into them. They would zoom up out of range. They kept this up for a time and had made several passes. On the last, with me in the middle of a vertical turn into them, one of the attackers let go with a 20 mm. He got lucky because it impacted the wing in my P-40 and blew a huge hole in it (large enough for my mechanic to stand up and put his head through it.) Fortunately my airplane still flew. But I was in a state of panic, knowing that they would probably attack again and I had very poor maneuverability. The adrenaline in these circumstances is truly at a peak. As a matter of fact, I was so panicked knowing that I was vulnerable that I failed to recognize a friend in Bill McGill trying to join up with me during the melee of battle (I learned this later.). He knew who I was but all I saw was prop and spinner apparently trying to get a bead on me. I thought that it was another 109. I then dove for the deck, finding what I thought was security just above the waves. I flew well behind friendly lines, then turned landward and back to

my strip. I dwell on the panic here to emphasize the importance of experience; after 50 missions or so, one becomes more adapted to combat environment. I think we were all too new to be really good combat pilots. I had a mere 100 hours of fighter time when we joined the 57th. That was probably average. And during the period of this training, the Army Air Corps didn't really have a lot of experience to pass on to we new sports. We did train with the British before going into combat, but that was a short term and speaking for myself, an unsophisticated youth from the Midwest, I found the whole experience over- challenging. What I am referring to is the matter of flying the airplane competently; flying the airplane in strange circumstances—desert, heat, visibility, strange landing fields. This is the kind of thing that is overcome by experience. Then there is the matter of living under primitive conditions with limited resources-food, water, bathing, laundry, simple necessities. I know that I am not doing this very well, but the point is that it takes time in the air and on the ground to become professional. We weren't for a long time, but finally one becomes mentally adjusted and can function more effectively.

Another somewhat hair rising mission occurred in the Medenine area. We were on the deck strafing when I took more r 20 mm's in the wing resulting in other huge holes. Again I sought security at sea. I broke for the coast and stayed on the deck again until I was certain I was behind friendly lines. When I cut in I was well behind our own landing strip and came upon a British P-40 re-supply unit. When I landed the British sergeant took a look at my bird and said "damn Yank, you've got a problem here." I can't remember if these words are accurate but the paraphrase is close. The airplane was gushing gas from ruptured tanks and you might say that I had a lucky day since I was damn fortunate not to have run out of gas out to sea. Well, the amusing thing about this incident is that the sergeant said "Yank do you want another plane?" I hadn't realized that this was a re-supply outfit, but naturally I was eager to get back to my strip so I jumped at the chance even though this airplane was cockpit configured for British use and was somewhat different than ours. By now it had been several hours since I left my revetment at my home strip. They all knew I was missing. My appearance, taxing into my own revetment with a new airplane after taking off on a mission, was hard to explain.

I am surprised that you refer to my claiming a probable 109 kill on March 1943. I have no access to records of this, and if you do, I 'd be grateful to have them. If you are referring to the mission when Marshall Snead was shot down (I believe that was Marble Arch), then I can describe that dimly. Snead was my flight commander and I was in his flight. We were again escorting medium bombers and were heavily attached by 109's. The fight became one big melee with airplanes going every which way. I jumped on the tail of a diving 109 and followed him down through a few thousand feet firing 50 cal and watching a mass of tracers seemingly enter throughout the fuselage. I did not see this airplane go down and I had to break off so I cannot make any major claim. In fact this is the way I reported it and I am surprised if they gave me a probable on it.

Most of the Ranger originals rotated back to the States after our so called Palm Sunday Massacre which I am sure you will read about from some of those on that mission. (I was a flight commander at this time. We had intelligence reporting a possible mass evacuation from Tunis over the next day or two. I scheduled myself for the dawn mission. Nothing happened. Just another damn bit of poor information. Aha, it was the next mission, and I missed it!)

After the fall of Africa, Gil Wymond and I along with others in the 64 and 66 were extended. We had more missions than most of those going home, but we were so devastated at missing the Big Shoot that we were kept. Gil Wymond took over the Squadron and I became his operations officer. I had over 80 missions at the time and stayed with 65 until after the fall of Sicily and then I rotated home in Sept of 1943 with a total of 116 missions. I'd like to brag about my personal crusade to get hold of flyable 109's which I did successfully in Sicily, but since that really doesn't have anything to do with the combat effort I'll not bore you with that.

I spent a year in the States in training outfits, then escorted the graduates of our two P-47 Fighter Training Squadrons at Wendover AFB arriving in Italy in Nov. of 1944. Fortunately, I was assigned back to my old Fighter Sqdn. and came in as just another replacement pilot. My old friend Gil Wymond was still CO and another old friend, Frank Manda (who I had trained in Africa) was Operations Officer. Unfortunately, Frank was shot down in Northern Italy in January 1944, and I became Ops again. Gil Wymond then rotated in April or May and I became Sqdn. CO. When the war ended in Italy, I had some 180 missions.

I might add, that the 57th was slated to join the war in the Pacific when we finished in Italy. Our planes were all transported and we were sailing for the Philippines in August of 1945. We were just outside the Panama Canal when the bomb was dropped. We were turned around and debarked in Boston.

I stayed in the Air Force and retired in 1968 as a colonel.

Some of the data that you have requested may not be available. I frankly don't know the number of my airplane (strange as that may seem). I know that we for the most part didn't take time to paint on names. So I didn't. My crew chief was Royball. My armorer was Bill Hahn. Pictures I may have some that will confirm some of my claims. Especially the ones about the "holes." I'll search.

Sincerely,

Ed Ellington

As a postscript to this summary, I'd like to add an observation which relates to your remark about all of us not making out as Aces. Some of our pilots obviously were more mature in combat situations. I name George Mobbs and Roy Whittaker in this category. Obviously there are others, but these are two names that come to mind. Opportunity is another thing. I nearly always led my contemporaries in numbers of missions, but other than the missions I've cited above, there was very little other contact with 109's in my experience. Some were gloriously fortunate to be on the Palm Sunday effort. Some of my own flight members were on their second or third missions. This brings me to another observation.

You've undoubtedly read Don Lopez's book "In the Eye of the Tiger." (Don and I were together at Eglin Field from 1946-1948.) When I read Don's book, I was mystified as to why he entered so many more incidents of combat than I had in a similar number of missions. I finally decided, and so wrote him, that I believed that the reason was that he was facing an advancing enemy and we were trailing a retreating enemy. I don't know if that is sensible or not, but in our case we would be in active combat. Then the 8th Army would break through, the Afrika Korps would retreat. After he was out of range, we'd have to wait until new air strips were prepared. We would stand down sometimes for weeks while Monty would reequip, retrain, and reattack. Lopez' outfit was always in the thrust of the enemy while ours was constantly running

*Carl Molesworth*

April 8, 2000

Dear Duke:

Just a quick note to thank you for replying to my request for information about the 57th Fighter Group for my new book, P-40 Warhawk Aces of the MTO.

Your photos are enclosed -- very interesting. It took a little longer than I expected to copy them, because I had to wait for enough pictures to accumulate before I could shoot a 36-exposure roll of film.

Concerning your combat of 13 March 1943, you were credited with a probable on the squadron's Form 34 for that 10-day period. I also was interested in your mention of Don Lopez and the comparison between MTO and CBI fighter operations. When I interviewed Don some years ago, I asked him how many times he encountered Japanese aircraft in China. As I recall, he thought he had about a dozen combats (with five confirmed victories). That certainly seems like more opportunities to score than most MTO P-40 pilots got.

The research is moving ahead, and I expect to have a publication date for the book before too much longer -- probably Fall of 2001. I'll keep you posted on that.

Thanks again for your help.

**Attachment 2**
**(Cairo/Alex)**

## ATTACHMENT NO. 2

In Cairo, Doll's Cabaret was a favorite night stop of visiting combat personnel. You could get anything at Doll's including a good steak. Where on earth that came from was anybody's guess.

Bob Hoke and I were great buddies in the flying school and in the 61st Sqdn at Bidgeport. Our first relief from combat was spent in Cairo. I believe we stayed at Shepherds, but I can't remember. (The Leroy was in Alexandria and there is another story.) Anyway, Bob and I went to Cairo on leave and he was a good drinker and party buddy. Bob had a girl friend in Connecticut that he was mad about and he made me promise that if anything happened to him that I would go back and see Gretchen.

Well, we got staggering around the streets of Cairo one night when we were accosted by a native explaining that he had some lovely young women that were waiting to see us. We did not want to admit that we were lost in the City, so we followed this gentleman to his site of pleasure. We went up a flight of stairs and into a room in which a young girl no older that fourteen or so was lying naked. Our escort said, "see, very clean, very hygienic." Bob and I weren't saints, but we weren't attuned to the customs of the Middle East, so we departed.

On one of my visits to Cairo, we were visiting the Shepherds' Hotel. On our way out and near the formal entrance to the hotel, I was suddenly stricken with the need to pee. So, right there, in the main street, beside a giant palm I relieved myself. Not a forgiveable exhibition, but in some attempt to rationalize the crass act, remember that we had just come from the middle of the desert where one could go pee at almost any venue (It didn't hurt the sand)—outside the tent, behind the O-club, beside your airplane-well you see how habit prevails. After several hours into a good party, the outside of Shepherds looks like any other desert location (but in broad daylight? Or was it? I forget.).

I hope that you forgive the admission of these stories.

Another time I got to visit Alexandria, Egypt. I am pretty sure that we stayed at the Hotel Leroy. Ed Fletcher from 64 was there and quite a gang of us. That was the time that Col. Art Salisbury met Nancy who worked at the Red Cross in Alexandria. Ed Fletcher was a natural born comedian and we partied relentlessly. Ed could muster dialogue with the entertainment in the night clubs in the most comedic fashion. One night we were in one of the most fashionable clubs in Alex. It so happened that Art and Nancy were also dining there and the evening entertainment was in full swing. Ed managed to get into the swing of things and the first thing you know we became part of the entertainment group. I am up there with Ed when Art calls from his table asking me just what am I doing up there. Not having any reasonable answer, I just said that I was on the schedule and pulled

out a phony paper to claim my position. Well, everybody knew we were well into our cups and let us go at that.

# ATTACHMENT 3

## (The Tower Incident in Naples)

# HEADQUARTERS ARMY AIR FORCES
MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS
A. P. O. 650

360.1x
360.112

10 SEP 1945

SUBJECT: Letter of Transmittal

TO : Commanding General, Army Air Forces, Washington 25, D.C.

1. It is requested that the inclosed correspondence be forwarded to Headquarters, 57th Fighter Group to be inserted in the 201 file of Major E. H. ELLINGTON and Major R. L. JOHNSON.

2. These communications have been previously sent to the C.O.D.S., P.O.A. and were returned because of an insufficient address, although the 57th Fighter Group was redeployed to the Pacific theater prior to VJ-Day.

FOR THE COMMANDING GENERAL:

ROY A. LANGE,
Major, Air Corps,
Actg Asst Adj Gen.

1 Incl: Ltr fr Hq 1419th AAF Base Unit, NURD-ATC, subj: Violation of Flying Regulations, dtd 16 Jul 45, w/2 Inds.

COPY

COPY

HEADQUARTERS
1419th AAF BASE UNIT
EUROPEAN DIVISION, AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND
APO 512, U. S. ARMY

16 July 1945.

360.111

SUBJECT: Violation of Flying Regulations.

TO : Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations, 1417th AAF Base Unit, EURD-ATC, APO 512, U. S. Army.

1. The following violation of flying regulations is reported to your office for your information and action as you deem necessary.

2. At approximately 0800Z, on or about 15 July 1945, a C-61 type aircraft, No. KK433, assigned to the 66th Flight Squadron of the 57th Group, RAF, location unknown, and piloted by Major E. N. Ellington, U.S.Army, committed the following violation at Ciampino Airbase, Rome, Italy:

a. Landed downwind.
b. Landed against two (2) red flares.
c. Landed south downwind while a light aircraft was rolling to a stop after having landed north.
d. When given the red flare, pilot pulled up enough to clear landing aircraft and then landed behind the aircraft, which had landed in the opposite direction as instructed by the tower.
e. Pilot did not file an arrival form.
f. Pilot took off downwind without obeying the light signals given from the tower.
g. Pilot did not get an operational clearance for take off.

3. Information has been received that the above aircraft arrived at this Base from Grossetto and departed for Naples, airfield unknown.

4. It is again stated that the above information is passed on to your Headquarters for action as you deem necessary.

/s/ James E. Johnston
JAMES E. JOHNSTON
Lt.Col., Air Corps,
Commanding.

Incl: Copies Tower Operators' Reports.

COPY

COPY

DISCREPANCY REPORT

DATE: 7-15-45

TIME GMT: 0914

TYPE AIRCRAFT C-61

AIRCRAFT NO.KK433

RADIO CONTACT (YES OR NO) NO

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN PILOT BY TOWER NONE

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DISCREPANCY: AIRCRAFT TOOK OFF DOWNWIND WITHOUT LIGHT CLEARANCE FROM TOWER. ALSO AIRCRAFT DIDN' T FILE AN ARRIVAL OR CLEARANCE WITH OPERATIONS.

SGT. EMILIO ADDANTE
SENIOR TOWER OPERATOR ON DUT

A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY:

A. Louis Appleton /s/
A. LOUIS APPLETON,
CAPTAIN, AIR CORPS

360.111x 2nd Ind. ACT/CDA/ebw
360.112
HEADQUARTERS, ARMY AIR FORCES, MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS,
APO 650, U.S.ARMY.

To: Commanding General, Army Air Forces, Winston Salem 1, North Carolina
(Attn: Chief of Flying Safety).

1. Your attention is invited to the basic communication.

2. Major E.H. Ellington and Major R.L. Johnson, who was also in the aircraft in question, are at present in a staging area in this theater awaiting shipment to the United States with their unit, the 57th Fighter Group.

3. Both officers have been questioned regarding the incident descril in the basic communication and the following disclosed:

a. C-61 aircraft which bears the squadron and group designation KK433 is C-61 number 44-83090. It has no radio;

b. Major R.L. Johnson was pilot of the airplane when it landed at Ciampino. He approached Ciampino to the north, was given a green light and then landed south. He did this in spite of the fact that there was a cub on the runway which had just completed its landing roll to the north, because the wind sock indicated to him that the wind was from the south. He states that he did not see the two red flares which the tower fired during his final approach.

c. Major Johnson states that he did file an arrival.

d. Major E.H. Ellington was pilot of the airplane on take- off. He states that he filed a clearance and then took off upwind as indicated by the wind sock. He saw no lights from the tower before or during take-off.

4. No action is being taken against these two officers in this theater. There is indication that both officers are either not familiar with or are indifferent to the rules for the airdrome control of an aircraft without radio. Both officers exercised poor judgment in this case and failed to take that degree of care a pilot is expected to take to insure the safety of flying.

5. This information is passed to you for use in the event further derelictions of these pilots are brought to your attention.

FOR THE COMMANDING GENERAL:

ROY A. LANGE,
Major, A.C.,
Actg Asst Adj Gen