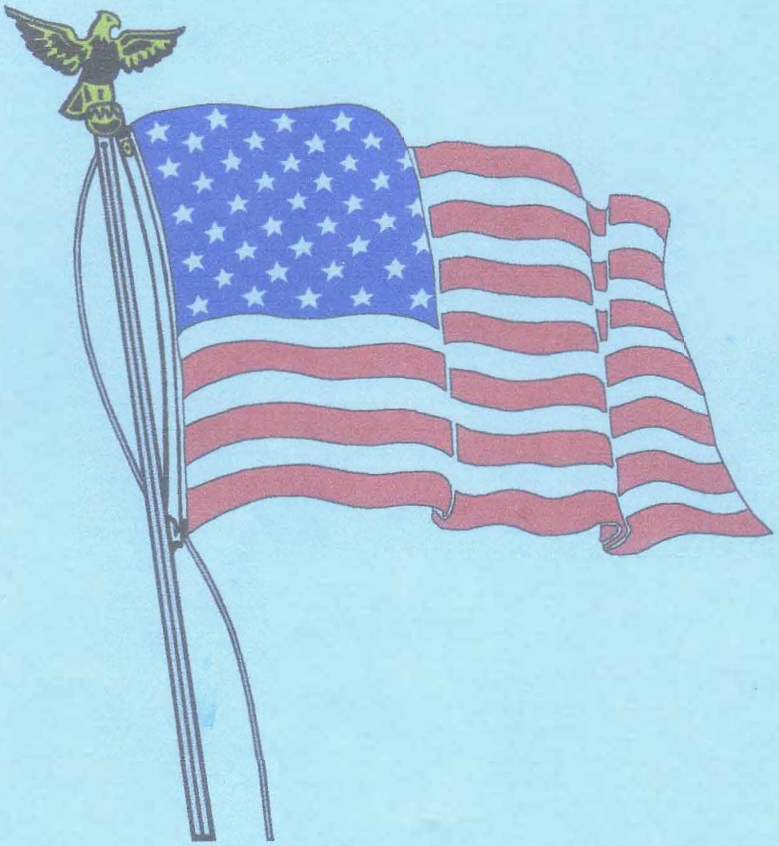
MY JOURNEY FROM *MOSQUITO POINT*



JACOB LIEMBURG COOPER

WORLD WAR II SERVICE
January 1943-December 1945

I said my good byes to Ma and Pa and little brothers Charlie and John, although I don't remember anything about that, and boarded a train in Utica. It would be nice if I could remember who took me there. Perhaps Ma and Pa went to the train station to see me off. It was a troop train, full of young men on their way to various military installations. It was a very slow train, stopping often, sometimes being shifted around in a railroad yard, backwards, forwards and finally moving again. After what seemed like days, we stopped somewhere, we knew not where, in the middle of the night. When it became daylight, someone opened a window and asked a worker outside where we were. He said, Chicago. After all that time, and we had only made it to Chicago! That's all I remember about my first train ride. Some days later, I was in San Antonio, Texas. I didn't know it then, but in future years my military career would take me to good old San Antone many times. I think that very nice city thrived mainly because of all the military posts near-by.

The Aviation Cadet program consisted of four phases: Pre-flight, and Primary, Basic, and Advanced Flying training. Each phase lasted about two months. Pre-flight training was conducted at the Aviation Cadet Center at Lackland Field outside of San Antonio. Initially, we underwent many hours of physical testing which included depth perception, dexterity, and a psychological examination. A very few cadets were disqualified at this point. We were given instructions in various military subjects, including Morse Code. We had to send and receive twenty words per minute, which seemed impossible when we first started, but it became easier as we got used to it. In addition, there was a lot of physical training, and marching and singing in formation. I found that I loved to march. We also studied military protocol and what it meant to be an officer in the United States Army.

At Pre-Flight you were a lower classman for about four weeks and then for four more weeks you were an upperclassman. Each upper classman had his own lower classman to ride herd on. We had to run except when marching and when you had to go left or right your corners had to be square. The upper classmen were forever harassing you. In the mess hall, each table had about four lower and four upper classmen. Food was served family style. The upper classmen helped themselves. You didn't dare take any for yourself. There was a ritual which went something like this. Lower classman: "Sir, would any upper classman care for the potatoes?". Usually you would be ignored, then perhaps try again. This time an upper classman would say no we don't care for any potatoes. Then: "Sir, could a lower classman have some potatoes?" More ignoring, until finally an upper classman said it was all right to help yourself to the potatoes. It was the same thing with the meat, other vegetables, etc. If you made a request or statement in an incorrect manner, or fouled up somehow, you might be required to eat a square meal. This meant that your utensil had to be lifted straight up from the plate, and then horizontally into your mouth. If you forgot, and an upper classman noticed, he might tell you to dress up your plate and

sit at attention for the rest of the meal. At the least, you would get chastised severely. In dressing up your plate your knife, fork, and spoon had to be placed across the plate from the four o'clock to the ten o'clock position. Sometimes, the first lower classman to ask for something to eat, would not be allowed anything, just because he was the first to ask. One time there were some bananas on the table. One of the lower classmen didn't ask for one. An upper classman asked if he wanted a banana. The answer was, no sir, whereupon the upper classman ordered the lower classman to eat all the remaining bananas. There were quite a few bananas, and the lower classman got sick.

In the barracks, lower classmen were on the lower floor and the upper classmen on the upper. After dinner, there was a study period. When that ended, the upper classmen came down stairs and started their hazing. You might have to do some exercises out in the open bay. You had to do all of them, and the upper classmen did them along with you, except that it was not the same upper classman all the time. A cadet whose bed was in a cubicle next to mine couldn't take it any longer; he was so exhausted that he broke down and asked to be washed out. They obliged him. If it wasn't exercises it might be reciting a long story you had to memorize. The recitation had to be perfect, not a word out of place, or you might end up doing fifty push ups. Ten PM was Taps and all of a sudden it became nice and quiet. Listening to the bugler playing Taps, while you lay there in the darkness, made you feel somewhat homesick, and wondering why the type of treatment we were undergoing was necessary. I never thought there would be so much hazing. There was a purpose in all of this. You sure grew up fast and learned to remain calm and collected under the most stressful of times, even with someone hollering in your face as loud as he could. The desire to earn those silver wings made the hardships we faced easier to accept. Besides, in a few weeks we were going to be upper classman. No matter how much difficulty you may be having at a particular time, don't forget your ultimate goal, and always keep in mind that bad situations usually have a way of getting better.

Our living area was inspected daily by a member of the upper class. The inspection was conducted with white gloves, which showed the dust easily, if you were unlucky to have left a bit of dust somewhere. Clothes had to be folded in a certain manner and displayed in your locker in a very neat and exact way. The blanket on your bed had to be so tightly drawn that a quarter tossed on it flipped over. If it didn't, the inspector angrily tore the bed apart and gave you special instructions at the end of the day, with a few push-ups thrown in. Those who ccould accept the situation as something of a game which would end sometime had an easier time of it.

When our time came to be upperclassmen we moved into the upper floor of the barracks. Finally realizing why all that we had faced was necessary, we gave the newly arrived lower classmen just as hard a time as we got. Our upperclassmen, whom we hated at first, but then realized were only doing their job, transferred out to attend Primary Flight School.

On April 23, 1943, after completion of Pre-Flight training, some of us were sent to Primary Flight School at Corsicana Field, a small civilian airfield near Corsicana, Texas. Other Pre-Flight classmates were sent to different primary flying schools of which there were many all over the country. We were happy because henceforth there would not be any more hazing. Primary flight training was conducted by civilian companies under contract to the federal

HEADQUARTERS
ARMY AIR FORCES GULF COAST TRAINING CENTER
Office of the Commanding General

February 23, 1943. Randolph Field, Texas

Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Cooper,
19 E. North,
Ilion, N. Y.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Cooper:

In a memorandum which has come to my desk this morning, I note that your boy, now an Aviation Cadet, has been specially selected for training as a Pilot in the Army Air Forces.

In order to win this war, it is vital to have the best qualified young men at the controls of our military aircraft. Upon their precision, daring and coolness will depend in large measure the success of our entire war effort.

The duties of an Army Pilot call for a high degree of mental and physical alertness, sound judgment, and an inherent aptitude for flying. Men who will make good material for training as Pilots are rare. The Classification Board believes your boy is one of them and that he will in all probability win his wings as a military pilot.

You must realize, however, that all of our study of the problem has produced no infallible method of determining in advance whether a young man has that inherent something which will make him a natural and safe pilot. As a result, some pilot candidates are later transferred to other types of military training.

Comprehensive tests indicate that your son stands a very good chance of successfully completing the rigid training for an army pilot and you have every reason to be proud of him. I congratulate you and him.

Sincerely yours,

G. C. Brant

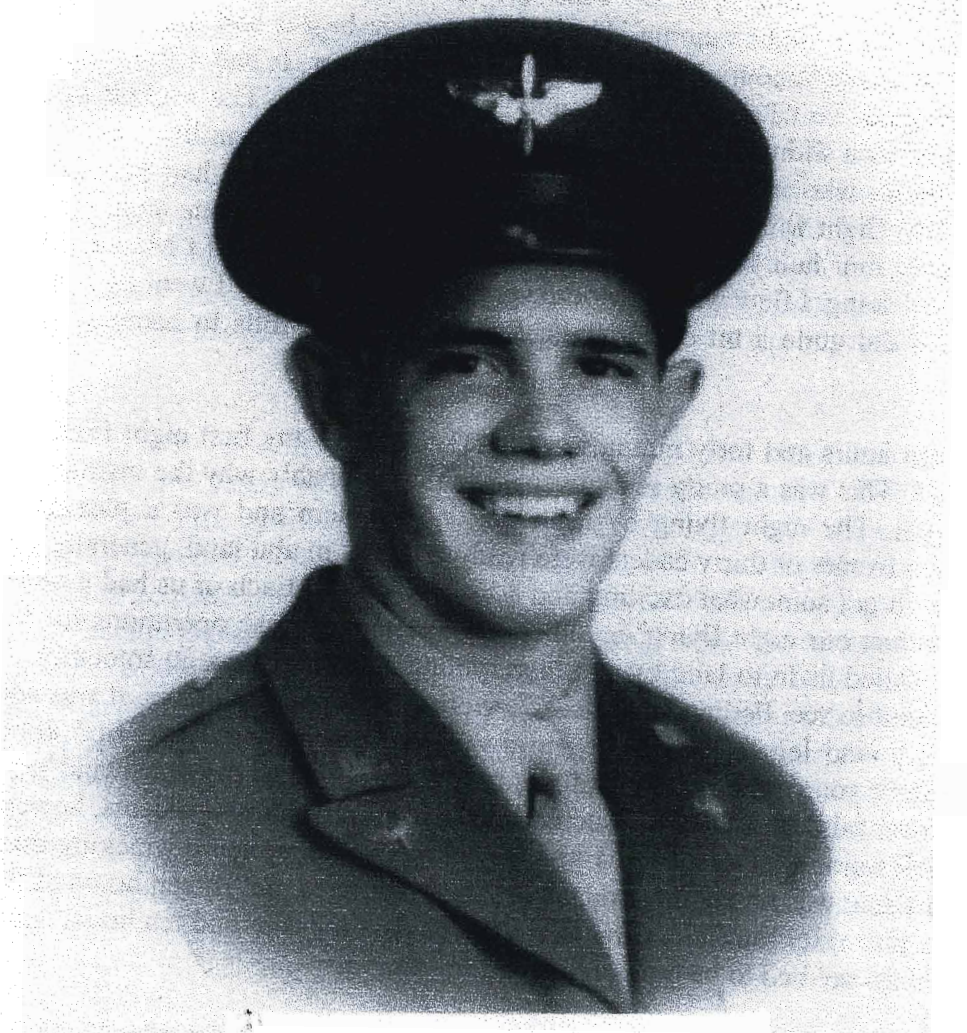
G. C. BRANT
Major General, U.S. Army
Commanding

government. The flight and ground school instructors were civilians. The Mess(dining)Hall was also civilian operated, a lady cook was in charge. This was my first introduction to rare roast beef. Ma always cooked meat very well done.

There were a few active duty military officers stationed at the base. They flew with us now and then to ascertain our progress. A "check ride" was something to be feared. If your progress in learning to fly was not up to par, your civilian instructor scheduled you for a flight with one of the military pilots. If the student could not be helped, or exhibited a fear of flying, he was washed out, and then sent for reassignment elsewhere, in some cases to bombardier or navigator school. At Primary we continued with classroom instructions, but now learning to fly became paramount. The aircraft used at Corsicana was a Fairchild PT-19A. It was a low wing monoplane with an open cockpit and two seats, one behind the other. It had a 175 horsepower Ranger engine. I had my first flight on April 27, 1943 with my instructor, my first time ever in the air. I wish I could remember his name, because he pulled me through some troubling times. The instructor communicated with you by talking into a flexible tube which was hooked up to your leather helmet. You couldn't talk back.

Even though I had dreamed of becoming an Air Corps pilot for as long as I could remember, I just didn't feel all that comfortable when operating the plane. In time, this feeling went away, and I enjoyed flying more and more. We had to learn how to recover from tailspins. First, you put your plane into a tailspin by climbing with little power until the engine stalled. The airplane would then descend, nose first, wings rolling over and over. I had difficulty putting the plane into the tailspin. It was a very uncomfortable feeling. Finally my instructor took over and told me to observe closely. He put the plane into a spin, took his hands off the controls, and the plane recovered by itself!! I had no problems after that. Our training flights lasted less than an hour and in the beginning I flew just about every day. My initial difficulty delayed my first solo flight, I think. It was not until May 19,1943, after I had flown with my instructor for thirteen hours and seven minutes, that I soloed. Some of my friends soloed with less time than that, probably after eight or nine hours. On the day I soloed, I had flown with my instructor for one hour and eleven minutes when he told me to land at an auxiliary field. After landing, he said something like, "Let me out of here, you're on your own now." He got out of the cockpit, jumped to the ground, and watched while I took the airplane off by myself. I made a number of landings as he had told me to. After about fifteen minutes, I stopped and my instructor got into the plane for the flight back to Corsicana. I was one very thrilled young man that day. My buddies doused me with a garden hose when I got back to the barracks. That was the ritual after someone soloed.

After that I normally flew two flights each day, one with my instructor and one solo. There was no night flying in Primary Flight School. One day I went on a cross country flight to Waxahatchie to Hillsboro and back to Corsicana, a solo flight of one hour and sixteen minutes. It was fun. My last flight at Corsicana was on June 23, 1943 and total flying time thus far was sixty-five hours and one minute. I also accumulated five hours and twenty minutes in the Link trainer. In this trainer, which was operated in a classroom, we practiced instrument flying. You could not see outside and the instructor could track your course on a map at his desk.



EARLY 1943 AT SAN ANTONIO AVIATION
CADET CENTER PRE-FLIGHT SCHOOL

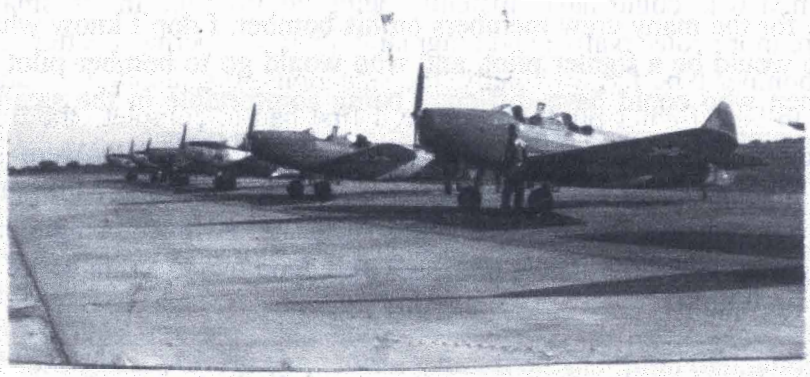
I did not intend to go into as much detail as I have, but wanted to point out that it was not very easy for me in the beginning, in fact I was in deep despair at times. My desire to succeed and please my parents kept me going, as did my desire to be a military pilot. The thought of failure helped me to overcome my problems and get through it all. No matter how difficult a situation you may be facing, don't quit, keep trying, and you will succeed.

After completing Primary, I was transferred to Basic Flying School at Majors Field, Greenville, Texas, reporting there on June 27, 1943. It was the same routine there, ground school(classroom) and flight training. The airplanes were bigger and more powerful. We flew the Vultee BT-13A, commonly known as the Vultee Vibrator. It had a Pratt and Whitney 450 horse power engine. To us Cadets it was one powerful airplane. The cockpit had two seats in tandem enclosed by a sliding canopy. At Basic, our instructors were military pilots. Mine was Lt Thomas M Moore, who was a real fine gentleman. Each instructor had perhaps a half dozen students. My first flight with Lt Moore was on June 30, 1943, lasting one hour. On July 7, 1943 I soloed after only four hours and twenty minutes of flight time with Lt Moore. I felt real good about how I was doing. I flew with Lt Moore very little after soloing. I went on five cross country flights and also did quite a bit of acrobatic flying, loops and rolls to name a couple of these maneuvers.

After sixteen hours and forty minutes in the BT-13 I flew my first night flight. This was on August 2, 1943. This was a pretty scary event, which is probably why the instructors did not fly with us at night. The night flying by itself was no problem and was a pleasant experience. However, when twenty or thirty cadets were ready to come in and land, generally within a short period of time, it got somewhat exciting and a bit dangerous. Each of us had a certain area and altitude to conduct our night flying in. When it was time to cease operations for the night, the control tower called us in to land by area. Everything did not always go smoothly. At times the field was difficult to see. Perhaps some cadets were not as quick as others. It was not unusual to be on the downwind leg for landing (you always landed up wind) and find another aircraft approaching from your right at your altitude, trying to break into the downwind leg also. There were a lot of near misses, if there are such things. I don't recall any accidents, however. We also "flew" the Link trainer at Greenville. I had eleven hours in that nerve wracking machine. Total flying time at Basic was ninety one hours and fifteen minutes. Seventeen hours of that was with my instructor, plus sixty four hours and five minutes daytime solo and ten hours and ten minutes night solo. Things seemed to be going real good for me.

Shortly after reporting for duty at Greenville, I met another Cadet who became a very close friend. We were in line to get our bedding and I heard someone who was ahead of me in line say that he was from Herkimer, New York. Since my home town of Ilion is only three miles from Herkimer, I introduced myself and learned that the individual was from Herkimer. His name was James Watson. Jim was about five years older than me and became a steadying influence in my life. He had managed a Woolworths Store in Vermont before entering the service. Later we would go overseas together and join the same fighter squadron. While at Greenville we went to Dallas a few times on Sunday afternoons which was the extent of our social life. We were not allowed to stay away from the base overnight. We were subjected to many hours of military type ground training, including a lot of marching in formation. I liked to march. We were separated

EARLY 1943 AT SAN ANTONIO AVIATION
CADET CENTER PRE-FLIGHT SCHOOL



FAIRCHILD PT-19s ON FLIGHT LINE
AT CORSICANA, TEXAS

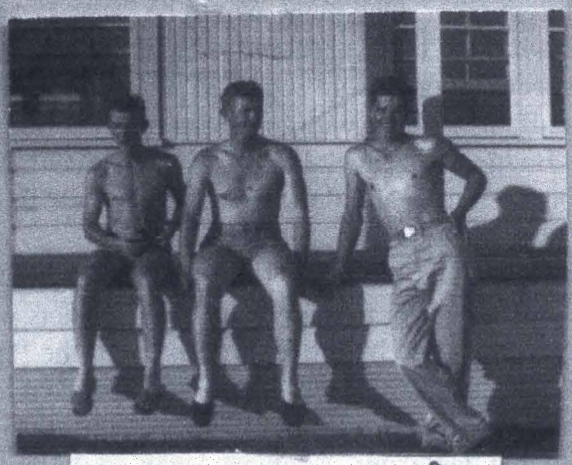
MAY 19, 1943, CORSICANA, TEXAS
PRIMARY FLIGHT SCHOOL. HOSING
DOWN AFTER SOLO. I'M FIRST WET
GUY ON LEFT

into many different squadrons and for some reason I was appointed as the Adjutant for mine. Made me proud. There were hundreds of bright young men there from alll over the USA.

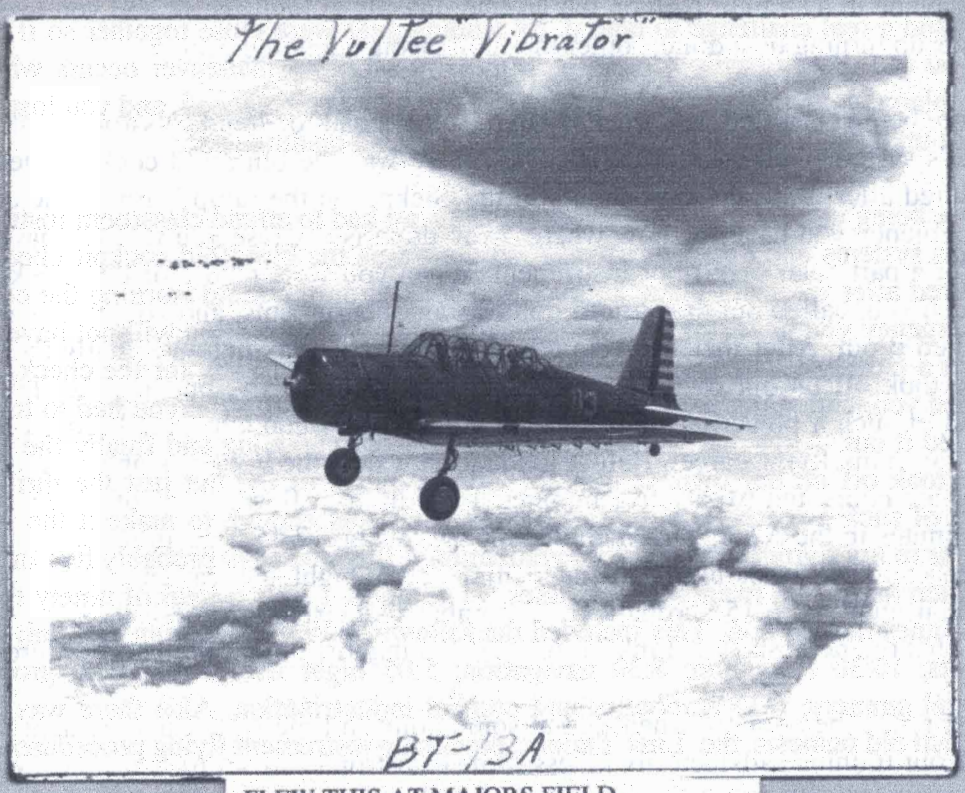
The completion of Basic Flight Training led to a very important crossroad in our military service. The Army had two main types of pilots: fighter pilots and bomber pilots. I think most Cadets wanted to be a fighter pilot. It seemed to be the more desirable type of flying for most of us. A fighter pilot had only himself to be concerned with, not like a bomber pilot who could be responsible for the many crew members on his bomber. I don't know what criteria was used to decide who would be a fighter pilot, and who would go to bomber pilot training. Some cadets were big men who could have difficulty being comfortable in the small cockpit of a fighter. Others were more conservative and pragmatic, therefore perhaps better suited for slower straight and level bomber type flying. Finally, the selections were announced and to my extreme joy, I was going to be a fighter pilot. Of course, I first had to complete the training satisfactorily; no small accomplishment, for sure. The would be fighter pilots were sent to Single Engine Advanced Flying School and the prospective bomber pilots to Multi-engine Advanced Flying School. My friend, Jim Watson, was also selected for advanced single engine training. Because they were going into multi-engine training I said good bye to a number of friends who I had been with since Pre-Flight.

On the road again, this time to Aloe Army Airfield in Victoria, Texas. I cannot remember how we got from one place to another, no doubt by train. Victoria is located quite a bit more south than Corsicana and Greenville, being south and east of San Antonio. Other cadets were sent to other single engine flight schools and most of the cadets selected to be bomber pilots went to Ellington Field near Houston, Texas. I was pleased that Jim Watson also received orders to report to Aloe Field. We reported on August 31, 1943 to the US Army Advanced Single Engine Flight School. The training was similar to what we had at Basic Flight School, but we received more instruction in tactical or combat maneuvers. The aircraft was more powerful. It was the AT-6, AT standing for advanced trainer. It was manufactured by North American Aircraft Company and was equipped with a Pratt and Whitney radial engine which provided 550 horsepower. It had two seats, one right behind the other with a sliding canopies. For the first time, we would be able to retract our wheels after takeoff. It was very important to remember that the wheels were not to be retracted while the plane was on the ground. Quite obvious, certainly, but there were a few occasions when someone, in a situation when there seemed to be a hundred and one things to do at once, did not remember this. Some were eliminated from training for such an oversight. Our classroom training (ground school) continued as before, as did physical training. We were scheduled frequently for firing shot guns on the Skeet range where we learned how to lead a moving target when shooting at it. This would help us in any dog fights we might be participating in against the enemy when we got overseas.

The base had an Armament Section and their personnel had installed a machine gun in one wing of each plane with the ammunition to go with it, probably 30 caliber. This was for our gunnery training, both ground gunnery and aerial gunnery. On October 2, 1943 we were sent on temporary duty to a small airfield on Matagorda Island in the Gulf of Mexico, just off the coast of Texas. We flew our planes to Matagorda Island. Firing a gun from your plane was very exciting. Another AT-6, flown by a Tow Target Pilot, towed a large rectangular canvas target at



ENJOYING THE TEXAS SUNHINE
AT MAJORS FIELD L mE



FLEW THIS AT MAJORS FIELD,
GREENFIELD, TEXAS DURING BASIC
FLIGHT SCHOOL JULY/AUGUST 1943

the end of a long cable which was attached to the tail of his plane. We took turns firing at the target. When the mission was completed the target was dropped along the side of the runway. The scorers could tell which Cadet hit the target because the tips of the ammunition in each plane were painted a different color. One plane would be firing red ammo, another blue, and so forth. When the target was hit, the color appeared around the hole in the target. After everyone landed the target was inspected scores were recorded. If you did well enough you qualified for the Expert Aerial Gunners Badge. Those with lower scores qualified for a Sharpshooters Badge, or the lesser Marksman's Badge. I was awarded the Expert Medal. Miracles do happen. We left Matagorda Island after about ten days and flew back to Aloe Field to continue our training.

Up till now we always had the company of an instructor before we soloed each type of airplane. While still at Aloe Field, prior to graduation, some Cadets were selected to fly the P-40, a real combat aircraft which was used by the Flying Tigers in the Pacific Theater of Operations and also in the North African Campaign. I was one of those picked to fly the P-40. I don't know why I had this honor and I didn't ask. I learned later that those selected had earned it on the basis of their flying ability and demeanor. Another reason could be that you were not instructor material and were slated for combat. I never aspired to become a flight instructor. There was room for only one person in the P-40 so when it was time for us to try it out we were on our own. It was much more powerful than anything we had flown and much faster. It was tricky just taxiing it and a real challenge to land it. Its landing gear were close together so if you were not careful you could very easily ground loop the aircraft. This maneuver occurs when you can't keep the plane in a straight path on the ground, usually at high speed, and you lose control. The plane ends up turning on a dime, sometimes collapsing a landing gear.

Before being entrusted with the P-40 in the air we had to attend classroom instructions about the plane's systems and characteristics. Also there was the blindfold cockpit check which was administered after we spent many hours in the cockpit on the ramp learning the cockpit layout. In an emergency you have to know where everything is because you will not have time to look around for a particular control or instrument. When you were ready for the check, an instructor blindfolded you, called out the various controls and instruments, and you had to touch each one as he called it out. After that we were allowed to practice taxiing and finally the big day came when we took off on our own. It was not an easy plane to fly, but just the thrill of being in command of such a powerful aircraft all by yourself was enough to make it the most exciting event so far in my flying career. Before graduation, I flew the P-40 probably five or six times for a total of ten hours and twenty five minutes. In addition, I flew a total of ninety two hours and fifteen minutes in the AT-6. This included the following: 17:45 transition; 5:00 night local; 9:25 instruments; 10:30 formation; 8:30 navigation; 5:05 night navigation; 9:00 ground gunnery; 20:45 aerial gunnery; 6:15 acrobatics and combat indoctrination. Also there was 13:05 hours spent in that old nemesis, the Link Trainer, practicing instrument flying procedures.

I don't remember exactly when, but at some point in time it became evident that we would complete our training satisfactorily unless some catastrophe arose. At that time we were allowed to order our new uniforms, the uniforms of a US Army Air Force officer. Something really great to look forward to. Representatives of a supplier in San Antonio measured us and our orders were placed for delivery just prior to graduation. The government provided all new officers with

5. UTP AR 600-35, the following-named Av/Cs, having completed a course in Aerial Gunnery at Matagorda Bombing and Gunnery Range 15 Oct 43 IC TM 1-270, are qual for ratings indicated:

EXPERT AERIAL GUNNERS

Rinehart, Robert W.	17096978	Critz, James E., Jr.	18135770
Miller, Edward L.	16077052	Gault, Billy J.	12087335
Johnson, Leonard D.	37102143	Garibaldi, Arthur T.	12078642
Woodworth, Walter A.	35512808	Danaher, James E.	18072541
Barensfeld, Jack R.	15131039	Croskey, Richard G.	20920775
Vigna, Joseph J.	39014790	Gilbert, Craig A.	16079950
Layne, J. T. (i.o.) Jr.	14158675	Banks, William E.	16077051
Conlan, Jerry V.	39258065	Fishburn, James R.	15333825
Yarbrough, James T.	14167121	Hutchinson, James D., Jr.	12099060
Cooper, Jacob L.	12137439	Boryczka, Frank J.	32553582
Arnold, Charles W., Jr.	13062898	McCarty, Joseph W.	37369610
McInnis, George (none)	6151652	Whalen, William E.	12080784
Taylor, Mark A.	11070319	DeFazio, Francis M.	32391977
Shean, Edward H.	17125231	Stone, Johnny J.	17030088
Grossman, Ralph F.	15108360	Costello, Walter O.	20480161
Busenbark, Joe S.	18044776	Ewalt, Paul I.	16104062
Turner, Ross T.	16114070	Wilson, Joseph E.	15113647

AERIAL SHARPSHOOTERS

Watson, James M.	32493411	Koons, Royal E., Jr.	17099170
Brethen, Richard H.	16083210	Lundberg, Felix E.	17024623
Olson, Richard L.	37160913	Potter, Roland C.	17084679
Manzer, Harry F.	6974649	Thompson, F. A. (i.o.)	18000195
Charbonneau, Leo B.	20135171	Kark, Donald E.	17114839
Savides, Philip M.	16089283	Ranger, John R.	32579226
Pastor, William J.	12093871	Jauch, Ralph C.	39401463
Bartley, Roy D.	15095985		

AERIAL MARKSMEN

Brown, Kevin V.	16079819	Ksanznak, Thomas A., Jr.	13008851
Frye, Chester B.	16110258	Mrenak, Frank W.	13087910
Hanrahan, Raymond J.	17069669		

6. The VOCO of 18 Oct 43 transferring 1st Sgt Kenneth B. Jones, 18032083, Hq & Hq Sq, 60th SEFT Gp, in gr to 482nd SEFT Sq, UTP AR 615-200, are confirmed and made of record. (Atchd 483rd SEFT Sq, and will remain atchd thereto).

7. UTP AR 615-200, Sgt Edward J. Isles, 32317659, 481st SEFT Sq, is trfd in gr to Hq & Hq Sq, 61st SEFT Gp.

8. Having been asgd 482nd SEFT Sq, IC Par 27, SO 272, Hq, Tech Sch and Basic Tng Center No 6, AAFWTTC, Lincoln, Neb, 12 Oct 43, Pfc Melocchi, Edward (none), 33670119 (on DS at Lincoln, Neb, atchd 780th Tech Sch Sq, and will remain on DS thereat, the VOCO of 12 Oct 43 transferring him in gr to 481st SEFT Sq, UTP AR 615-200 are confirmed and made of record.

By order of Colonel ROSS:

HORACE C. IVEY
1st Lt., Air Corps
Assistant Adjutant

OFFICIAL: Horace C. Ivey

HORACE C. IVEY
1st Lt., Air Corps
Assistant Adjutant

DISTRIBUTION "A"
(1) CG, Hq, AAFCFTC, Randolph Fld, Tex Att:1FT (5)CO,AAFTS,Scott Fld,Ill
(5) CO, AAF Preflight Sch, Ellington Fld, Tex

NOV 3, 1943 ALOE FIELD VICTORIA, TEXAS. JIM WATSON AND ME. JUST COMMISSIONED 2ND LTS AND AWARDED SILVER PILOT'S WINGS

Army of the United States

Honorable Discharge

This is to certify that

JACOB L. COOPER

12137439, Aviation Cadet, Atchd Unasgd, Hq & Hq Sq, 60th 3EFT Gp, Aloe Army Air Field

Army of the United States

is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military service of the United States of America.

This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest and Faithful Service to his country.

Given at **Aloe Army Air Field, Victoria, Texas.**

Date **2 November 1943**

STATE OF NEW YORK
HERKIMER COUNTY, ss
Recorded on the 12 day of March,
1945 at 4:57 o'clock P.M., in Book No.
..... of .....
at page 293 and examined
..... Clerk

Stoyte O. Ross

STOYTE O. ROSS,
Colonel, Air Corps,
Commanding.

W. D., A. G. O. Form No. [illegible]
January 22, 1943

ENLISTED RECQRD OF

Cooper (Last name) Jacob (First name) L. (Middle initial), 12137439 (Army serial number) Aviation Cadet (Grade)

Born in Ilion, in the State of New York

Enlisted ~~xxxxxxxx~~ 11 August, 1942, at Albany, New York

When enlisted ~~xxxxxxx~~ he was 18 6/12 years of age and by occupation a Cutter Grinder.

He had Brown eyes, Brown hair, Ruddy complexion,

and was 5 feet 7 inches in height.

Completed 1 years, 2 months, 22 days service for longevity pay.

3 NOV 1943
Agent Finance Office
Aloe Army Air Field, Texas

Prior service: [2] None

Paid in full $ 7.00

Emeral O. Noah
EMERAL O. NOAH, 2nd Lt., F.D.

Noncommissioned officer Never

Military qualifications [3] Expert Aerial Gunner, Par. 5, SO #255, dtd 19 Oct 43, AAAF, Victoria, Texas

~~Army specialty~~ Pilot trainee

Attendance at None
(Name of noncommissioned officers' or special service school)

Battles, engagements, skirmishes, expeditions None

Decorations, service medals, citations None

Wounds received in service None

Date and result of smallpox vaccination [4] 1-23-43 Immune

Date of completion of all typhoid-paratyphoid vaccinations [4] 2-10-43

Date and result of diphtheria immunity test (Schick) [4] None

Date of other vaccinations (specify vaccine used) [4] Tetanus toxoid 3-26-43

Physical condition when discharged Good Married or single Single

Honorably discharged by reason of [5] Completion of training per Par 25a AR 615-160

Character Excellent AGO Periods of active duty [6] (See Remarks.*)

Remarks [7] No time lost under AW 107. Not entitled to travel pay. * Hq 2nd S.C., SOS, Gov. Island, N.Y., to Duty 1-15-43; AAFCC, SAACC, San Antonio, Tex., 1-18-43 to 2-18-43; AAFPS(P), SAACC, San Antonio, Tex., 2-18-43 to 4-22-43; 301st AAFFTD, Corsicana, Tex., 4-23-43 to 6-27-43; Atchd Hq & Hq Sq 50th BFTG, MAAF, Greenville, Tex., 6-27-43 to 8-30-43; Atchd Unasgd, Hq & Hq Sq 60th SFFT Gp, AAAF, Victoria, Tex., 8-31-43 to 11-2-43.

Print of Right Thumb

Signature of soldier Jacob L. Cooper

John J. Fogarty

JOHN J. FOGARTY,
1st Lt., Air Corps,
~~Commanding~~ Asst. Personnel Officer.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENLISTED RECORD

[1] Enter date of induction only in case of trainee inducted under Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 (Bull. 25, W. D., 1940); in all other cases enter date of enlistment. Eliminate word not applicable.

[2] For each enlistment give company, regiment, or arm or service with inclusive dates of service, grade, cause of discharge, number of days lost under AW 107 (if none, so state), and number of days retained and cause of retention in service for convenience of the Government, if any.

[3] Enter qualifications in arms, horsemanship, etc. Show the qualification, date thereof; and number, date, and source of order announcing same.

[4] See paragraph 12, AR 40-210.

[5] If discharged prior to expiration of service, give number, date, and source of order or full description of authority therefor.

[6] Enter periods of active duty of enlisted men of the Regular Army Reserve and the Enlisted Reserve Corps and dates of induction into Federal Service in the cases of members of the National Guard.

[7] In all cases of men who are entitled to receive Certificates of Service under AR 345-500, enter here appointments and ratings held and all other items of special proficiency or merit other than those shown above.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE

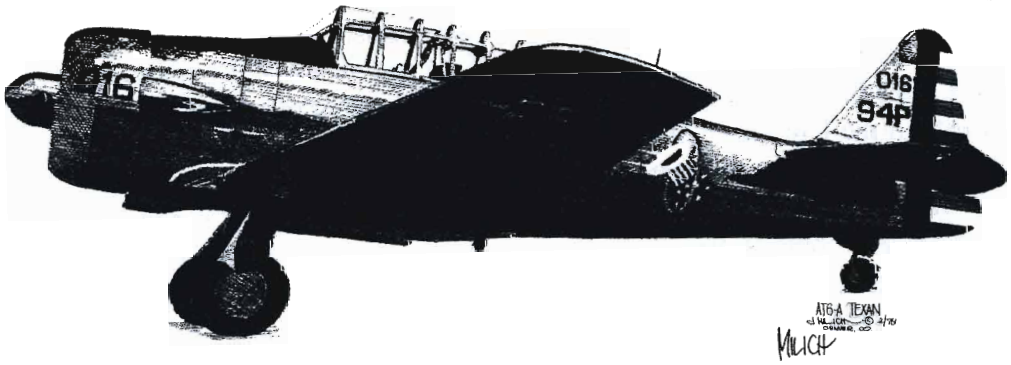
AR 345-470.

Insert name; as, "John J. Doe," in center of form.

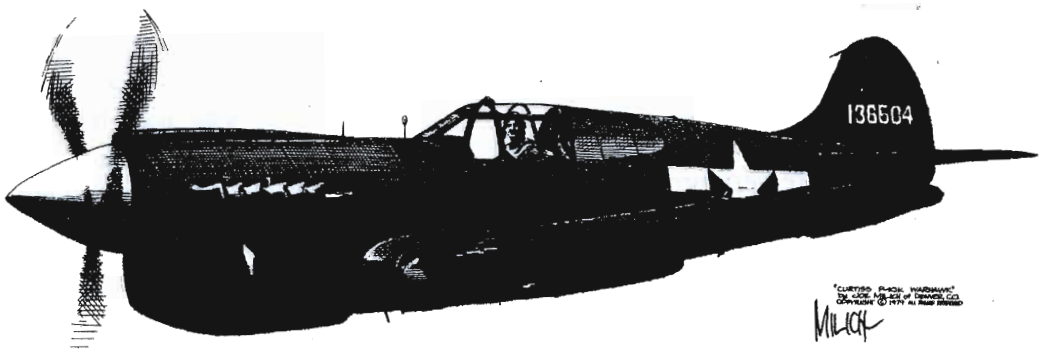
Insert Army serial number, grade, company, regiment, or arm or service; as "1620302"; "Corporal, Company A, 1st Infantry"; "Sergeant, Quartermaster Corps."

The name and grade of the officer signing the certificate will be typewritten or printed below the signature.

☆ U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1943 O—508689



NORTH AMERICAN AT-6 "TEXAN"
FLEW THIS PLANE IN ADVANCED
FLIGHT SCHOOL AT ALOE FIELD,
VICTORIA, TEXAS



CURTIS P-40 "WARHAWK". GOT
10 HOURS IN THIS AT ALOE FIELD
PRIOR TO GRADUATION FROM
AVIATION CADET OROGRAM

a clothing allowance of 250 dollars, which was almost sufficient. Most of us bought a copy of a book entitled, The Officer's Guide. It told about the heritage of the officer corps, what it meant to be an officer and contained helpful hints about what was expected of us, including various social customs. We would soon be Officers and Gentlemen, at least that's what the book said. Because there was a war going on, much of the social protocol was dispensed with, at least in the Army Air Force.

Finally the big day arrived, November 3, 1944. After about nine months we were ready for graduation. That date has never passed during the rest of my life without me remembering. The graduates, standing in ranks during a very official ceremony, were commissioned as Second Lieutenants in the US Army Air Force and were awarded the silver wings of a pilot in that great organization. Talk about a dream coming to fruition. Probably one of the biggest days of my life. Some of the graduates had parents and girl friends in attendance. Our new officer uniforms were worn for the ceremony. It was the custom for newly commissioned officers to give one dollar to the first enlisted man who saluted them. There were many men awaiting us after the ceremony and I am sure that some eager men really did pretty well financially. Speaking of finances, as Second Lieutenants we were paid one hundred and fifty dollars per month. Our duty as aircrew members entitled us to monthly Flight Pay of an additional seventy five dollars. Much better than the seventy five dollars we received when we were Aviation Cadets.

Graduation also meant our first leave since we started Cadet training. Leave is like vacation. Jim Watson and I lost no time starting our trip back to the Mohawk Valley. We had orders to report to an air base in Tallahassee, Florida in about ten days. Train travel was the only way to go in those days. The railroad cars were usually very crowded and it seemed like most railroad traffic went through St Louis, Missouri. I can still remember trying to keep up with Jim as we were running, with all of our heavy baggage, from one part of the station to another when we had to change trains. Jim was a track man at Herkimer High School and very fast. I don't remember very much about that first leave. All of my friends were in the military service, so there probably wasn't much to do. I spent time with the family mostly, and it was nice being home again, enjoying Ma's cooking and seeing Pa and the rest of the family if only for a short while. I am sure that Ma and Pa were very proud of me, but, like most Frieslanders, were reluctant to exhibit their emotions too openly. I guess I'm no different.

I was eager for the leave to be over so my training could continue. At that time Dale Mabry Field in Tallahassee, Florida was a place where many pilots were sent before being transferred to other airfields where they would receive their operational training in a combat airplane. We were not there very long and fortunately, Jim Watson and I received orders to report to the same place, Harding Field in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The big question we all were concerned with was the type of aircraft in which we would be trained. We were all fighter pilots, so it was either going to be the P-39 Bell Aircobra, P-38 Lockheed Lightning, or the P-47 Republic Thunderbolt. As I recall, the P-51 North American Mustang was not a consideration for us at that time. I had always had a desire to go to combat in the P-39, so felt more than a little disappointment when, upon arriving at our destination, I learned that I was going to be a P-47 pilot. The P-39 was involved in combat at that time in a dive bombing/strafing role in close support of front line troops. This seemed to be exciting. The P-47 was being used primarily for high altitude bomber

escort which was not all that appealing to me. However, tactics change; aircraft designed for one particular role were sometimes found to be well suited for other uses. The P-47 turned out to be the best of all close support aircraft.

We reported to Harding Field in late November 1943, brand new Second Lieutenants. Most of us, I think, were eager to get our training over with so we could join the fray wherever we were needed. We were assigned to a Replacement Training Unit (RTU). Its mission was to train us so that we could replace pilots already overseas or we could fill shortages that existed. This meant that we would probably not stay together once our training was completed. There were about one hundred of us and when we went overseas we would probably be sent as individual replacements to many different fighter squadrons. We did not remain at Harding Field for our training. We were placed on detached service to an airport at Hammond, Louisiana, not very far away. Hammond was not as nice a facility as Harding, but that's the way it goes sometimes. We were kind of out in the boondocks, although I found Hammond to be a friendly little town. Probably better, really, than the bigger metropolis of Baton Rouge. I used most of my time off to visit the local area and did make a few friends there. After I left Hammond I did correspond with a girl I had met there. In fact, for a few years she sent a crate of strawberries each year to my oldest sister, Evelyn. Hammond was great for strawberries. Apparently, absence did not make the heart grow fonder, as it wasn't long before Hammond was replaced by more pressing matters and the corresponding ceased.

The P-47 was a big aircraft, bigger and heavier than most other single engine fighters. It was made by Republic Aviation and had a big radial 2000 horsepower engine. It was named the Thunderbolt. Our introduction to the P-47 was similar to our previous experience with initial training in other aircraft. We had class room training covering the aircraft systems, engine, and various procedures. Local flying regulations and procedures were also covered. And of course, the inevitable cockpit blindfold check. Again, there was no room for an instructor in this aircraft, so when you were deemed ready by your instructor, you were all by your lonesome when you took off into the blue. A very good friend to this day, Max Campbell, was the first of us to try this new beast. Max got it off the ground in fine shape, made a circle of the field and came in to practice a landing, There was a stand of trees off the end of the runway that Max was using. As he came in on final approach to the runway, Max got too low and disappeared from our view behind those trees. All of us were standing on the ramp watching to see how Max would do on this first flight. When he disappeared we thought the worst, but Max gained some altitude and in a few seconds reappeared over the trees and brought the plane in for his first landing. We all breathed a collective sigh of relief. I am sure Max did too, although today he does not remember this ever happened. At least he won't admit to it.

My first flight in the P-47 Thunderbolt was on December 4, 1943. It lasted for one hour and the time was spent getting the feel of the plane. I had fourteen more flights before December 1943 was history. Our training included acrobatics, dog-fighting against each other, aerial gunnery, ground gunnery and also included instrument flying practice in the good old Link Trainer. We had no time for Christmas or New Years leave. It was much the same in January with twenty flights. We soon ran across some strange fighter aircraft in our area. They were US Navy aircraft from Pensacola Naval Air Station, Florida. They were also training for combat so

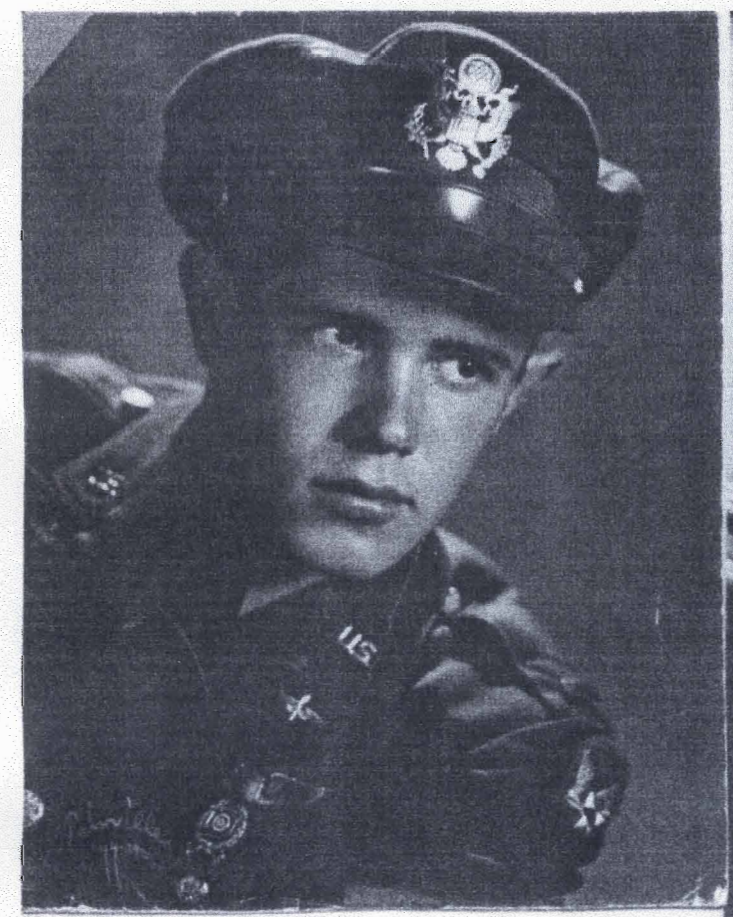
on many occasions we would dog-fight with them. My last flight at Hammond was on February 8, 1944. During my stay there I had accumulated 107 hours and 25 minutes in the Thunderbolt, including four hours of night flying. There were also 6 hours and 45 minutes spent literally sweating it out in the Link Trainer. Would we never escape that beast?

A number of us became fairly close friends while at Hammond. Of course Jim Watson was there, but also Max Campbell, Bill Brant, Tom Linstrom, Pappy Heyl, Wendell Hodges, Phil Beisner, Ted Brient, Charles McDaniel, Garrett Wakefield and some others who I can't think of right now. When our training was completed we were sent back to Harding Field to await further orders. We had plenty of time on our hands while we waited. I recall going to New Orleans once with some of the guys. The only thing I remember about that trip was the very wide streets there. We also visited Baton Rouge often. My friend Jim met a nice girl who worked for a photographer and they became serous about their relationship, something I did not know at the time. Later, when we were overseas Jim sent his undeveloped film to her. She processed it and sent the pictures back. The photographer, well known in that area, took portraits of a few of us for free. Mine is somewhere among these pages.

Even though we were sort of in limbo with not much to do, we were not allowed to go home because our overseas orders could come at any time. Finally, in mid-March 1944, about a month and a half after my last P-47 flight, orders were issued sending us to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. We were to wait there for assignment to a troop ship that would take us to our unknown destination overseas. Transportation to Camp Kilmer was by train. Our group had two or three cars and I was selected to be in charge of one of them . That was a good deal because a private room went with the responsibility of keeping track of everyone. I remember that I couldn't get to sleep on the train. One of the Porters, a very nice black man, suggested that I would get some rest if I laid down even though I couldn't sleep.

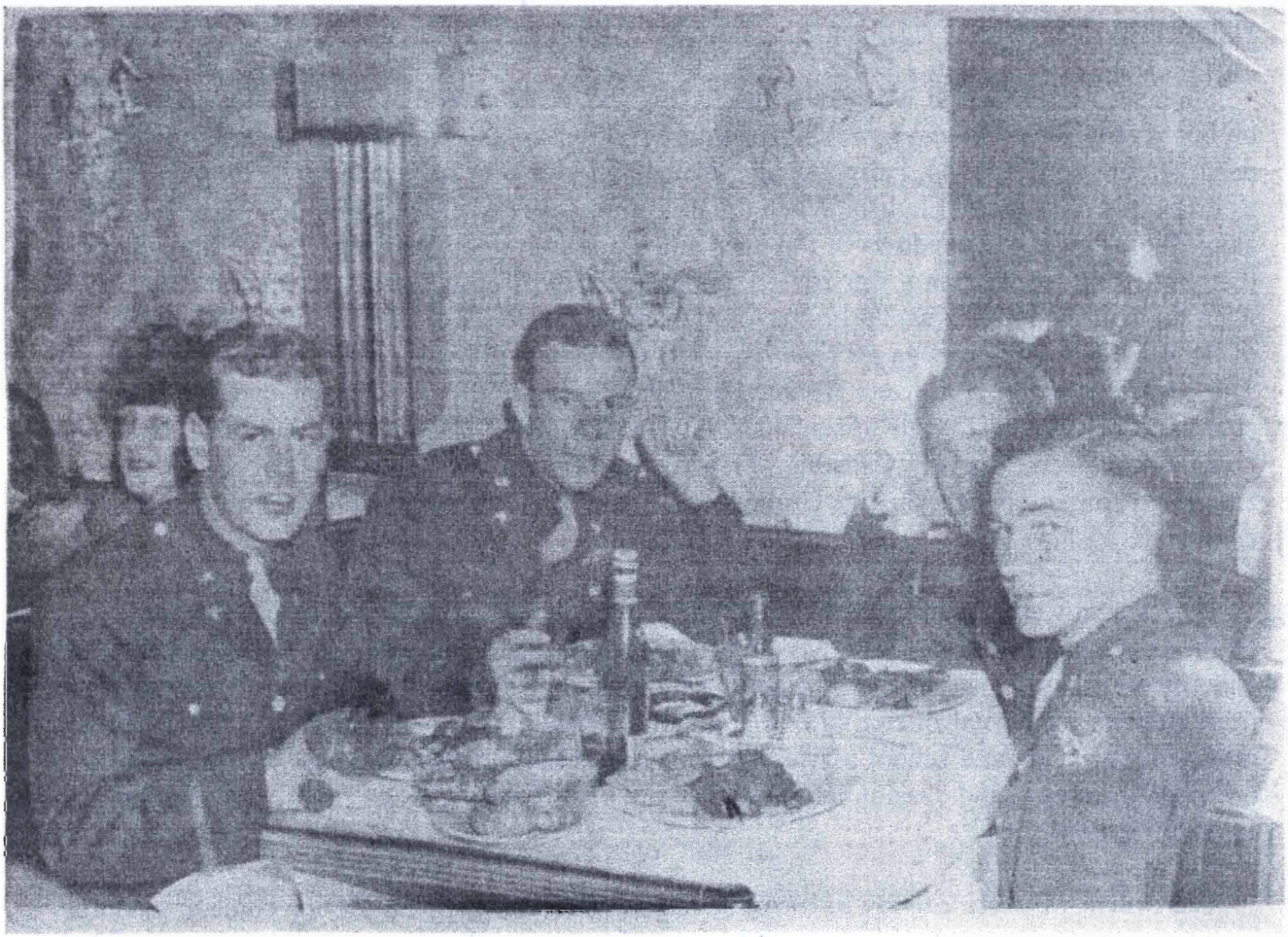
My recollection of the train trip and our stay at Camp Kilmer have long since been erased from my mind. Uneventful, I would assume. While waiting for our ship assignment, we were allowed to visit New York City. My sister Ruth and her husband Steve Stephenson were living at that time on Long Island very near the city. I visited them and as I was leaving Steve gave me three bottles of Seagram's V.O. It was a real nice present. Also, while at Camp Kilmer, I visited my high school Public Speaking teacher and baseball coach, Elwyn Swarthout, who was living nearby with his wife Genevieve. I remember that we had a very nice time. Prof Swarthout had left his teaching position and joined the ranks of the defense workers. He wanted to do what he could for the war effort. I am sure that he hated to see his former students and baseball players go off to war. A great man.

On March 28, 1944 we departed New York Harbor for a destination still unknown, to us a least. We were fairly certain that we would end up in England because of the recent news about a forthcoming invasion of the European continent. Our ship, the Esperance Bay, of English registry, had been converted from a freighter to a troop ship. It was not a very large ship and it had been around for many years. We slept down below the top deck in a room about as narrow as one's reach, with three bunks on top of each other. It was to be our home for the next twelve days. Our ship traveled in a convoy with many others, never on a straight course, always changing direction so as to confuse the German submarines, I guess. Also on board were



ME- DURING P-47 TRAINING
LATE 1943

HAROLD AFTER COMPLETING
NAVY BOOT CAMP LATE 1943



Bill Brant
493d Sqdn

Jim Watson†
493d Sqdn

ME

Phil Beisner†
492d Sqdn

N.Y. City dinner at
Jack Dempsey's just
before going overseas

personnel from a military hospital. We were pleasantly surprised to learn that this group included ninety-eight nurses. Many of the young fly-boys comprising our group were real eager to meet the nurses, however I was still my shy, bashful self. The senior medical staff did not take too kindly to their nurses spending time with us, even insuring that we ate our meals at different times. Nevertheless, some relationships were started on the journey across the Atlantic and my friend, Max Campbell, married one of the nurses while in England. I remember very little of the crossing except the very bad food, the lack of liquid refreshments (the V.O. was for later), and the salt water showers where you could not work up a lather with the soap. I did get into a poker game, my first ever, and in about twenty minutes lost twenty dollars. I stopped right then and there and never played again, except with good friends for nickels and dimes. One of our group, I think his name was Thresher, was an accomplished piano player. Much of our time was spent around him at the piano, most everyone singing along. The crossing was an uneventful one, for which we were very thankful, although there were a couple of warnings of submarines in our vicinity.

Soon we were told that we were going to England. After arrival at Portsmouth we were kept on board ship for a few days waiting for transportation to take us to our next base. Finally, we debarked on April 9, 1944, Palm Sunday. We had an idea that we would be landing in England as the ship's crew were English. When the time came, we traveled by train to Atcham, our first stop. The blacked out windows of the train and the search lights probing the sky, brought to us the reality that we were in a war zone. I am sure that most of us were a bit apprehensive about what the coming months would bring. At Atcham, a small village about thirty miles north west of Birmingham, there was an air base where newly arrived pilots received "in-theater" training. The theater was the European Theater of Operations (ETO) which was under the overall command of General Dwight Eisenhauer, later to become President of the United States. His command included English, Canadian, French, Australian as well as units of the United States and many other countries. Air, Ground and Naval forces made up General Eisenhauer's command.

At Atcham we were assigned to the 495th Fighter Training Group. All of us who came over on the Esperance Bay were there. My first flight from England, on April 27,1944, was one hour and fifteen minutes. It was spent becoming familiar with the local area. I had twelve flights from Atcham for a total of twenty one hours and twenty minutes. There was some class room instruction also, ground school as we called it, consisting mostly of combat tactics. There was one class on escape and evasion in case you were shot down.. My last flight from Atcham was on May 13, 1944.

The orders we were eagerly awaiting finally arrived; assignments to our combat squadron. Twelve of us were sent to the same fighter bomber group, the 48th, four each to the 492nd, 493rd, and 494th Fighter Bomber Squadrons. The 48th Fighter Bomber Group was assigned to the 9th Air Force, a bit of a disappointment for some who wished to go to the 8th Air Force where there was more aerial combat against German fighter aircraft. Fighter aircraft assigned to the 8th Air Force were used most of the time for heavy bomber escort missions. The fighter aircraft of the 9th Air Force were used primarily in support of the ground forces, dive bombing and strafing targets directly in front of friendly troops, plus other targets, usually transportation

Ibsley, England. Lived in Nissen Hut on left

and communications, further behind the front lines. The 9th Air Force also had medium bombers for larger targets further to the rear of enemy positions. It wasn't long before any disappointment about our assignment changed to a feeling of pride, knowing that we would be making it less difficult for the men on the ground.

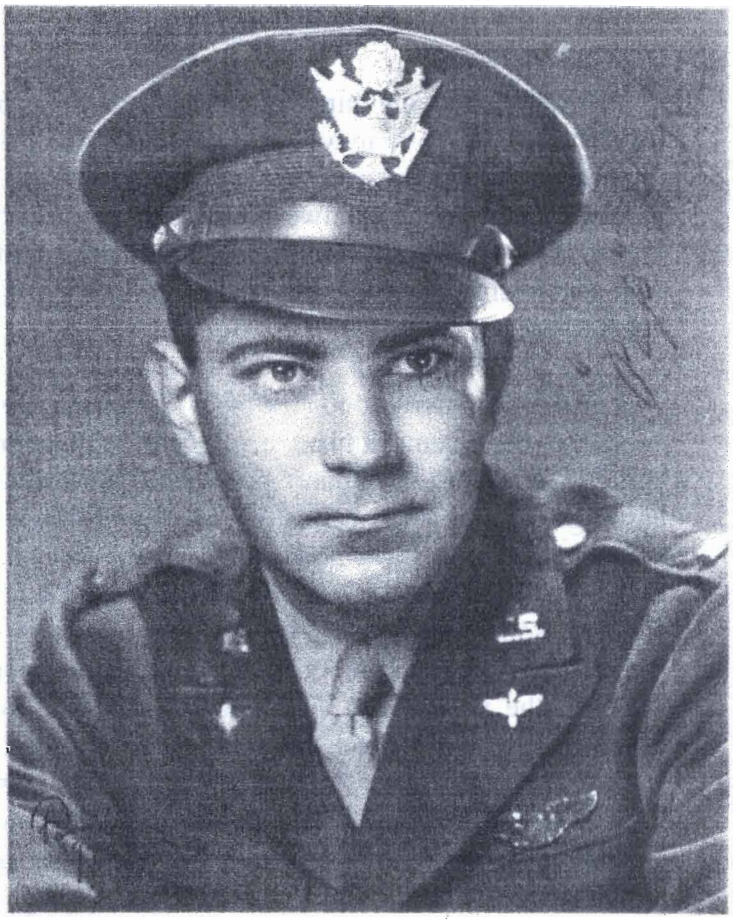
We reported to our squadrons on May 16, 1944. In addition to myself, there were my close friends Jim Watson, Rod (Pappy) Heyl, and Tom Linstrom who were assigned to the 493rd Fighter Bomber Squadron. Our new location was at Ibsley in southern England, near Bournemouth. We lived in a Nissen Hut, a metal structure about forty feet long with a roof that arched from one side to the other. The floor was cement and we slept on canvas cots. It was Spartan, but adequate. The 493rd had arrived in England not very long before we arrived. The pilots who had come overseas with the squadron enjoyed much nicer living quarters in an old manor near the base. My first flight from Ibsley was on May 21, 1944, just becoming familiar with the local area. The next day I flew for two hours and fifteen minutes on a low level navigation flight. That was it; I was ready to utilize the training I had received for the past almost eighteen months.

The squadron hierarchy consisted of a Commander, an Operations Officer and an Assistant Operations Officer. The squadron was organized into six flights (A, B, C, D, etc.), each having about seven pilots per flight, with a Flight Leader in charge. At any given time, as I recall, two flights were off duty. I flew my first combat mission on May 23, 1944 and while at Ibsley flew fourteen more. Many of these missions were against rtargets which were located just across the English Channel in the north west part of France. We dived-bombed bridges and German positions, also strafing personnel and equipment. I flew on one escort mission for the heavy bombers of the Eighth Air Force deep into southern Germany and back, a total of four hours, my longest flight in a P-47 so far. But, practically all of our missions were in direct support of the forthcoming invasion of German-occupied France. The invasion(D-Day) began on June 6, 1944. The Allied forces were able to establish a beach head on the other side of the English Channel in Normandy and started to push very slowly inland. Casualties were enormous on both sides.

On June 12, 1944 I flew my tenth mission, still from our base in England. On that day we patrolled an area east of the beach head and encountered quite a few German aircraft who were intent on attacking the invasion force. A dog fight ensued and my Flight Leader, Tony Porter, shot down two aircraft. I was kept busy protecting his tail from enemy airplanes, my assigned task. Things got very hectic with all the milling around and I finally lost track of my Flight Leader. I came upon a lone German FW-190 flying at low level away from the melee. I fired at him at the same time as someone else did. I could see the tracer bullets from the other airplane passing me to my left. The German plane crashed into the ground. During the intelligence debriefing after returning to England our Operations Officer claimed shooting down a FW-190 at low level. I assumed it was the same airplane I was shooting at, so I did not make a claim. Didn't want to have a debate with someone so senior to me. We also flew some missions escorting medium bombers of the Ninth Air Force while they bombed oil dumps, bridges and communications centers further inland.

After our ground troops were able to capture sufficient land in that part of France known as Normandy, US Army Engineer Aviation Battalions started to build airstrips, not far from the

JIM WATSON TOM LINSTROM



ROD "PAPPY" HEYL
Baton Rouge, LA.

Ibsley, England →

beach. These airstrips were to be used by Ninth Air Force fighter groups in support of the ground forces. During the month of June construction on twelve Advanced Landing Grounds (ALGs) were started with seven becoming fully operational by the end of the month. The ALGs were numbered A-1, A-2, etc. Before they were finished, the engineers had constructed about eighteen of them, often while encountering enemy fire.

A most unfortunate thing happened while those of us in the Nissen Hut at Ibsley were packing for the move to Normandy. I placed one bottle of Seagram's V.O. on the floor so I could roll it up in my bed roll. This was the last of the three bottles my brother-in-law gave me. With the help of my friends, the other two were long ago finished off. We were saving the last bottle for France. I was distracted by someone and inadvertently knocked the last bottle over. It just tipped over, but even so, managed to break into many pieces. My good friends were very disappointed, needless to say.

The 48th Fighter Group ("bomber" had been dropped from its title) became operational from ALG A-4, near Deux Jumeau, a very small village in Normandy on June 28, 1944. Our advanced echelon, made up of support personnel, had arrived on June 18th to prepare the area for the entire group. The airstrip was not what we had been used to. After the engineers bull-dozed the area level, tar paper was laid directly on the ground the full length of the only runway and on the taxi ways. Wire mesh consisting of wire about a half inch in diameter welded together forming six inch square grid patterns was laid on top of the tar paper. This was our runway. Soon thereafter this was improved when long, metal interlocking strips each about six by fifteen feet replaced the wire mesh. These strips were not solid, but had been made lighter by piercing circles in a regular pattern throughout their surface. This made our take offs and landings much smoother, but because of the runway's short length and the usual crosswind, taking off and landing proved to be a challenge. Initially, the runway was only 3600 feet long, but later was extended another 500 feet. During dry spells the area became a dust bowl and when it rained, mud was everywhere.

Tents were pitched, each housing at least four men. Our squadron's tents were located in an apple orchard which the airstrip encompassed. The apples did not mature while we were there. One of the first orders of business was to dig slit trenches which were to serve as our toilets. Of course, the number one priority was flying our operational missions. During the evening hours, it was not unusual for a German aircraft to fly over our area, no doubt on a reconnaissance mission. Our anti-aircraft guns, positioned adjacent to our tent area, were brought to bear, making for a very noisy time. The fragments of their exploded shells often dropped onto our tents. During these attacks a few men ran to the fox holes which we had dug in the ground for just such an eventuality. However, most of us elected to lay on our cots, taking our chances. Initially, we were so close to the front lines that we could hear the noise of the large artillery guns. Most of us did not venture away from the airstrip as there was not much to see. Much of the area had been devastated. A few brave souls took a Jeep to take a look at the area near the front lines, but I was not that curious. Souvenir hunting was prevalent, but for reasons that I cannot explain, I was not interested. Very foolish. There was some bartering with a local farmer for fresh eggs which were a real treat.

After flying fifteen missions from our base in England, I flew my sixteenth from our Normandy airstrip on July 7, 1944. Many of our missions during this time were of very short duration as we were dive bombing and strafing targets located directly in front of our ground troops, who were positioned immediately south of our base. One mission was only forty-five minutes long. For a short time our airstrip was so close to the front lines that if you made a wide traffic pattern when taking off or landing the German troops would shoot at you. On July 11th, while skip bombing some tanks just west of St Lo, I was on the receiving end of some German 20mm anti-aircraft artillery which left a few holes in my left wing and left wing flap. This was not an unusual occurrence. It had happened before and would again. I flew twenty missions from our Normandy airstrip, strafing and dive bombing tanks, armored vehicles, trucks, bridges, whatever could be found. On August 2,1944 I blew my right tire when landing and skidded off the strip, finally coming to a stop. All kinds of excitement. Later on, there was a German counter attack in the Mortain/Falaise area and on August 12th, during that battle, I destroyed two tanks on one dive bombing run. Made me feel kind of good, knowing that our ground troops might have an easier time as a result.

Our Squadron Commander was William Bryson who had flown combat previously in England and in the North African Campaign. He was a very capable leader who did not want anyone to try to be a hero. He insisted that we hit our targets accurately, but refrain from lingering over the target area too long. That could be unnecessarily dangerous. It was bad enough as it was. He said wars are not won by one person, it is a team effort. He also stated that wars are not won quickly; it took a long sustained effort by many people and added that there would be plenty of targets for us the next day, so we should not take any unnecessary chances. The longer you strafed a target the more dangerous it became for you because the enemy had that much more time to get a bead on you with his anti-aircraft guns. Other weapons, including personal small arms, were brought to bear on us when we were attacking a target where German personnel were present.

The food available on Normandy left much to be desired. Most of the time we had nothing more than K Rations which came in a Cracker Jack sized box and contained some soda crackers, canned meat, a candy bar and four cigarettes. My buddy, Jim Watson, recognized for his can do abilities, was issued a Jeep with a small trailer attached. He was given some money from a collection that was taken among the Officers. Along with one or two others, Jim drove down to the beachhead where ships were being unloaded. The cargo frrom the ships was placed onto trucks which were then driven inland for delivery to supply depots. The money given to Jim was used to bribe the truck drivers into giving up some of the cases of food that was being loaded onto their trucks. Jim and his helpers brought their bounty, usually canned goods, back to our base where everyone in the squadron, Officers and Enlisted men, enjoyed it.

We had quite a large tent in which an Officer's Club was built. It had a bar and shelving. It was called the Klobber Klub. George Pullis, a pilot, did most of the work on this facility along with his good friend Dick Peyton, another pilot. Captain Leonard, our squadron medical officer, made bath tub gin out of medical alcohol which went good with grapefruit juice, but was very powerful. Tom Linstrom flew a small cabin plane to England and brought back some Coke mix, so we had Gin and Coke. There was no beer available and the lack of ice for the drinks didn't

Normandy-Don Ferguson helping Tom Linstrom with his Sat. nite bath

Normandy - Jim Watson in front of our tent

NORMANDY
OFFICER'S MESS

seem to bother anyone. Such diversions were necessary for most of us. We were also given one ounce of whiskey for each mission flown. Mission Whiskey, they called it. In the old movies about combat flying, the pilots usually had a drink soon after landing. Had to calm their nerves, I guess. Doc Leonard was the keeper of the Mission Whiskey. We let him accumulate what we had earned. He kept accurate records and later on when we could go to Paris or Brussels, the Doc would dispense our individual share for our trip to town. Having American whiskey, made one very popular. At some point in time, I don't recall when it started or how long it lasted, we were eligible for the English whiskey ration. This consisted of a bottle of Scotch and Gin each month. Lots of partying going on.

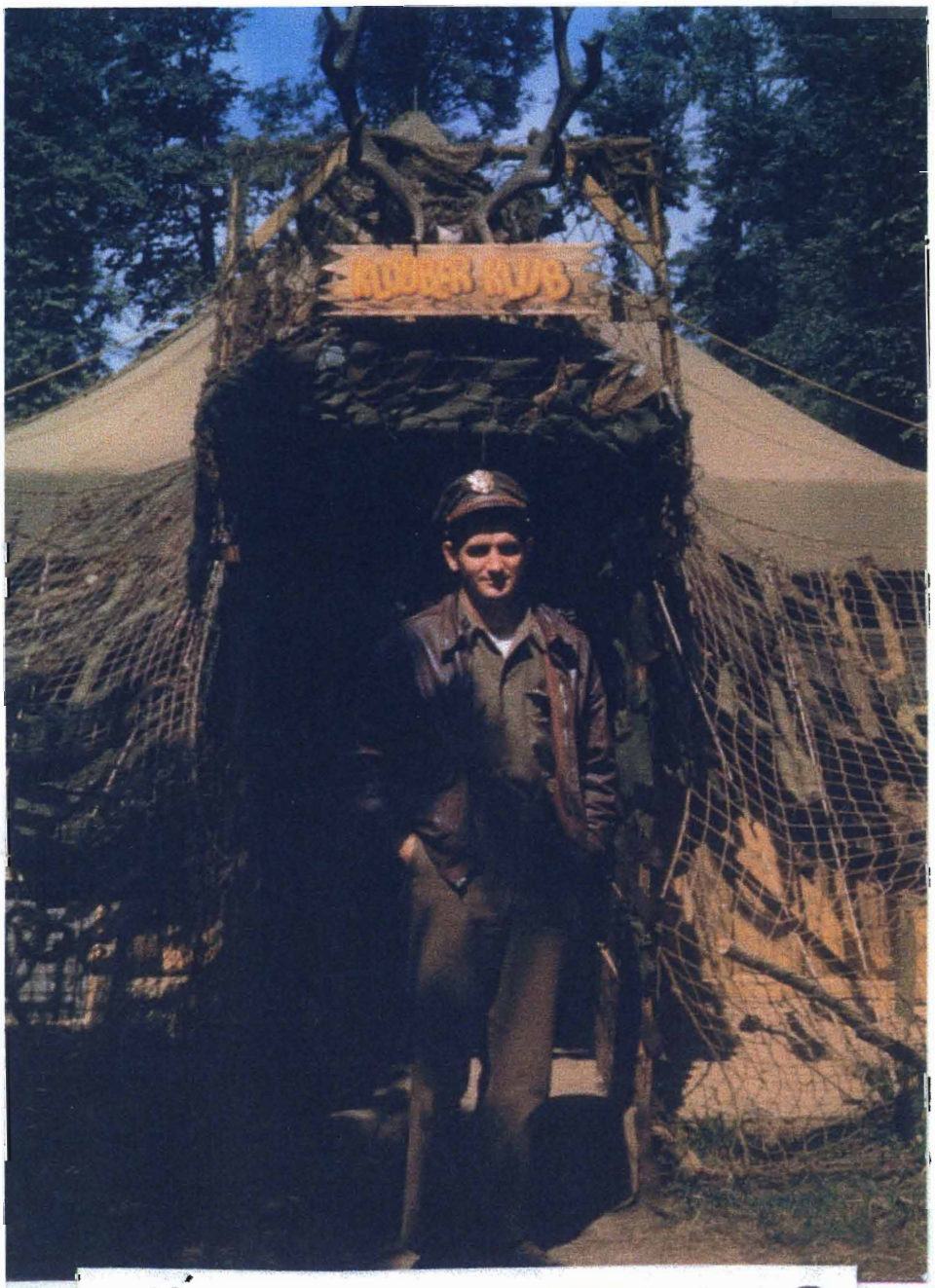
I recall a couple of happy events while in Normandy. One day an old boyhood friend from Ilion, Bob Murphy, walked into our area looking for me. We had a nice visit. Bob was stationed nearby with a unit which supplied our bombs to us. On another occasion I had one of our Sergeants drive me to another air strip in the area where I visited with my friend, Joe Bates. Joe was assigned to the 363rd Tactical Recon group. It was nice seeing someone from back home, but we all were busy so there was not much time to enjoy a visit.

Finally, after driving the Germans from the Cherbourg Peninsula to our west, the Allied Ground Forces advanced eastward and southward at a rapid pace. This made it necessary for us to move again so that we would not be too far from the ground forces we were supporting. My last mission from the Normandy airstrip was on August 31, 1944. We moved about 145 miles to the east, to a permanent airport at Villa Coublay, a suburb of Paris. Living conditions were somewhat improved over what we had experienced in Normandy. Most everyone took the opportunity to visit Gay Paree when they had some time off. I went into the city a couple of times and found the people very thankful to have us there. Paris had not been targeted to any great extent by either side during the war, so it was practically intact, **very** beautiful, with a lot of interesting and famous places to visit. There was much celebrating going on. On one visit to Paris with about five or six other pilots, we met a Frenchman who was a tour guide before the war. He could speak English very well and, for some cigarettes and candy bars, he showed us all the points of interest. We had the use of a jeep from the squadron or sometimes we traveled in a German car that had been found in fairly good running condition.

Our stay in the Paris area was very short-lived, much to our sorrow. The Nazi forces were being pushed back more and more towards Germany by our ground forces. I flew only three missions from Villa Coublay, on September 5th, 9th and 13th. They were longer missions than we had been used to, about three hours each. Two of them were dive bombing and strafing airfields in Cologne and Frankfurt, Germany. We were too far away from the front lines again, so another move was made, a short one, to Cambrai in Northern France.

Cambrai was about one hundred miles from our previous base in Paris and the pilots with the least seniority, which included me, and the ground officers and enlisted men, rode there in the back of our squadron trucks. The other pilots flew our airplanes to the new base. The Germans had operated from this same airstrip for quite some time. They had planted a lot of vegetables which we enjoyed. Most of the French people were not friendly, mainly because their city had been just about leveled by Allied air raids. C'est la guerre, as we used to say. We were at

Normandy- Stone Woolf Ferguson-Ne-Mason-Jones-Freeman-Archer



NORMANDY - KLOBBER KLUB
F. PECOTT - Acft. Maint. Officer

NORMANDY

Gerald "Big" Jackson - W. Woolf. J. Conner,
ME, JIM WATSON, ROB "PAPPY" HEYL

NORMANDY
Back - Pappy Heyl - W. Cameron - J. Freeman
Front - Guy Gallop - Jim Watson - Me

Cambrai for only two weeks. I flew four missions from that base, the first one on September 21st and the last on September 28th., three armed reconnaissance and one fighter sweep, the latter looking for German aircraft to no avail. On that mission, my Flight Leader, Gerald Jackson, took a direct hit at about 12,000 feet altitude from a German 88 millimeter gun. I was flying on his wing in loose formation. His plane, very badly damaged, went down and he bailed out right away. I followed him down but lost sight of him when he vanished into some clouds. Eight months later we learned that he suffered a broken leg when he hit the ground and was taken prisoner. Big Jackson, as he was called, was a very experienced fighter pilot having completed a tour in the North African Campaign, before joining our squadron. I was privileged to visit him in Florida in the mid 1980s.

On the move again, we arrived in St Trond, Belgium around October 1, 1944. It was only a short distance from Cambrai, about 95 miles. Here we were to stay for about six months because the Germans dug in their heels in the area of the Rhine River, halting the rapid advance of the Allied ground forces before they could reach German soil. Our airbase at St Trond had been constructed by the Germans after they invaded Belgium in 1939. It was a permanent facility, although for some time after our arrival we lived in pyramidal tents. It was not very comfortable when the temperatures dropped and the snow started falling. We had pot-bellied stoves in the middle of each tent with the metal chimney rising up through the peak of the tent. A metal cap at the top of the tent kept the canvas from burning where the chimney exited. Our cots were placed around the walls of the square tent. It was a bit on the chilly side when we rose in the morning, especially if whoever was on fire watch fell asleep and did not keep the fire going. There was a shortage of wood and coal also. We were about three miles from the city of St Trond, which the Belgians called Sint-Truiden, but I never went there.

Our living conditions improved toward the end of the year when we moved to what was once a school for children of Belgian Military Officers. We even had hot water showers, something we had not enjoyed since the previous June when we left England. The school, located on a hill, was a very short distance from the airfield. It was possible to see the runways down below from our quarters. We were lucky to be able to leave the tents as that winter was one of the coldest and snowiest on record. Our enlisted men, however, were not so fortunate, as they had to continue living in the tents. My first mission from St Trond was on October 6, my forty-third sortie so far. During this period we dive bombed and strafed targets located mainly in the westernmost part of Germany, generally within an area south of Essen/Cologne to Luxembourg and east to the Frankfort area. These targets consisted of railroad yards, fuel dumps, vehicles, tanks, trains and also German defensive positions directly in front of and often very close to friendly ground forces. When we were scheduled to fly it was necessary to report to the Operations shack for briefing early in the day. At times the weather would not be good enough to go on a mission, so we had to stand by until it improved. This time was usually spent playing cards or reading. There was a hot plate of some sort in the ready room and grilled cheese sandwiches were a very popular item.

In December 1944, the Germans counterattacked. Their goal was to recapture Antwerp, a Belgian seaport near the North Sea. They hoped to drive a wedge between the Allied forces. They moved ahead quite rapidly in the beginning, but eventually bogged down in the snowy

Ardennes Forest because of the stiff resistance put up by the American Forces. This event was called the Battle of the Bulge and turned out to be a very bloody encounter. Normally, our aircraft would have been a big help in this battle but our efforts were hampered on most days by the very bad weather. Our base was placed on alert a couple of times because of threats of enemy airborne forces parachuting into our area.. These threats did not materialize, but infiltrators were captured in the city of St Trond near-by. If and when the Nazi ground forces threatened our base, we were to evacuate our airplanes. This plan was changed since it would also have been necessary to evacuate many other bases, and there were not enough safe airfields to fly to. In addition, there was no guarantee of having weather conditions favorable enough, so it was directed that we stay put and defend the base as best we could. Thankfully, it would not be necessary.

On December 17, 1944 my very good friend, Jim Watson, was shot down by a German pilot. Another one of our pilots was lost on the same mission, one that I did not participate in as it was my day off. On that mission our squadron was about to dive bomb some ground targets when German planes attacked them from above and out of the sun. The encounter was very brief but deadly. Parachutes were not observed so it was felt there was very little hope of anyone surviving. This was later proved to be true. The loss of Jim, who I had known and been with since Basic Flying School in Greenville, Texas was most difficult for me. We had been real close friends for almost a year and a half. I have never forgotten him and all he did for me. But, no matter what, there is no time out in war, and before long the weather improved. I was kept busy with my flying duties, making it easier for me to concentrate on something other than the loss of my good friend.

While at St Trond we were allowed to visit the city of Brussels. It was easy to hitch hike as there was a lot of truck traffic passing through our area going to and from the front lines. It was a nice place to visit which some of us did when we had a day off.. We soon found our favorite haunts and enjoyed spending some leisure time away from the pressures of our work. We also had a very nice Officer's Club where we spent much of our off duty time. A small transport plane was used to make trips to the famous French wineries bringing back loads of Champagne and wine. Lots of partying going on. I recall at least one dance being held. Many American nurses, assigned to a nearby military hospital, attended. In addition, while at St Trond, pilots were allowed to go on FLAK leave. Officially, it was called Rest and Recuperation (R&R). Those who had been in combat for a long time were flown south in a C-47 transport plane for a week on the French Riviera. The group I went with stayed at the Hotel Martinez in Cannes. It was beautiful, right on the Mediterranean. People were still looking for land mines on the beach. I do not recall that any of us were interested in the beach. We had clean sheets, terrific food in a nice restaurant, and good old American beer, something we had done without since leaving the USA. There was not a shortage of spirits, which most fighter pilots never turned down. When we returned to our base in Belgium, we were ready to go at it again. Such diversions were probably necessary.

January 1, 1945 started off with a bang. The Germans conducted fighter-bomber raids on many of the Allied Tactical Air Force airbases in eastern France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Our base was the target of a raid by many German fighters who strafed our planes and

St. TROND BELGIUM
493rd Acft ready for takeoff

equipment. Many of the planes at our base were destroyed and others damaged, but we were back in the air flying missions before the day was over. I was lucky, because I was off duty that day, and was able to observe all the activity from the building where we were living. A number of German planes were shot down by the anti-aircraft guns defending our base. They did a superb job. One German pilot who had bailed out of his plane was captured by some men of our squadron and he became a Prisoner of War. The loss of Allied aircraft was only a temporary setback, because replacement aircraft were readily available. Soon we were back to normal, at least normal for the type of activity we were engaged in.

On January 25, 1945 I flew two fruitful missions, leading two flights of eight airplanes on each mission. We dive bombed and strafed motorized vehicles, railroad yards and troop positions. I was fortunate to get some excellent results, returning to strafe again and again. We returned to base with no casualties. I was recommended and approved for the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross for that day's accomplishments. I should mention more about awards for pilots. When I first started flying combat we were awarded the Air Medal for every ten missions. After ten more missions you were awarded the first Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal. Very soon thereafter the requirement was lowered so that it required only five missions to earn the Air Medal and each subsequent cluster. If you survived, you got a lot of clusters to your Air Medal. By the time hostilities ceased, I had been awarded fifteen clusters, a total of sixteen Air Medals. I recall that one of our pilots was awarded the Silver Star for some superior results on a mission, but this was unusual. The type of missions we flew did not provide the opportunity for us to do something really great.

The Allied ground forces were eventually able to push the German troops back. They then continued their advance toward German territory. A bridge over the Rhine River at Remagen was very fortunately captured intact. On the northern front, on March 24, 1945, paratroopers and glider borne troops established a foothold across the Rhine River at Wesel, Germany. I flew my eighty-eighth mission that day, our squadron providing top cover for this massive attack. Our job was to insure that German fighter aircraft did not attack our transports and gliders. That mission was longer than normal, three hours and fifty uneventful minutes. It was very sad, however, to observe the numerous tow planes and gliders being shot down by enemy anti-aircraft guns. A very costly, but successful crossing of the Rhine. This crossing, and the one further south at Remagen, enabled our ground forces to advance rapidly eastward, resulting in the encircling of about 120,000 German troops in the Ruhr Valley. Our ground forces moved so rapidly eastward into Germany that it was time for us to move again.

My last mission from St Trond, my ninety-first, was flown on March 30, 1945, dive bombing and strafing a railroad yard just east of Cologne, Germany. The very next day I flew a mission from our new base at Kelz, near Duren, Germany which was about sixty miles from St Trond. This base was about thirty miles into Germany, between Aachen and Cologne, in the area where we had flown many missions for the past six months. Living conditions were on the primitive side again, back into tents and having to put up with the mud of Springtime. No one could leave the base as it was forbidden to fraternize with the local populace. We didn't really want to and I am sure they felt the same way. It must be terrible to be taken over by an invading army, but I don't know of anyone who was sorry for them, as they had invaded neighboring countries many

St. Trond, Belgium
Briefing for mission

ME

Cannes, France

St. Trond, Belgium
ME WITH 3 NURSES

BOMBER

Ilion Fighter-B[redacted] Pilot Helps Destroy 500 Nazi Tanks in Ardennes

Ilion—Lt. Jacob L. Cooper, son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Cooper, 19 E. North St., helped destroy or damage almost 500 German tanks and motor vehicles in four consecutive days of flying over the Ardennes salient, it was reported today from a Ninth Air Force Base in Belgium.

A veteran of the Normandy campaign, the 21-year-old P-47 Thunderbolt bomber-pilot likened the scene of German vehicles fleeing from the ~~Belgian bulge~~ to the clotted roads of northern France after the battle of Falaise.

"You could point your nose down anywhere and find German trucks or tanks on the road," he said. "Even the small secondary roads twisting around the wooded mountain gorges of the Ardennes were loaded with traffic headed back toward Germany."

As flight leader for a four-man Thunderbolt formation, Cooper led a particularly effective attack against six enemy vehicles racing eastward in the Prum area, the Air Force dispatch said.

Dropping his bombs in an accurate cluster on the trucks, he destroyed three of them; then added another kill when he returned for a withering low-level strafing assault. On a later mission the same afternoon, his flight destroyed a 28-car freight train loaded with war supplies.

"It was covered with flames and burning fiercely when we turned back for the base," Cooper said.

Cooper joined the fighter-bomber unit when it was operating from southern England. He later flew from various airstrips and captured German bases in Normandy and northern France, and is now stationed in Belgium.

His group has won special commendations from the commanding generals of both the First and Ninth U. S. Armies for spearheading attacks of American ground troops, and Cooper himself has been awarded the Air Medal with 12 oak leaf clusters.

While blasting defended positions in the Aachen area, flak struck his aircraft in the wings and fuselage but he was able to make his home-base safely.

A graduate of Ilion High School, he worked in the Remington Arms plant before starting pilot training in January, 1943. He received his wings and was commissioned a second lieutenant at Aloe Field, Victoria, Tex., in November, 1943. He has been overseas since April, 1944.

A brother, Edward C. Cooper, is a staff sergeant in the Army Air Forces at San Antonio, Tex.

St. Trond, Belgium
me, after mission

times over the years. Thankfully, we were not at Kelz/Duren very long because our ground forces were continuing their advance. I flew only six missions from there, the last on April 13, 1945. One of these was a long three hours and forty-five minutes to Halle, Germany where we strafed a German airfield. I was credited with one plane damaged on the ground.

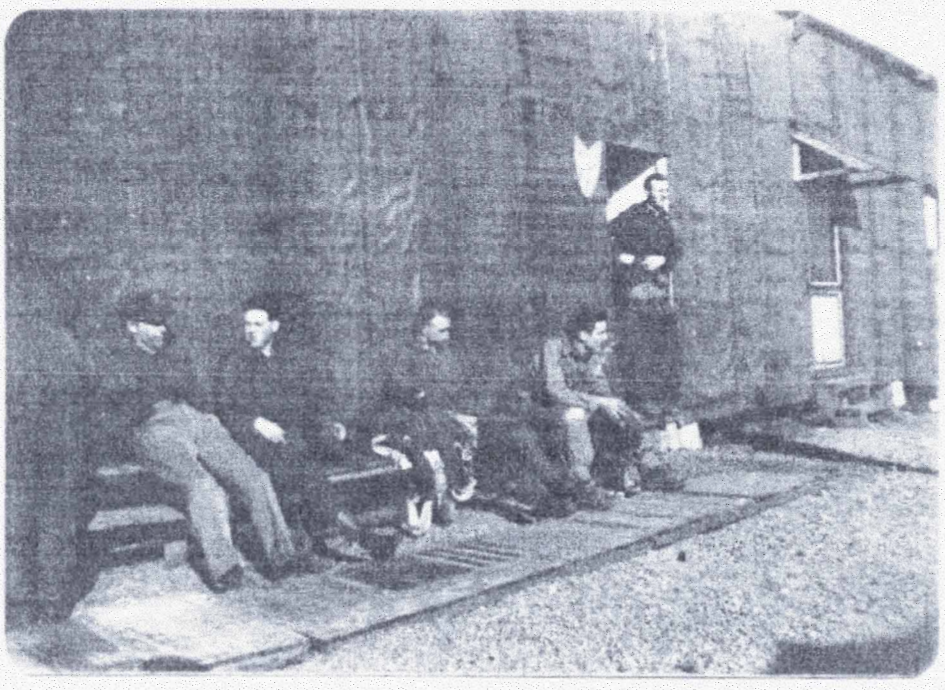
On April 17, 1945 we moved to a base at Rothwesten, near the city of Kassel, in the northern part of Germany. This was an established German air base with very fine buildings. It was left in very nice condition by the German night fighter outfit that occupied the base before we got there. Our living quarters were top notch and life became more enjoyable again. Our squadron flew only eight missions from this base. I was on two of them, my 97th and 98th. At the time I didn't know that the 98th would be my last combat mission, but we knew that our work would be finished very soon. No sooner had we settled down at Rothwesten, we moved again, this time southward to Illesheim, Germany in the Nuremberg area, about one hundred and fifty miles away. We arrived there during the waning days of April 1945 and early in May. In the northern battleground which we had just left, the Allied armies had met up with the Russians who were fighting the Germans on the Eastern Front. However, to the south there was still plenty of German resistance. It was rumored that the Germans would make a last ditch stand in Bavaria, the southern area of their country.

Our new base was also one previously used by the German Air Force. It had concrete runways and excellent living and aircraft maintenance facilities. The squadron was sent on only three missions from Illesheim before May 8th, 1945, VE-Day(VE:Victory in Europe). Because of the rapid advance of the American forces into southern Germany and finally into Austria, the Germans capitulated shortly after we arrived at Illesheim. Their last ditch stand never materialized. Naturally, the end was cause for much celebration and that's exactly what we did. Our long and dangerous journey was over, at least in Europe. Practically all of the enlisted men who went overseas with our squadron in April 1944 were still with us, but all of the original pilots were gone. Most had finished their tours and had been rotated to the States at various times, and sad to say, there were those who had made the supreme sacrifice.

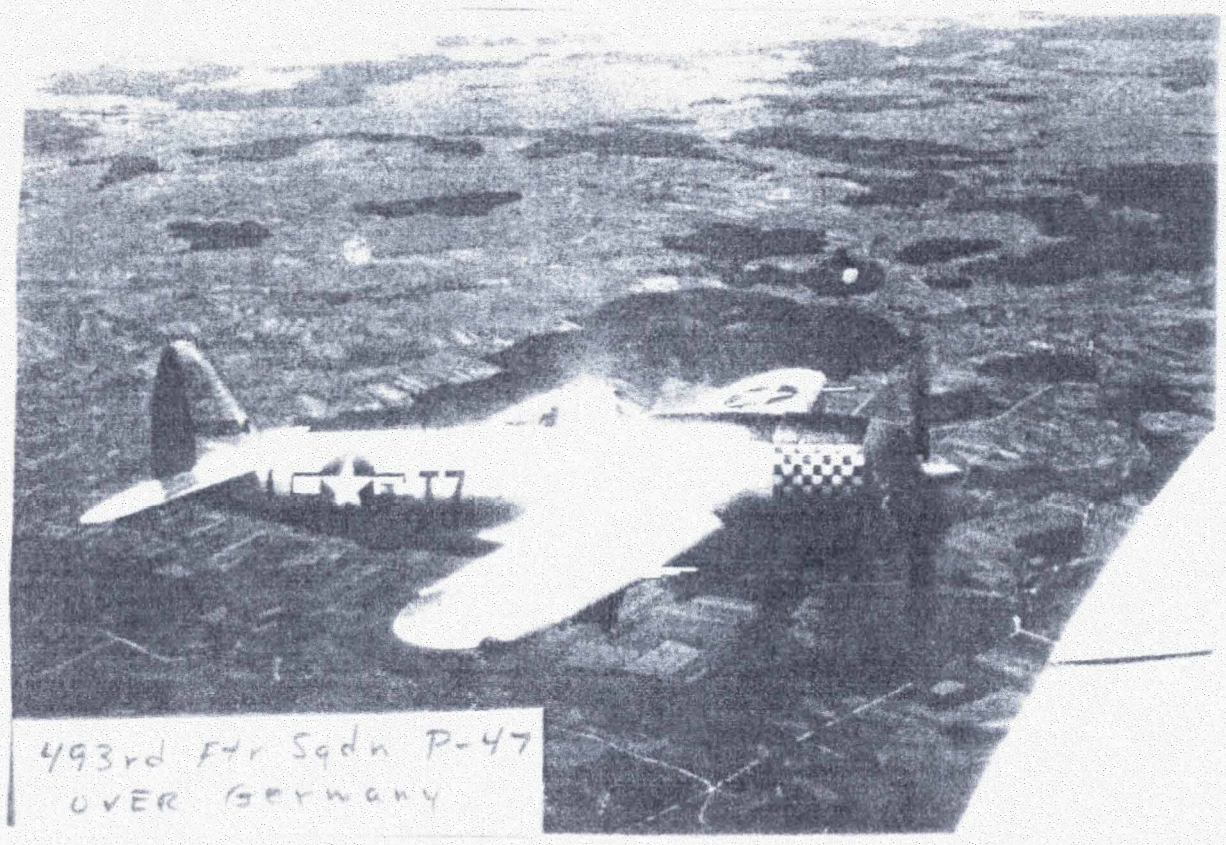
There were a number of houses on the base. German civilians were evicted from them and we moved in, perhaps five or six pilots in each house. Each basement contained a lot of potatoes and the area had a large deer population, which some of us successfully hunted. Venison steak sandwiches with french fries were the order of the day, the bread baked by the squadron cooks. Life became a bit more leisurely with no one now shooting at us. One of our non-commissioned officers had previously repaired a German bus which he was using to take squadron members on tours of the area. I was on the bus when the tour for that day was to Switzerland. The scenery was beautiful, making it difficult for me to realize that there had been a war, which now, thankfully, was finished, at least in Europe.

Many people were now being sent back to the USA. A few months prior to this time, actually in April, I had flown enough missions to be sent back to the States. At that time I let a good friend go home in my place. He had married sometime before going overseas and his wife had just had a baby, which he had never seen. I chose to remain overseas for a while and was now considering staying with the squadron for its next transfer. We had received many new,

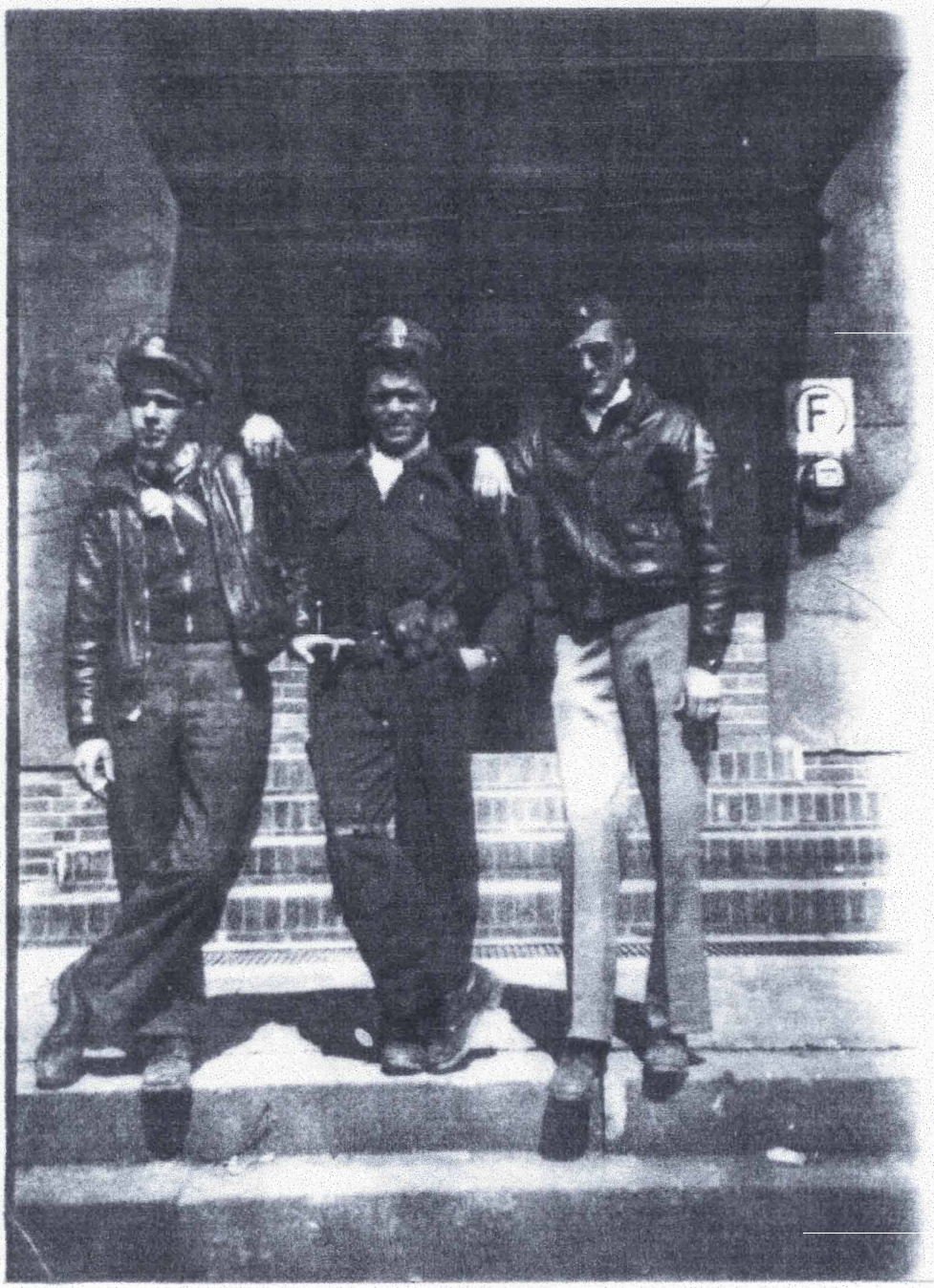
KELZ/DUREN, GERMANY
493rd (I-7) AIRCRAFT READY
FOR TAKE OFF. NOTE EXTER-
NAL GAS TANK AND MECHANIC
ON WING, GUIDING PILOT



KELZ/DUREN, GERMANY
Sweating out the weather



493rd Ftr Sqdn P-47
OVER Germany



Rothwesten, near Kassel, Germany
Apr '45 - Me, George Pullis, Bob Hart

Illesheim, Germany-May 2, 1945

FRONT: Roland Burns, Operations Officer-61 Missions;
S Paul Latiolais, Commander-95 Missions;
Don Clarke, Asst Opns Officer-76 Missions

REAR: George Pullis, F Flight Leader-108 Missions;
Rodney Heyl, A Flight Leader- 116 Missions;
Jacob Cooper, C Flight Leader- 98 Missions;
DonArcher, B Flight Leader,- 89 Missions;
George Yobb, D Flight Leader- 87Missions;
Jerry Foulkes, Spare Flight Leader- 91 Missions;
Johnnie Corbitt, E Flight Leader-96 Missions

Illesheim, Germany
may-July 1945. Houses
we lived in

HEADQUARTERS
NINTH AIR FORCE

APO 696, U S Army
29 June 1945

GENERAL ORDERS)
:
NUMBER 119) **E X T R A C T**

* * * * * *

III--DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS.--By direction of the President, under the provisions of the Act of Congress approved 2 July 1926, (Bull. 8, WD, 1926), andin accordance with the authority delegated by the War Department, a DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS is awarded to the following named officers:

JACOB L. COOPER, 0-697003, 1st Lt, Air Corps, 48th Fighter Group. For extraordinary achievement in aerial flight against the enemy. On 25 January 1945, while leading a squadron in a close support of the ground forces, Lt. COOPER attacked an enemy truck and tank column with telling effect. Heedless of intense anti-aircraft fire, and demonstrating superior airmanship and aggressiveness, Lt COOPER returned alone to make numerous strafing passes until his ammunition was exhausted, inflicting additional damage on vital enemy equipment. His courageous action and resourceful leadership reflect great credit upon himself and his organization. Entered military service from New York.

* * * * * *

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL WEYLAND:

ROBERT M LEE
Brig Gen, USA
Chief of Staff

OFFICIAL:

(Signed) F. H. Monahan
F. H. MONAHAN
Lt Col, AGD
Adjutant General

"A TRUE EXTRACT COPY"

Jerome I. Steeves,,
Lt. Col. Air Corps.

25 Aug 45
Date Issued

Headquarters XXIX Tactical Air Command
MUNICH GERMANY

CITATION FOR

The Belgian Fourragere 1940

Capt. Jacob L. Cooper, O-697003., 493rd Fighter Squadron (SE), 48th Ftr. Gp.
UNITED STATES ARMY, for meritorious service in Belgium from 1 October 1944 to 15 January 1945 inclusive.

1. His Royal Highness and Prince-Regent of Belgium has twice cited the XXIX Tactical Air Command in Orders of the Day of the Belgian Army-Decision No. 717, dated 7 July 1945, for meritorious service in Belgium from 1 October 1944 to 15 January 1945 inclusive, in connection with military operations against the enemy.

2. The unceasing and heroic efforts of the Officers and Enlisted personnel of the units of the XXIX Tactical Air Command permitted this headquarters to organize and prescribe the missions so effectively carried out against the enemy. Yours was a decisive and glorious part in the defeat of the enemy during the Battle of the Ardennes and you have helped immeasurably in the liberation of Belgium.

3. For these two citations, His Royal Highness the Prince-Regent of Belgium has awarded you The Belgium Fourragere (1940). This certificate authorizes you the right to wear this Fourragere as a visible token of your military virtue and the gratitude of the peoples of Belgium. The War Department has approved the awarding of The Belgian Fourragere (1940) with citation per War Department Cable (AG-WAR-WX 32845 dated 15 July 1945).

4. It is to be noted that having been an original member of your organization during the period 1 October 1944 to 15 January 1945 inclusive, you are authorized by the War Department to wear the Fourragere over the right shoulder when in proper uniform in any branch or echelon of the United States Army, Navy, or Marine Corps establishments.

William H. Casteel Maj AC
Unit Commander

493 Ftr Sqdn
Organization

(This citation not valid unless signed and sealed by Unit Commander.)

R. E. Nugent
R. E. NUGENT
Brigadier General, U. S. Army
Commanding

inexperienced pilots and a training program was instituted to get them accustomed to combat operations. We flew many training flights, some even before the German surrender. I flew thirteen such flights during May 1945 and five in June. Finally, we learned that we would be going directly to the Pacific Theater by ship through the Panama Canal, thus having no opportunity to go home first. We would not be taking our war weary airplanes, and on June 10, 1945 I led about twelve aircraft to an air base near Paris. We left our planes, adding to the many hundreds of P-47s already parked there. We were taken back to Illesheim by a transport aircraft. After much soul searching, I then decided to go back home. I had flown over 202 hours combat time and figured I had best see my family before going to the Pacific Theater. I was assured that after I had completed my thirty days leave time in the States, I would have little difficulty joining the squadron again after it arrived in the Pacific area. Therefore, on June 26, 1945 I was transferred to a personnel center outside of Paris to await orders. I had mixed feelings about leaving as I left behind many good friends. We had been through some tough times together. I was happy, however, as I had received a promotion to the rank of Captain on June 25, 1945. Don't remember, but I imagine I was somewhat proud of that.

The mass exodus of troops from Europe meant waiting for your turn to get aboard a troop ship. After weeks of waiting near Paris, I was sent to Antwerp, Belgium, waited some more there, and finally boarded ship, probably in mid-July 1945. It was a WWII Victory ship called the USS Aiken, named after the city in South Carolina. I was placed in charge of the people in one of the holds of the ship. We departed port early in the evening. When daylight arrived, I was surprised to see that we were still in the estuary and not out to sea, still able to see land on both sides. Antwerp is a long distance inland, apparently, a fact I was not aware of. The trip across the Atlantic was mainly uneventful, except for a very severe storm we experienced while off the southern coast of England. I was surprised to see the bow of the ship go under the water while the stern was way up in the air. It was so bad that some of the crew became sick. I was lucky as it didn't seem to bother me. Perhaps I was too scared to get sick. Those of us who were able were pressed into service working below decks in the mess hall dishing out food. Thankfully, the storm lasted only a day or two and we continued on our way in not as troubled waters.

No doubt one of the most welcome sights I had ever seen was when we came close enough to the United States to see lights on shore. We debarked the next morning in Boston, Massachusetts and went directly by train to Camp Miles Standish nearby. On the train we passed the backyards of many houses and it was nice to see that most of the people had hung bed sheets from their clothes lines with messages painted on them, like welcome home. A few tears were shed. We found ourselves at a processing center for men of all services returning from overseas. After a few days I received orders to report to another processing center, this one for Army Air Force personnel. It was located in Greensboro, North Carolina, but the good news was that I could go home first.

I don't remember much about the train ride home, except that I felt down in the dumps because Jim Watson was not with me. We had rode on many trains together before we went overseas. I really dreaded the visit to his Father. Of course, deep down, I wanted to at least do that much. "Sentimental Journey" was a very popular song at that time. Someone had a radio on the train and listening to that song really made me melancholy. I should have been elated, but for

some reason, I wasn't. It was late at night when I arrived in Utica, New York. I took a taxi for the eight mile ride to Ilion, but stopped on the way at one of our favorite watering holes in Frankfort, Billis's Tavern. Saw a lot of old friends, but didn't tarry long because I wanted to get home to the family. They knew I was coming, but had no idea when. I was happy to see my Mother and Father but I don't remember any specifics about this homecoming. I am sure that my parents were very happy, very relieved, and more than a little proud. Some of my activities overseas had been written up in the local newspaper, and I had written to them often, but for security reasons could not say anything about where I was or any details of what I was doing.

As I recall, I only had a week or ten days before having to leave again. I enjoyed Ma's home cooking immensely. I had lost quite a bit of weight overseas and I wanted to gain some back. I went to visit Mr Watson in Herkimer. He was very kind and understanding, realizing how difficult my visit was for me. He had lost his only two children in WWII; my friend Jim, and Bernie, who was killed in Sicily while serving with the Infantry. I knew Bernie slightly from the days when I used to box. Many of my friends were home from the wars and we had a great time getting reacquainted and talking about old times. No one that I can recall talked very much about their experiences during the war. I guess we wanted to forget. Pa took me to Packy's Bar and Grill where he usually stopped after work. I was just as proud of him as I am sure he was of me. It was mandatory that we wear our uniforms when in public. Not long after I arrived home Japan surrendered. This was called V-J Day. There was a big celebration in Ilion, even a parade. I would not be going to the Pacific Theater of Operations after all. It is possible that my life was saved by the dropping of the two atom bombs on Japan that our courageous president, Harry Truman, authorized. His action convinced the Japanese, who had attacked us without warning almost four years previously, to call it quits.

When my leave expired, I reported to Greensboro, North Carolina for processing. After a few days there, I was transferred to Perrin Field outside of Sherman, Texas. Sherman is not very far north of Dallas, maybe forty miles. I was assigned the duty of Pre-separation Counseling Officer, explaining the GI Bill of Rights to those who were being discharged. I received some training for this position and did a lot of reading so as to be able to perform the best job possible. I did not like this desk job and had to work five and a half days each week. Saturday afternoons and Sunday we were allowed to fly. The flying was not very challenging as the only aircraft available was the AT-6 which I had flown before graduating from the Aviation Cadet program. I had become accustomed to more advanced, more powerful aircraft. My first flight from Perrin was on September 20, 1945, becoming familiar with the AT-6 again. Because of my dislike for my duties and the flying, I became somewhat disillusioned. I had volunteered to serve during the emergency, plus six months, but at the time I volunteered I thought that the emergency would end when Japan surrendered. Not so, the emergency would continue until some date to be announced in the future. I decided to try and get out of the service regardless, and since there was a large surplus of people, my request for release from active duty was approved. My last flight from Perrin Field, my last in WWII, a one hour solo, was on October 3,1945.

Hindsight is always better than foresight and I am sorry to say that the decision I made because of this temporary period of disillusionment had a very adverse affect on my future. Getting out of the service proved to be a big mistake. I had no other career goals at that time that

I can remember. At Perrin Field I found myself in a position that was not to my liking, but I should have realized that it would not last forever. Many years later I did return to active duty; however, my job opportunities and advancement might have been much better had I remained on active duty continuously. There may be times in your life when you are dissatisfied with your job or situation, but often the best course of action may be to just stick it out. Don't rush into a decision you may regret later on.

People were released from the service under a priority system, according to the number of points you had earned. Points were credited for various reasons, such as time served, time spent overseas, and medals earned. Probably other ways to earn points, but I don't remember them now. I had so many points that I was released ahead of many others who had been approved for release before me. They asked if I wanted to be released from the base nearest my home which was in Rome, New York. I chose instead go to Scott Field, Illinois which is just across the Mississippi River from St Louis, Missouri. My brother Ed was at Scott attending Radio Operator school at the time and I wanted to see him on the way home. I spent about a week at Scott Field in early October 1945 processing for my release and had a great time with Ed and his wife, Arlene. I was pleasantly surprised when Ed was able to get some time off from duty so that we could all ride home on the train together.

Most of the old gang had returned home after their war time duties. Harry Yardley, Bob Lewis, Herbie Mead, Gordy Bowman, Ron Unsinn and my buddy Harold had been in the Navy. Jack Winslow, Johnnie Mullen, Ed Plunkett, Don North and Dick Morris served in the Army. Dick flew P-51s with the 8th Air Force in England and Ed Plunkett was on the front lines as a spotter for the Artillery in Europe, often serving near where I was based. I guess the old gang did their bit for Uncle Sam.

After using up accrued leave time, my release from active duty was effective on December 9, 1945 at which time I was automatically assigned to the Army Air Force Reserves. After almost three years of active duty, I was a civilian again and happy to be back home. Many of my friends were also home from the service and we met often and as time passed by we were able to talk about our war time experiences. To me, the transition to civilian life was not an easy one, but before very long I decided that I had better get on with my life.