

865TH AIR ENGINEERING SQUADRON

History of the 865th Air Engineering Sqdr.

Cpl. J. P. Scholz

On the 15th of April, 1945, under T O & E No. 1-457T dated 15 April, 1944, and with authority as per Paragraph 1, Section II GO 52, Headquarters Eighth Air Force Service Command, the 865th Air Engineering Sqdn. was activated and assigned to the 66th Fighter Wing at Leiston, Suffolk, in England, with Capt. Robert G. Lynch as Commanding Officer. With Five men and one Officer as the Original members of the 865th, more men were absorbed from the 439th Air Service Group and the old 50th Service Group. From this meager start the 865th has been built into one of the best Squadrons in the ET, and certainly the largest on AAF Station Neubiberg.

On 2, July 1945, Sgts Marshall Davis and Louis T. Nitroy departed from

Leiston, Suffolk by air for AAF Station R-85, Germany as Advance Party according to Letter 370-5, "Movement and Assignment of Troops." Then on 21, July 1945 the 865th was released from assignment with the Eighth Air Force Service Command and assigned to the Ninth Air Force Command. On July 23rd of that year the Sqdn was assigned to the 42nd Air Depot Group, and by the end of July all remaining personnel completed a permanent change of station to its present site on AAF Station R-85, Neubiberg, Germany.

At 00:01 hours on the 15th of December 1945, the 865th was released from assignment with the 42nd Air Depot Group and assigned to the 439th Air Service Group under the Seventyeth Fighter Wing here at Neubiberg.

From the first of January 1946 until the present time, most of the old men of the Sqdn. the men originally assigned to the 865th when it was activated, have re-enlisted just to be with the Sqdn. and with their old buddies who also re-enlisted.

In April of this year the men said good-bye and God-speed to their former Commanding Officer Capt. Lynch, who was being redeployed, and welcomed Capt. William F. Frantz as their new Commanding Officer. Up to that time, Capt. Frantz had been acting in the capacity of Engineering Officer. At the time that Capt. Frantz took over the Office as C.O. and until 1st/Sgt Alvis returned to his job after spending a few months at home on his re-enlistment furlough, Sgt John R. Lewis did a magnificent job as acting first Sgt, a job which he had never had any training for nor experience.

On the thirteenth of August of this year, Capt. Frantz was released as C. O. and Capt. Ernest D. Carwile was assigned as the new, and presently still is, Commanding Officer, with Capt. Morris being assigned as Sqdn. Adj. and Capt. Rogers as Engineering Officer. Since then Capt. Morris has been transferred to the job as Provost Marshal, with Capt. Frantz being placed on orders to return to the Z of I. The new Sqdn. Adj. Lt Wilhite, was formerly the test pilot for the 865th.

A SUPPORTING UNIT FOR THE 357th FIGHTER GROUP

A great unit of men who were a big help during our combat days when the work load was in excess. Recovered our crashed aircraft and performed repairs and maintenance. They possessed a high level of equipment to do work beyond that which could be performed on the flight line.

BLESS THEM ALL!

A Brief history of Leiston Airdrome

The Friends Of Leiston Airfield began this on going project in 1995 to establish a permanent record of a piece of local aviation history.

RAF Leiston or Station 373 as it was more correctly known had a short but distinguished operational history. Which began in 1943 when it was home, first to the 358th Fighter Group flying their P-47 Thunderbolts. Before being replaced by the 357th Fighter Group, in doing so became the first group in the 8th Air Force to become operational with the P-51-Mustang. Enabling them to escort the allied bombers deep into Germany, as Leiston is only three miles from the East Coast, (heavily damaged allied aircraft were already using the partially completed runways on their return from action) it was the ideal position for such an operational unit. The young American pilots flew their P-51 Mustangs with skill and valour in support of the daylight bomber offensive, earning themselves two Distinguished Unit Citations. Such was their effectiveness that they were singled out by the German propaganda machine and were christened 'The Yoxford Boys' by Lord Haw Haw.

They counted many ace's amongst their number probably the best known being a young Charles 'Chuck' Yeager flying his Mustang B6/Y (Glamorous Glenn) named after his girlfriend. Chuck later won fame as the pilot who in 1947, went on to become the first man to fly faster than the speed of sound. Amongst other famous young aces were Clarence 'Bud'. Anderson flying B6/S (Old Crow) the name taken from Bud's favourite whisky, another pilot was Col John Landers flying B6/? (Big Beautiful Doll,). Landers later left the 357th FG in 1944, to take over the 78th FG at Duxford his aircraft continued to carry the same name, but changing from the red and yellow chequers, to the black and white of his new group. Carrying the colours and code depicted on the aircraft flown by Robert Young at our Memorial services.

In 1991 a Memorial was erected, on the now derelict airfield on one of the surviving fighter dispersal's, by a group of cadets from 1379 (Leiston) Squadron Air Training Corps, unfortunately the memorial and access to it deteriorated rapidly,

So in September 1995 a group of people interested in aviation history and concerned at this situation met to discuss what could be done to secure a more permanent reminder of the historical link between a few acres of Suffolk and a collection of young men from the USA, also to honour the 96 young servicemen, who made the supreme sacrifice from this airfield.

To this end the Friends Of Leiston Airfield (FOLA) were formed. after a great deal of planning and a lot of negotiation a permanent site was secured and a new and more durable memorial was constructed, the project was completed in the autumn of 1997 at a cost of some £2500.

The dedication service took place in May 1998; honoured guests included Veterans of the 357th FG Association and many locals who either worked on the construction or along side the USAAF during the war years. Major General Hinton Commander in Chief 3rd Airforce Europe accompanied by a full colour party from RAF Mildenhall completed the American presence.

The local Royal British Legion band provided the music.

FOLA worked hard to raise the £1500 needed so that our guests and around five hundred onlookers could enjoy the sight and sound of Robert Davies, flying his P-51 Mustang Big Beautiful Doll performing a marvellous display, which started the days memorable events.

The programme for the 1999 Memorial Service took place on Sunday the 23rd May following again the same format as the previous year's featuring Robert in his Mustang, Big Beautiful Doll, and music by the Royal British Legion Band. Among the Veterans and guests, there were, ex pilots and base personal that again, with their families, made the trip across the Atlantic.

To be with us on what is a special celebration for them, to rememnice with friends and comrades of days gone by, to rekindle friendships, among the locals who once worked beside them, also to make new and lasting friends with our Association.

The USAAF left Leiston in July 1945 going to Germany as part of the allied occupation force Station 373 was returned to the RAF, when on October 10th 1945 it became No 18 Recruit Centre and Technical Training Centre.

Shortly afterwards in 1946 the Airfield finally closed and was mostly returned to farmland by 1955

from Peter Drew

The other day I went to the local religious bookstore where I saw a "Honk if you love Jesus" bumper sticker. I bought it and put it on the back bumper of my car, and I am really glad I did. What an uplifting experience followed!

I was stopped at the light of a busy intersection, just lost in thought about the Lord, and didn't notice that the light had changed. That bumper sticker really worked. I found lots of people who love Jesus. Why, the guy behind me started to honk like crazy. He must really love the Lord, because pretty soon he leaned out of his window and yelled, "Jesus Christ" as loud as he could. It was like a football game, with him shouting "go Jesus Christ go". Everyone else started honking too, so I leaned out of my window and waved and smiled to all those loving people. There must have been a guy from Florida back there, because I could hear him yelling something about a sunny beach, and I saw him waving in a funny way with only his middle finger stuck up in the air. I had recently asked my two kids what that meant. They kind of squirmed and looked at each other, giggled and told me that it was the Hawaiian good luck sign. So I leaned out the window and gave him the good luck sign back.

A couple of people were so caught up in the joy of the moment that they got out of their cars and were walking toward me. I bet they wanted to pray, but just then I noticed that the light had changed, and I stepped on the gas. It's a good thing that I did, because I was the only car to get across the intersection. I looked back at them standing there. I leaned out the window, gave them a big smile, and held up the Hawaiian good luck sign as I drove away.

Praise the Lord for such wonderful folks.

"Flying Panther" and pilot Edward K. Simpson (363rd F.S.). There were many handsome young men in the 357th Fighter Group.

Photo - Irv. Cohen and enlarged by Olmsted



Flight of fancy all in a day's work for 'Doggie' Kline

By PAULA BLANKENSHIP
Staff Reporter

Forrest "Doggie" Kline was born to fly.

Climbing out of the cockpit of his World War I bi-plane, the 83-year-old pilot and former Lockheed engineer isn't a conventional retiree.

"It seems to me I work all day long," says the Rimrock resident. "I keep thinking I'll sit down and read all day but it hasn't happened."

Instead, Kline is constantly planning ahead.

After all, there are flight plans to register and air shows to schedule, he says.

From May to June the flying ace will attend four different air shows at

locations from San Diego to Kansas City.

"I attend about eight air shows a year," says Kline. "In some shows I have to make formation fly-bys, static displays."

And then there's the photography.

"The World War I airplane is an attraction, so there's lots of pictures taken with pretty girls and babies next to my airplane."

Not that he minds, Kline has always enjoyed "the ladies."

"I met my wife of 61 years in a bar," explains the dapper senior who sports a well-groomed-handlebar mustache. "I told my friends if you pick up enough of them

you're bound to find a good one.

"When I want something, I go all out."

Determined to recreate a youthful passion, Kline was breaking into his 80th year when he decided to build for himself an airplane he once admired in the pulp magazines of the '30s.

"It's an absolute mirror image of an aircraft attached to the 25 Aero squadron that flew over France in 1918," said the pilot.

"I had as much fun building it as I have flying it," Kline said.

Wearing a snowmobile suit, a ski mask and mittens, Kline normally flies at 400 to 500 feet. The fighter flies about 90 miles an hour.

"Sometimes I race trucks," he boasts. "Sometimes I win, but not every time."

But mostly, Kline just enjoys the scenery, and, as opposed to other modes of transportation, flying for him is easy.

"I've never failed a flying test," he dead-panned, "but I've failed my driving test three times."

Kline doesn't worry about getting hurt during any air excursions. He's never suffered any serious injuries as a pilot even though during his military service he wrecked three airplanes.

"I never got hurt 'till I fell off a ladder four years ago," he says. "But they fixed me up and now I can still dance with the girls and fly."

For Kline, it was something he was born to do.



Staff photo by Paula Blankenship

The flying ace, Forrest Kline doesn't adhere to the concept of retirement. He spun into the Cottonwood Airport on Friday suited up and ready to fly.

PRIME TIME

IN
ARIZONA
FROM
ANN STEVENSON

I N G E N U I T Y

M/Sgt. Charlie Campbell served as the Armament Chief of the 364th Fighter Squadron for its duration. He was one of the first men to be assigned to the squadron when it formed at Hamilton Field in California and one of the last to depart from Leiston Airfield in England for he was assigned the duty of being in charge of a cadre of men to close the base. A few corrugated sheet metal buildings had to be disassembled and the areas had to be cleaned up. All materials had to be sorted for salvage, recycle or disposed of.

As the years have passed since the war, Charlie has been known for his keen memory of those days. As questions have come into being concerning those war days, Charlie has been of considerable help with many discussions. The photos of the burned out 364th Fighter Squadron Armament shack at the area of the flight line and the photo of the Armorers shack brought Charlie into being again. He can tell many interesting war stories.

Charlie's latest story made known to us is that as the Armorers removed the 50 caliber machine guns from the aircraft at times to clean them and repair them, the guns were taken to the Armament shack. After cleaning the guns in a fluid, they needed rags to wipe the guns dry before applying what lubricant was needed. Charlie stated that while the men served in the U.S., they used flannel rags that came cut in SQUARES. Upon arriving in England, the flannel was supplied and cut off a ROLL. As time passed, the roll situation caused a problem for much more flannel was being used. He soon figured out where all the flannel was being used off the roll. With toilet paper being very scarce and of poor quality, the flannel was in demand for another purpose other than wiping the guns. THE TENDER CARE THAT WAS ENJOYED CAME TO A SUDDEN ENDING!

Joe De Shay

H E L P

If you have any photos of John England or if you ever served at Dyersburg, AAB Tennessee, contact Tim Bivens, Historian at 5080 Upper Finley Road, Dyersburg, TN 38024-7144. Phone 901-286-5900. He would like to hear from you.

VIDEO TAPES

"Mustang Magic" by Tom Beemer (362nd F.S.) for sale at \$22.50 including postage. ALL ABOUT YOUR 357th FIGHTER GROUP!

Order from Mrs. Nema Beemer at 8132 Leavenworth Road (east), Leavenworth, WA 98226

BOOK FOR SALE

"The 357th OVER EUROPE" by 357th Fighter Group Historian, Merle Olmsted. Available and priced at \$27.00 includes packaging and postage. SEND ORDER AND CHECKS TO MERLE OLMSTED, 6803 Rexdale Lane, Paradise, CA 95969.



FIT TO DROP?

A Look at the use of drop tanks in the Second World War

By Max Westley of
Duxford Radio Society

Over the radio came the command: "Drop tanks!" from the 8th Air Force Fighter Group commander. All the P-47 Thunderbolt pilots pressed their trigger switches on the top of the joystick, to jettison their drop tanks. At long last, in September 1943, the gunners in the B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator bombers knew that their "little friends" were going to escort them all the way to the target and back.

On May 10th, 1941, Rudolf Hess had flown from Augsburg to Glasgow on his ill-fated peace mission. His Messerschmitt Bf 110 was carrying two external plywood wing tanks, which were dropped in the North Sea before reaching the coast. Later that year, in September, the Air Corp/AAF directive precluded the use of external drop tanks on all new fighter aircraft. These thoughts were echoed by the P-47 designer who said: "I don't want any ornaments being hung under my sleek fighter." But the Curtiss P-40 was already flying everywhere

were tried to overcome the ever-increasing demands of the Fighter Wings. Major Cass Hough, at the Air Technical Section, Bovingdon, was given the task of investigating alternative drop tanks. A test pilot, Hough, together with British designers, set about designing a 108 gallon tank, similar to the 44 imperial gallon paper tank used by the RAF Hawker Hurricane fighter for long-range ferrying operations. In May 1943, Brigadier General Frank Hunter, head of the 8th AF Fighter Command, after considerable pressure, at last told Hough to put the tank into production. The lack of fighter escorts all the way to the target had resulted in heavy losses of bombers and aircrews, such as on the Regensburg and Schweinfurt raids. The tank was successfully demonstrated at Burtonwood Air Depot on 26 June and by September the paper tanks were being made in large quantities in England.

These cigar shaped, impregnated compressed tanks, 99.5 inches long, 21.5 inches in diameter and

on the tank/bomb release panel, allowed one, two or three shackles to operate, by pressing the control button on top of the joystick. After attaching hose and glass tubes to the pressure and fuel lines, the shackles and sway braces were tightened to eliminate movement in any direction.

The fuel selector valve positions in the cockpit read: *Main On, Auxiliary On, Belly Tank On and Off*. But with wing pylons another valve was added to select *Right Wing Tank* and *Left Wing Tank*. Apart from flying the P-47, which weighed over 6.5 tons, the pilot was kept busy noting the time he was on external tanks! Quite an operation, especially since there were no fuel gauges for the belly or wing drop tanks. When the tank was jettisoned, the glass tubes in the fuel and pressure lines shattered, and the displacing arm hinged back to the rear of the pylon. Incidentally the arm spring was made



P-47s with 108 gallon paper belly tanks ready for take-off. The white ring on the nose and tail stripe were added to reduce confusion between the P-47 and the German Fw 190. Photo reprinted by kind permission of the Imperial War Museum.

with 52 US gallon belly tanks, proving their worth. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, on 7th December 1941, the Mitsubishi A6M2 Zeros, were using metal 74 US gallon belly drop tanks. They had taken-off from the carrier *Hiryu*, 274 miles north of Oahu, Hawaii, and this devastating attack showed how the extended range of a fighter could not only give protection to the torpedo and dive bombers, but also attack targets on the ground. It was nearly two years later before the Eighth Air Force were using long range tanks on their own fighters over Germany.

Aluminium belly tanks, were originally developed to overcome the many problems facing the USAAF including ferrying P-47s across the Atlantic. In 1943, due to material shortages, alternatives such as steel and paper

weighing 52 lbs were made from moulded sections -- nose, center and tail -- and were assembled with a gelatine lining to make them petrol proof, and bonded together with wood. The metal fittings i.e. filler cap and pressure/outlet pipe flanges were then added, together with a wire earthing frame, to prevent electrostatic sparks in the tank. After doping on a final paper covering, the tank was sprayed with silver cellulose paint and red location stripes added. A 75 gallon tank can be seen in The American Air Museum, next to the P-51 Mustang.

The displacing arm, which prevented the tank from hitting the tailplane when jettisoned, was hinged down from the aircraft, and the tank then attached to the belly and/or pylons. When the P-47D, with wing pylons, came into squadron service, the mechanical mechanism was replaced with electrical bomb shackle fixings. Toggle switches,

from shock cord (bungee rubber), the same material used to counter-balance the waist guns in the B-17 and B-24s.

Tanks would be filled just before take-off to reduce leakages, but they did occur.

One morning, in the Spring of 1944, Duxford's 78th Fighter Group were climbing hard over Pampisford, about two miles to the east of Duxford. As they roared overhead, petrol was seen streaming from a P-47's port wing drop tank. The pilot pulled the aircraft out of formation and headed for an RAF bombing range. The P-47 dived in low, and jettisoned its two 108 gallon tanks. I don't know what the score was, since all other items dropped there were 11 lb smoke bombs! To this day I always wondered who the pilot was and if he is still alive.

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from John McDonald (Grp.Hq.)



The above photo is an enlargement made on a copy machine and was taken by Frank Szczech of the 70th Station Complement Unit at the Leiston Airfield, England. The mobile flying control vehicle in the background is where Frank performed his duty by frequently sending out beacon calls under the call name of "Earl Duke" to the aircraft returning from their combat missions. In the lower left corner, note the wire mesh and steel rods covered with gravel for pavement for parking their vehicle at either end of the three runways in order to be in a better position to guide our pilots home.

Left to Right: Sgt. Frank Szczech, An RAF Sergeant and a fellow Airman.

CAPS FOR SALE

White cap with 357th Fighter Group Logo ----- \$14.00 ea.
Price includes packaging and postage. Make checks payable to:
Joe De Shay, 465 N. E. 34th Street, Boca Raton, FL 33431

Subj: info?
Date: 00-04-11 05:28:32 EDT
From: franka@clara.co.uk (Frank Aldridge)
To: Deshay357@aol.com (Joe De Shay)

Good Morning to you Joe and Ellen. I recently had an E-Mail from the Stepson of Bernard Seitzinger, pilot with the 364th. Below is the info that he sent me, it may be of use for updating records as B. Seitzinger does not appear in the roster?

Bernard Seitzinger was born in Fairfield, Iowa, USA on or about 1908. He was the son of a Lutheran Minister.

He flew combat as a volunteer civilian pilot for the British in 1939 and or 1940 in North Africa. Based upon one of the drawings that I'm about to send to you, I infer that he was flying P-40 Aircraft at this time. He was shot down while flying a mission and was captured by (Italian?) troops. He managed to escape and evade his captors and found his way back to a friendly unit.

On the 20th of September 1940, Bernard was involved in a landing accident while flying a BT-9B trainer. He had a taxiing accident on January 15th of 1941, also in a BT-9B. I expect to receive copies of the original accident reports for the above mentioned incidents in three or four weeks. If by some chance either of the reports includes a photograph of Mr. Seitzinger, I will certainly arrange to have a print made and forwarded to you.

Sometime later, Bernard joined the 364th Fighter Squadron and flew missions over Europe. On September 18th, 1944, Capt. Seitzinger was shot down shortly after scoring an aerial victory and was captured by the Germans and taken POW. It was during this captivity that I presume that Bernard met up with one Richard Boyd who created the four drawings that eventually found their way to me.

In 1950 or 1951, Bernard married Evelyn Margaret Rice, my mother in Bangor, Maine, USA. Later in 1951 he had orders to report to the west coast of the USA to join a squadron in a staging area preparing to ship to Korea. He took emergency leave twice before traveling to the west coast to comfort his new bride who lost both her mother and father during a very short period of time.

Later in 1951, he left for Korea to join a squadron as CO or XO. While returning from a mission on or about the 27th November, he crashed in territory held by the North Koreans and was presumed KIA. There was some controversy surrounding his incident. The Air Force said that he had some sort of equipment malfunction after jettisoning ordnance and flew straight into the ground. According to witnesses interviewed after the war by my father, Dana W. Brown, Major Seitzinger was probably the victim of an unfortunate case of accidental fratricide by another US squadron.

In any case, the Major was awarded a Purple Heart posthumously. As often happens during war Mr. Seitzinger's remains were never recovered. I am awaiting some documentation of unknown description from the U.S. Air Force Office of Missing Persons concerning Mr. Seitzinger.

My apologies for the lengthy message. My interest in the affairs of Bernard Seitzinger began after my mother sent me these four very interesting aircraft drawings last year. At the time, I had no idea what the markings on the side of the fuselage represented. Through the efforts of a few people that I met on the net and most especially to my friend Scott at www.heavybombers.com, I learned that the markings were squadron codes belonging to the 357th Fighter Group. The drawings he mentioned will be put up on the web site in due course. Yours Sincerely,
Frank Aldridge

Web Site: 357th Fighter Group.
[Http://www.357thFighterGroup.com](http://www.357thFighterGroup.com)