

structors was 1st Lieutenant James Stewart of movie star fame. My crew flew with this officer as instructor on three or four training flights; (all at night for some reason). On one occasion, we reported to "Jimmy" Stewart at the operations office and were introduced to actor Andy Devine who was on the base for a U.S.O. appearance.

Then, when all of the crews became proficient as bomber operators, we were transferred to Pocatello, Idaho and switched to the use of the Consolidated B-24; much to the unhappiness of some die-hard B-17 lovers. This outfit probably ended up in the 445 Bomb Group and, eventually, the 8th Air Force. So, combat-wise, Stewart was not in a B-17!

For the reason I mentioned in a prior correspondence, my crew was split up and assigned, temporarily, to Martin B-26's in Wendover, Utah. We were then reassigned individually to combat squadrons and I ended up in Colorado Springs in the 827th Squadron, 484th Group.

One final misnomer you run across. There persists a habit of explaining that the term "Flying Fortress" as applied to the B-17 was because of the many machine guns she carried; (in the later versions, of course, where she did carry one more than the B-24). However, I believe that the term was a political one used to convince the congress in the isolationist, tight money era of the 1930's that this heavy bomber could defend the coast of the U.S. against foreign navies, long before the shore fortresses could come into action. Hence the name given by the lobbyists representing Boeing, so the money would be allocated to the prototype.

As a bomber, the Consolidated aircraft built in this version was designated as the B-24 in American use and as the "Liberator" by the British. Unlike the B-17, it also became useful in other versions; such as the PB4Y-1 by the U.S. Navy; (the nose turret similar to the Grumman "Avenger"), the C-87 or LB-30 as a transport-cargo version. Winston Churchill, for one, utilized the transport type flown by the R.A.F.

I mention the above because at least one of the former cargo versions, the LB-30, is presently masquerading as a "B-24" in exhibitions around the country. It has MG's fitted here and there, but no turbo-supercharging to its non combat type engines. It would have been handy for me to use the cargo door in the starboard side when I had to bail out!

I guess we can't stop those who persist in assuming facts and not double-checking when they should, but it's worth the try sometimes.

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Dear Bud:

I enjoyed your story on the XIX Allied Air TAC Fighter-Bombers in France, July to December 1944. Our connection was of course the Lyon August supply mission following the 15 August Riviera invasion. I'm including some data on the 332nd Fight-

er Group, 15th AF, which flew cover for our missions with the 484th Bomb Group.

Some of us owe our lives to their excellent and dependable escort work. During the war we were not permitted to buy them a drink in the officers club due to race.

After the war I bought copies of their combat film "The Tuskegee Airmen" and sent a copy to a black university in Texas as a means of providing a role model for their ROTC students.

Subsequently, Mary and I set up a scholarship fund to provide financial assistance to ROTC candidates.

Any others who wish to make a tax deductible contribution to this fund may do so at:

332nd Fighter Group Scholarship Fund
Prairie View A & M University
Vice President for Development &
University Relations
Prairie View, TX 77446

The combat activities of the 332nd closely paralleled that of our own bomb group, same targets, same hazards.

The following is excerpted from the Air Force Magazine March 1995:

Out of the Wilderness

By John L. Frisbee

To fight with few allies for a principle opposed by a majority of the people and institutions of one's own country demands spiritual and moral resources that are rare, indeed- a kind of valor for which decorations are seldom given. Flying against the Luftwaffe's best fighters, some of the time with second rate equipment called for a different order of valor. Both battles were fought simultaneously by a tall, erect man of innate dignity. That man is Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., the first black man to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy in the twentieth century, the first to lead an AAF group in combat, and the first black general officer in the Air Force. The principle for which he laid his career and his life on the line many times was racial equality. Success in the air war over Europe was a key to its attainment.

It is difficult for younger Americans to appreciate the depth of racial prejudice that existed in this country fifty years ago. Segregation was enforced rigidly in our military services. Ben Davis knew that when he accepted an appointment to West Point in 1932. His father was one of the Army's few black officers, later its first black general. During young Ben's years at West Point he was "silenced" by his fellow cadets. Despite constant pressure to force him to resign he graduated thirty-fifth in a class of 276 and hoped to enter flying training. But the Air Corps accepted no blacks in any capacity.

In late 1940, President Roosevelt directed the Army Air Corps to establish a flying program for blacks at Tuskegee, Alabama. The field opened in July 1941 with Capt. Ben Davis as leader of the first class which was to form the nucleus of the 99th Pursuit Squadron. Commanded by Davis the squadron completed combat training but for more than a year no theater commander would accept them. Finally they were sent to North Africa outfitted with obsolete P-40s and sent into combat in July 1943 without the customary leavening of experienced pilots from other units. It was, as Davis told his men, their great opportunity for themselves and for all black Americans. The squadron scored its first victory against a FW-190 a month later. Nevertheless, commanders in the