

James Ronald Grove

23 December 1918 - 21 May 1943

James Ronald Grove was born 23 December 1918 to Hugh Lowe Grove Sr. and Ora Lillian (Hurlbut) Grove in Brownwood, Texas. Brownwood is in the Northern Texas Hill Country about 140 miles Southwest of Ft. Worth. He joined older brother Hugh Lowe Jr. and twin brother Roland H. The 1920 Census showed the family living at 400 Grove Street in Brownwood, which the family owns free of a mortgage. Hugh is a Bookkeeper at a Furniture Store. The 1930 Census showed the family moved to 2306 First Street in Brownwood. They own this home, valued at \$7,500, and they have a radio set. Hugh is now the Manager at the Furniture Store. James graduated from Brownwood High School, class of 1937. This is when the family moved to Corpus Christi, TX. James enrolled at Corpus Christi Community College from 1937-1939. It looks like he was a Gold Glove boxer in the Featherweight division and played basketball. The 1940 Census showed them living at 805 Coleman Street. They own this house, valued at \$3,500. Hugh is now a Salesman, earning \$1,000 in 1939. James has finished 2 years of college and is working as a Roughneck on an oil rig. He earned \$420 in 1939 working just 32 weeks.

James joined the Army Air Force 7 October 1940 as a Private at Kelly Field, Texas. He was 5' 4" tall and weighed 130 lbs. His Army Service #18025198. In September 1941 he was a Corporal stationed at Ellington Field, Texas when he and twin brother Roland stood up in big brother Hugh's wedding. Soon after Pearl Harbor was attacked, James qualified for flight training. He became part of Class 42-H. He started Primary at Vernon, Texas, on 26 February 1942, flying a PT-19 trainer. He flew a total of 59:30 hours with 161 landings. Then to Basic flight at Randolph Field, Texas from 4 May to 30 June 1942. He flew a total of 84:10, most likely in a BT-13. Next was Advance training at Foster Field, Victoria, TX, from 5 July to 6 September 1942. Upon completion, he was awarded his wings and Commissioned. Being an Officer, Lt. Grove was given a new Service #0-664575. During his flight training, he flew a total of 220:10 hours, 73:48 dual and 146:22 solo. After some leave time, he was assigned to the 319th Fighter Squadron, 325th Fighter Group that was being formed under the direction of the Boston Air Defense Wing. Over the next 3 months the Group conducted intense training, flying patrols and anti-sub searches. Lt. Grove flew 78 times during this training time. At the end of 1942 he had 106:25 time in a fighter, 220:10 training, for a total of 326:35 time. Early January 1943 the 325th traveled by train to Norfolk, Virginia, and found 72 brand new P-40 Fs (Merlin powered versions of the Warhawk) waiting for them. Over the next few days, the Navy taught Army pilots about short take-offs. On 7 January the 325th and their P-40s were loaded onto the aircraft carrier Ranger, destination still unknown. Next morning the Ranger pulled anchor and set sail. On 19 January, the Ranger was about 90 miles off the coast of Casablanca, French Morocco, and the order was given to launch the P-40s. Now the Navy, being good sports, gave the Army pilots 425 feet of deck to fly off, while Navy pilots only got 390 feet. All 72 planes made it off the Ranger and landed at Gages Aerodrome, outside of Casablanca. This was a French Air Base.

While waiting for the rest of the Group's personnel, several planes were transferred to units in active combat to replace losses. On 24 January, the 325th flew protective patrols for President Roosevelt while he was at the Casablanca Conference. As more personnel and equipment arrived, the local training picked up. As much flying as possible, with shortage of planes, and lots of lectures from combat veterans of the air war over N. Africa. In January and February, he flew only 13 flights for 21:30 hours. More planes were available in March and April, with 46

flights for over 95 hours of flight. In early April the 325th had enough planes that 2 of its 3 squadrons were moved up into combat with their move to Montesque, Tunisia. On 17 April 1943 the 318th and 319th Squadrons flew their first combat mission, escorting B-25s over Mateur, Tunisia. About a month later the 317th Squadron had enough planes to move up also, so now the Group was at full strength. Lt. Grover flew 12 times in May for 27:50 flight time. The 325th flew its first combat mission as a Group on 19 May 1943. On 20 May the 325th flew an escort mission over Sardinia and found some ME-323s, a large 6 engine transport plane flying low and slow. 1st Lt. Grove was credited with destroying one of these planes.

1st Lt. James R. Grove was lost on 21 May 1943 during an escort mission over Decimomannu Airdrome on Sardinia. 52 fighters escorted B-26s of the 17th and 320th Bomber Groups. Several ME-109s attacked the bombers before they reached the target area, 4 of them being shot down. One was by Lt. Grove, his 2nd victory, before he was shot down near Cap Bon, Tunisia. He was initially buried at a US Cemetery in Tunis, Tunisia. After the war, he was brought home on the USAT Barley Kirschbaum to New York City, arriving 4 May 1948. He traveled by train and was buried at Greenleaf Cemetery, Brownwood, Texas.