

This month, our Spotlight illuminates a very colourful colleague, Col. George R. Vanden Heuvel. Born in Mount Vernon, New York, Col. Van was raised in Staten Island, N.Y. He attended the Degree Course in Georgia Tech., winning a BSc. degree, and it was while attending the Tech. that he joined the Reserve Officers Training Corps, and was commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the Coastal Artillery, where the interest he acquired in ballistics was to stand him in good stead later in his Air Force career. However, a yearning for wider and vaster horizons led him to volunteer for the Army Air Corps. His transfer having been accepted, he commenced pilot training in June of 1942. This training took him via Stearman, BT-13s - the infamous Vultee Vibrator - and the AT-6, known to the RAF as the Harvard, to the P-51. Van's natural aptitude for flying, his scientific qualifications, plus his patience and exacting standards ensured his selection for instructing duties, which he carried out from graduation in December 1942 until July 1944, when he was posted to the ETO and joined the 376th Fighter Squadron, 361st Fighter Group, 8th Air Force, at Bottisham, Cambs. He was on this station for less than 24 hours, happening to arrive on the day of the Group's move to Little Walden! Van recalls it as a day of sheer lunacy, out of which came some semblance of order. The Group had taken off from Bottisham on a mission during the morning, and landed back at Little Walden. In the meantime, all the ground support and administrative units had moved by road to their new base - what a task, moving such a unit in such a short time! Van flew a total of 72 combat missions with the 361st and became an "ace" with a total of 9½ victories. He holds the DFC with an OLC, Air Medal with 13 OLCs and the European Theatre Medal with 3 Battle Stars. He remained with the 361st until September 1945, and decided to make the Air Force his career. It is

Basic FLT Instructor Cochran Fld Macon Ga. (It was worse than combat)

interesting to note that his first P-51 was E9-L, and his last with the Group was E9-Z, nicknamed "Mary Mine" and serialled 44-64005. As a result of some research by Steve Gotts last year, we have now established that this aircraft is still flying regularly in the hands of a private owner. Van took part in a drone testing programme of B-17s which led up to the Kiniewetok Atom Bomb Tests, and upon the completion of this hazardous and exacting task, he was transferred as Chief of the Engineering Division, Air Force Ballistic Missiles, from July 1958 to December 1959. During this time, he was closely involved with the RAF and Air Ministry in the installation of Douglas SM-75 Thor missile sites in the U.K. For his outstanding work in this field, he was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal. From 1962 until his retirement in 1965, Col. Van was Assistant Air Attache, London, a fitting climax to a distinguished career. Finally, having helped defend this country in both a real war, and during an uneasy and significant period of peace, Col. Van decided to make it his home. We are honoured and proud to know him as a friend, and grateful to him for the keen interest he takes in FOTE.

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or Phone 01-997-5885

*Paul D. Schlundt**Primary Flight**Instructor*

ANY PILOT WITH GUTS ENOUGH

The Combat Diary of 1st Lt George R Vanden Heuvel

376th Fighter Squadron, 361st Fighter Group

2 November 1944, 3 miles high, North of Erfurt, escorting B17s. As the 109s tumbled from above, landing through the rear box of B17s in a perfect bounce; Yorkshire Yellow Flight reverse course.

"109s below, lets go!" Winging over into his dive, Lt. Vanden Heuvel follows an enemy, then loses it in overcast; his report continuing "We come out under the overcast. A FW190 turned on Lt. Crapala and myself. Lt. Mitchell closed in on him and registered numerous hits - the FW190 hit the ground and burned. I became separated and as I was turning around I saw a FW190 making a steep turn head on into me. I fired a short burst, saw no hits but the 190 did a snap out of the steep turn he was in. As we were about 100 feet off the deck at the time he did not recover, hit the ground upside down and burned. I claim one FW 190 destroyed."

66 rounds expended.

Aircraft P51D E9-D 44-14217

26 November 1944, 15 miles South of Ulzen, escorting bombers to Misburg.

"We were escorting B24s who were sort of notorious for being late and on this day the B17s had already turned and B24s had left quite a gap and as we came up to the turning point in front of us we saw about 150 German planes. They were Me109s and FW190s and they came straight into the B24s and of course we went straight on into them. They shot down a lot of B24s; we broke up and chased whatever we could and that's the day I got into compressibility. Going straight down, kept trying to pull back on the control column and finally, by the time I got down to 5,000 feet, I managed to pull out. All alone, I climbed back towards contrails of bombers and about half way up ran into about 14 or 15 FW 190s. Got on one's tail and fired, but only one gun fired out of 6 - I remember sitting there pulling the trigger and only seeing one gun fire and out front this lovely Focke Wulf. During this time several others were making side passes at me but scored no hits. Then two FW 190s came from opposite sides shooting at about 60° deflection with one inverted. He came so close that his canopy almost scraped along my P51. I looked behind me and saw No. 2 on my tail; I dumped the stick and split-5ed. As I went down the two FWs ran together and exploded in a flaming mass. I continued on out of that area."

Group Leader Captain John D. Duncan bore eloquent testimony to the action:

"I climbed back to 22,000 feet and observed a lone P51 at my two o'clock in a 'Battle Royal' with around 12 to 15 FW190s who were making passes from all sides. As I was going over to join him. I saw two FW190s bearing down on him from port and starboard. I called on him to break but he just stayed there until the last moment before kicking

his stick forward and going into a steep diving turn to the left, leaving the FW190s to crash head on. I believe the pilot caused the destruction of the two FWs by his coolness of head and split second timing, and that any pilot with guts enough to pull a manouvre like that should have full credit for the destruction of both enemy planes."

Meanwhile, the battle was not yet over. Sighting a box of B17s with around 30 Focke Wulfs shooting at them, Lt. Vanden Heuvel turned into them firing on two but with only one gun working found it was no use and cut out when the enemy started chasing him. Throttling back, his engine sounded "like a coffee grinder," having been on War Emergency Power for thirty five minutes instead of the permitted maximum of six! After landing at St. Trond, Belgium for a plug change the Engineering Officer exclaimed that "you'll never get back to England in that;" but Lt. Vanden Heuvel was determined not just to return but to take his guns back to the Armoury and "give them Hell." The conversation is not recorded for posterity, but it must have been rough.

To aid the Ninth Air Force in combating any interference to its fighter bombers from the Luftwaffe; two of the Eighth's Fighter Groups were moved to France. The 361st eventually finding itself at A-64 St. Dizier complete with essential ground men. Accommodation was virtually non-existent. Six of the pilots including George utilized an old house and an even older stove, spending their nights feeding it little blocks of wood because the hole in the top was only 3 inches square!

On Christmas Eve three missions were flown escorting P47s clobbering Germans trying to escape through the passes in the Ardennes. During one of these missions, number four was added to the bag. "I was Yellow Two, flying Lt. Clarence E. Sullivan's wing on a fighter patrol between Bonn and Trier. We were in the vicinity of Wengerohr when White Leader, Lt. William J. Sykes, called out they were Me109s and almost immediately afterwards I saw a yellow nosed P51 which I am sure was Lt. Sykes clobber an Me109 which began to smoke, fell out of control and explode on the ground.

Lt. Sullivan turned towards Lt. Sykes and some more 109s when I saw a 109 approaching Lt. Sullivan from the right. I started towards the 109 and he turned into me. I got my pippin on him and began firing at extreme range but the rate of closing was so great that only a short burst was possible. There were a few hits on his canopy, but he made no effort to dodge, so I broke under him and turned to the left to get after him but he had made no turn but continued straight ahead in a gradually increasing dive and dove into the ground and exploded. I believe the pilot was killed by one of my strikes. I then turned to rejoin Lt. Sullivan and heard Lt. Sykes call for "someone to get this guy off my tail." Down at my 10 o'clock I saw an Me109 firing at Lt. Sykes' plane from which pieces started flying off. Lt. Sykes called that they had got him then jettisoned his canopy and baled out over the left side. His chute opened almost immediately. Meanwhile Lt. Sullivan was closing on the 109 and registered numerous hits on his first burst. Lt. Sullivan pulled up right off the trees and the 109 went into a steep dive into the ground. As I made a turn I flew past Lt. Sykes's chute and he seemed to be alive and kicking. I claim one Me109 destroyed and claim one Me109 destroyed for Lt. Sykes. I also support Lt. Sullivan's claim for one 109. (Note:- Lt. Sykes was badly wounded but survived and now lives in New Jersey.)

1st. Lt. Sykes Flying AC E9F - 44-11903.

"It wasn't all combat and small stoves though as the good things caught up with the Group when we found that in France there was a spirit allowance - 2oz. of Bourbon for each four hours combat down and that every month each pilot received two bottles of Scotch, two bottles of Gin, one Vodka, two Cognacs and four bottles of Champagne, which arrived on December 26th. Then on the 28th the January allowance arrived, whoopee!

26th December 1944 in the vicinity of Metz the 376th Fighter Squadron were flying a fighter sweep. Lt. Vanden Heuvel, flying as Yorkshire Red Four.

"Our Squadron Commander took us down to bounce something which turned out to be a Piper Cub, which we lost anyway. I was flying tail and Charlie, number four in the last flight, and out of the sun came twelve FW190s, who went right down in front of us. Nobody said anything so I called out "twelve bogeys at 12 o'clock." One of our old experienced pilots said "They're P47s." They passed in front of us and turned and I could see the Black Crosses. I said "They're 190s" and somebody also said "They're T Jugs." Thirty seconds later I said "Break, they're 190s" and he said "By God, they are." By this time I was flying on Claire Chennault Jr's wing, and he got on a 190 and took the most beautiful picture, but that's all - he didn't have his guns switched on. I quickly pulled off his wing, got my K14 sight on the 190 and shot him down with a long burst from 250 through to 200 yds, 20 degrees deflection, registering many hits on his fuselage canopy and wing root. He dove straight into the ground, exploding on impact. I climbed back up and saw two planes on the deck, finally identifying them as a FW190 being chased by Captain Jay Ruch. I said "Little friend flying over village, do you need any help?" and he replied "yes I'm out of ammunition" and instructed me to shoot down the 190, which was smoking slightly and taking weak evasive action on the deck. As he pulled up out of a gully I got behind him, put my pips on his wingtips and started shooting. He lit up like a rainbow, shuddered, pulled up and as he rolled over onto his back, out came the pilot and I can see him now, sailing past my plane and he had on the most beautiful leather outfit trimmed in white." (For that skirmish Lt. Vanden Heuvel was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross).



1st Lt Vanden Heuvel, December 26, 1944, immediately after becoming an Ace. The beard incidentally was a symbol of protest with regard to the delay in his promotion.

More dangerous months were to follow as the Eighth Air Force Fighter Command finished off the Luftwaffe in the skies above its homeland and indeed on its own airfields. There were to be no more aerial victories for Lt. Vanden Heuvel, most missions now being flown against transportation targets such as locomotives, barges etc.



Left: P51D, 44-14685, E9-L on dispersal at Chievres, Belgium during Feb. 1945.

Right: Same aircraft, "Mary Mine" at Chievres in March 1945. Lt. Duane Grounds on top, Capt. Sullivan on wheel and crew chief Sgt. Sullivan in cockpit.



Following on the heels of the advancing Allied armies the 361st Fighter Group moved forward in support to Chievres, Belgium by February 15th, 1945 where they remained until April 9th when they returned back to England and Little Walden.

On April 16, 1945 a strafing mission was planned against Reichersberg and Kircham airfields and there now follows the combat report of that actual mission by Lt. Vanden Heuvel.

"At 1550 Glowbright, Lt. Col. Caviness, (newly arrived Group Commander) made a pass at Reichersberg landing ground followed by the rest of Yorkshire Squadron. The pass was made NE to SW, with a small left turn off the field, breaking into a right turn to go over and investigate Kircham landing ground. White 3, Lt. Chapman, fired on a twin engine airplane in the open at the south corner of the field which caught fire and burned. This was the only undamaged aircraft in the open, all others were already burning, or under the trees (see sketch).

Yellow Leader, Lt. Vanden Heuvel, began firing at 800 yards to the SW. As he got in range he saw there were two a/c parked together. One blew up at 300 yards and the other began to burn as Yellow Leader pulled up over them and identified them as FW190s. Yellow 2, Lt. Jones began firing into the same woods until he saw the sun glint on an a/c parked behind the trees. He fired at it until it exploded. Yellow 3 and 4 did not fire, but as they pulled up they saw several a/c in woods SW of the field and went back for them. Red 3 (Leading Red Flight), Lt. Chalmers saw a FW190 at the right edge of the woods at the SW edge too late to fire as he made a circle to the left and made a West to East pass across the field, pulling his strikes up into the cockpit and seeing the airplane burn as he passed over it. Blue flight did not fire on this pass but turned around to the left for another NE to SW pass. This time, Blue Leader, Lt. Eisenhut, found a FW190 on the North edge of the field and fired from 400 yards until the a/c burned as he passed over it. Blue 2, Lt. Kelly, fired at a Fiesler Storch, but it would not burn. Blue 3 Lt. Grounds shot up a JU-52 which also would not burn. Meanwhile, Yellow 3 and Yellow 4, Lt. Spencer and Lt. Chadwick set up a gunnery pattern of their own on several JU-52s parked along the West edge of the patch of the woods about 900 yards SW of the field, making passes from West to East. In about five passes they each caused three JU-52s to burn up (a total of six). After his pass on Kircham airfield Yellow Leader, Lt. Vanden Heuvel, came back and made a pass at another JU-52 in this same woods, but although it was clobbered, the a/c did not burn."

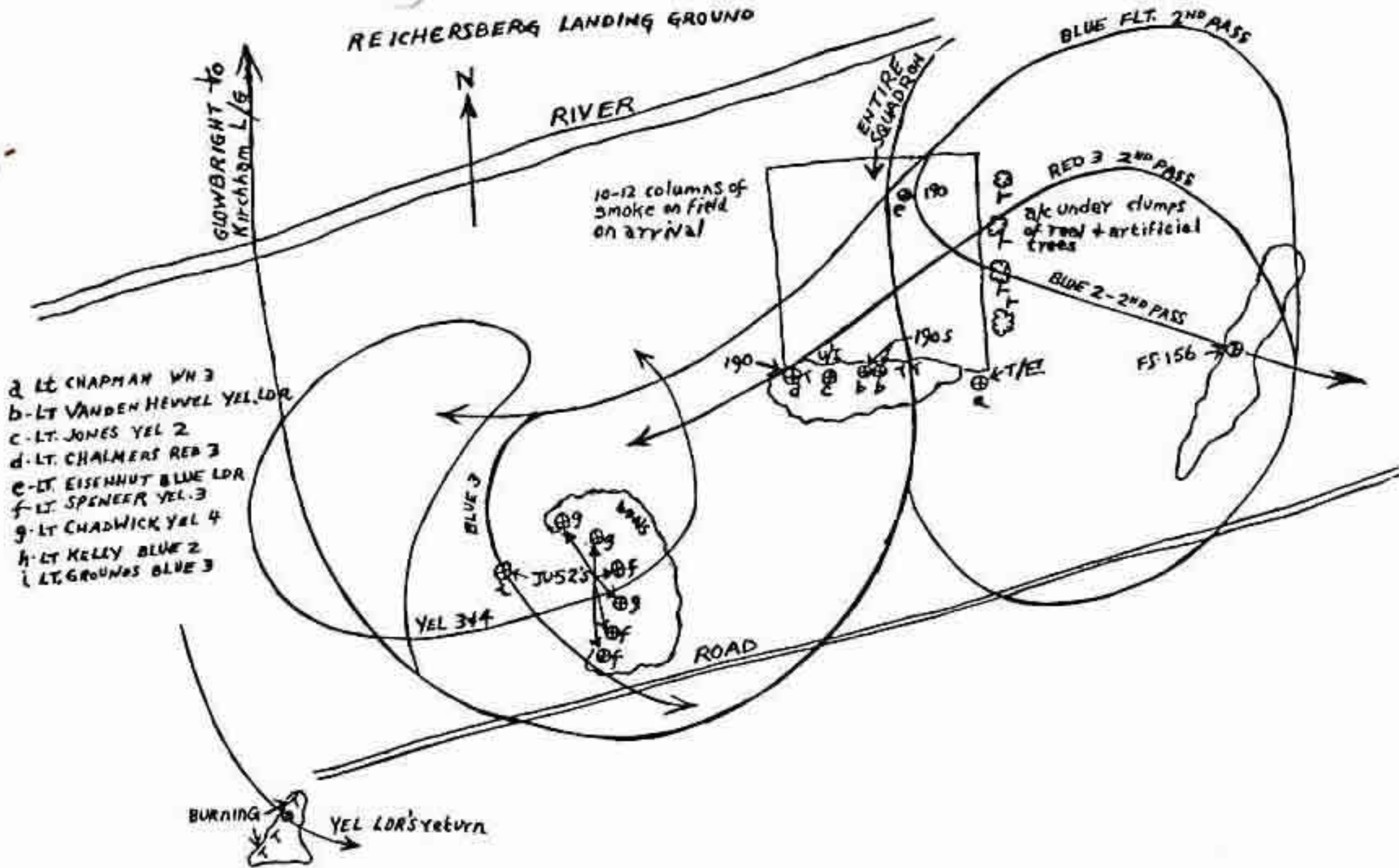
During his short excursion to Kircham airfield Lt. Vanden Heuvel explained in a separate report "I followed Glowbright over to Kircham landing ground and made a pass NE to SW. I couldn't see any airplanes at first but I saw something camouflaged under some trees on the South side, so I began firing from 600 yards, closing to 100 yards. As I passed over I identified my target as a Me410. It was burning well."

1575 rounds expended including attack on Reichersberg.
(An Oak Leaf Cluster was awarded to supplement his previous DFC after that mission.)

GROUND CLAIMS CONFIRMED

April 16, 1945	2xFW190 1xMe410 1/2xJU52	P510 44-64005	E9-2 'Mary Mine'
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REICHERSBERG LANDING GROUND



- a - LT CHAPMAN WH 3
- b - LT VANDEN HEWEL YEL LDR
- c - LT JONES YEL 2
- d - LT CHALMERS RED 3
- e - LT EISENHUT BLUE LDR
- f - LT SPENEER YEL 3
- g - LT CHADWICK YEL 4
- h - LT KELLY BLUE 2
- i - LT GRONAS BLUE 3

10-12 columns of smoke in field on arrival

2k under clumps of real + artificial trees

BURNING YEL LDR'S return

CONFIRMED CLAIMS BY 1st Lt GEORGE R VANDEN HEUVEL

Nov 2, 1944	1xFW190	P510	44-14217	E9-D
Nov 26, 1944	2xFW190	P510	44-14685	E9-L
Dec 24, 1944	1xFW190	P510	44-14685	E9-L
Dec 26, 1944	1½xFW190	P510	44-14685	E9-L



George Vanden Heuvel still recalls the incident quite vividly when he shot down the FW190 with its pilot in the beautiful leather outfit and often used to wonder as to what had happened to him. Eventually, with the help of Eighth Air Force Historian and writer Danny Morris, contact was established with Herr. Hans R. Hartigs, who replied:

"Dear Friend, first of all the question which is probably the most interesting to you, whether I am the German Bandit whom you shot down over Luxembourg, near Florren-Villes. According to the situation, it should be me. I was at the time First Lieutenant and Squadron Leader and on that day I was leading the 2nd Group of the Schlageter Squadron (2/26) with our FW190s. We had instructions at the time to protect the advance tanks of the Rundstedt offensive, which had already penetrated deeply into Belgium, from your fighter-bombers and bomber attacks and from the 'Indians' (our name for enemy fighter pilots.)

I did find the tanks which had however been buried but which were already deserted because they had been put out of action without ammunition and petrol.

Actually I had carried out my instructions but there had been an order not to return from a sortie under any circumstances without contact with the enemy. I was therefore looking for an aim on the ground by flying low but unfortunately I did not find anything suitable and decided to gain height with my group going South. I realised that I would be quickly discovered by your Radar and the enemy air command would send its Indians against us. It was a sunny morning with hardly any clouds, and that is the best weather for you and your Yellow-Jackets to chase after the German Bandits.



You proceeded to do this thoroughly, however, I still shot down a Thunderbolt but then I was shot down by a Yellow-nosed Mustang. I was able to save myself with a parachute and that meant the end of the war for me."

George or Van to his close friends retired from the U.S. Air Force in 1965 with the rank of Colonel and now resides in London, England with his charming wife Barbara, but the Eighth still retains its hold on him. He is now the Eighth Air Force Historical Society's

U.K. agent and is also a familiar figure at Friends of the Eighth meetings where he considers each of its members to be a dear and personal friend.

"Mary Mine" is still in existence though slightly bent at the moment. Registered as N51CK and owned by Charles Kemp of Jackson, Mississippi it came to grief in a crash at King City, California, last April, when the cam on the A bank of the Merlin engine broke and a forced landing resulted. When George and the Eighth relinquished their title to her the Mustang entered service with the Royal Canadian Air Force on June 7, 1947 as 9561 where it remained until September 20, 1950 when she was stored for surplus sale at Carberry by the Crown Assets Disposal Corporation. In 1958 the aircraft was sold in the States registered as N6339T. After many ownership changes she eventually was acquired by Charles Kemp.



Colonel Vanden Heuvel places a wreath on behalf of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society at Madingley Cemetery during 1979 Memorial Day.

George has one wish which he hopes one day to come true and that is to come face to face with "Mary Mine" again and maybe even to fly her! What a day that would be for a pilot with guts enough.

A side to George's character that few people know is that at one time he had artistic aspirations towards the written word. The poem "Inspiration" was written by 2nd Lt. George R. Vanden Heuvel, Coast Artillery Reserve Corps in 1940; another facet to this fine gentleman and friend of the Eighth Air Force Research Group (Wales).

GENERAL ORDERS)

HEADQUARTERS 361ST FIGHTER GROUP

APO 558

NUMBER 1)

4 May 1945

SECTION I: DESIGNATION OF FIGHTER ACE
SECTION II: DESIGNATION OF FIGHTER ACES

I. The following named pilot having destroyed five or more enemy aircraft in aerial combat is designated FIGHTER ACE (Posthumously) effective 27 May 1944.

LT COLONEL GEORGE L MERRITT, JR 0335112 AC (5 destroyed)

II. The following named pilots having destroyed five or more enemy aircraft in aerial combat are designated FIGHTER ACES, effective on date shown:

1ST LT DALE F SPENCER	0758874	(10 destroyed)	5 July 1944
CAPTAIN WILLIAM R BEYER	0816628	(9 destroyed)	27 September 1944
1ST LT URBAN L DREW	0812776	(6 destroyed)	7 October 1944
1ST LT WILLIAM T KEMP	0682656	(6 destroyed)	12 September 1944
1ST LT GEORGE R VANDEN HEUVEL	0377674	(5 $\frac{1}{2}$ destroyed)	26 December 1944
CAPTAIN WILLIAM J SYKES	0793027	(5 destroyed)	24 December 1944

BY ORDER OF LT COLONEL CAVINESS:

J. F. O'MARA
Capt., Air Corps,
Adjutant.

Classification Canceled

On _____

At _____

By _____

By _____

OFFICIAL:

J. F. O'Mara

J. F. O'MARA
Capt., Air Corps,
Adjutant.

* 3 Destroyed on the Ground
April 1945 in May Mine

A SPECIAL REUNION

By Robert S. DeGroat

The "Mary Mine"

This P-51 Mustang, nicknamed the "Mary Mine" is an actual combat aircraft which saw duty in the European Theater during World War II. Piloted by Lt. George R. Vanden Heuvel, who was assigned to the 376th Fighter Squadron, 361st Fighter Group, stationed in England, this plane bears its original markings including tail number and confirmed enemy kills. Vanden Heuvel became an "ace" during the war, with a total of 72 combat missions and 94 victories.

The history of the aircraft reveals that on April 16, 1945, Lt. Vanden Heuvel took part in a strafing mission against German airfields, and while flying this aircraft, accounted for three aircraft destroyed and one damaged.

Vanden Heuvel continued a distinguished military career following World War II, serving in a variety of testing programs which resulted in a tour as Chief of the Engineering Division for Air Force Ballistic Missiles. Upon his retirement in 1965, Colonel Vanden Heuvel was the Assistant Air Attache in London. Following his retirement, Van Heuvel elected to remain in London, where he still lives.

She was a thoroughbred, the result of fine wartime breeding. He was a young, veteran fighter pilot. They met in England during the final stages of World War II. They worked together several times before the war ended, then each went their separate ways.

That was 38 years ago. The two friends were reunited on October 7, 1983 at AIRSHO 83.

He gave her a long look, and touched her gently several times. She had not aged visibly. The color scheme was the same, even down to her nickname "Mary Mine." She was as he remembered.

He is George Vanden Heuvel, a fighter ace in World War II. She is a P-51D, SN 44-64005, the very Mustang he flew several times in tallying his 72 combat missions. Now under the care of owner Charles Kemp, she is known as N51CK. Outwardly, however, she remains "Mary Mine."

He obviously enjoyed seeing her again. Would he care to take a ride in her? He climbed into the jump seat. After checking that George was secure, pilot Merle Gustafson climbed into the cockpit and strapped in.

The Merlin engine turned over and caught. Taxiing out, the plane looked splendid in her Eighth Air Force colors; the yellow nose of the 361st Fighter Group and the yellow rudder of the 376th Fighter Squadron, both accentuating her natural metal finish.

Sometime later, "Mary Mine" appeared back over Rebel Field, making some high-speed passes before executing a fighter-break and maneuvering into the landing pattern. The reunion had come full circle.

It had been a very special reunion for George, shared with his brother Robert, and squadron-mate Don Vulgamore. For the few lucky observers, it was also very special reunion and one of the highlights of AIRSHO 83.



A very special reunion for George Vanden Heuvel (second from left). Shown with him are his brother whom he had not seen in 20 years, "Mary Mine's" present owner, Charles Kemp, his wingman from WWII, Don Vulgamore, and Merle Gustafson who took him "around the patch" in the P-51 he had last seen 38 years ago.

D. BOOKER

George on Dec. 26, 1944

The day that he became an "Ace".

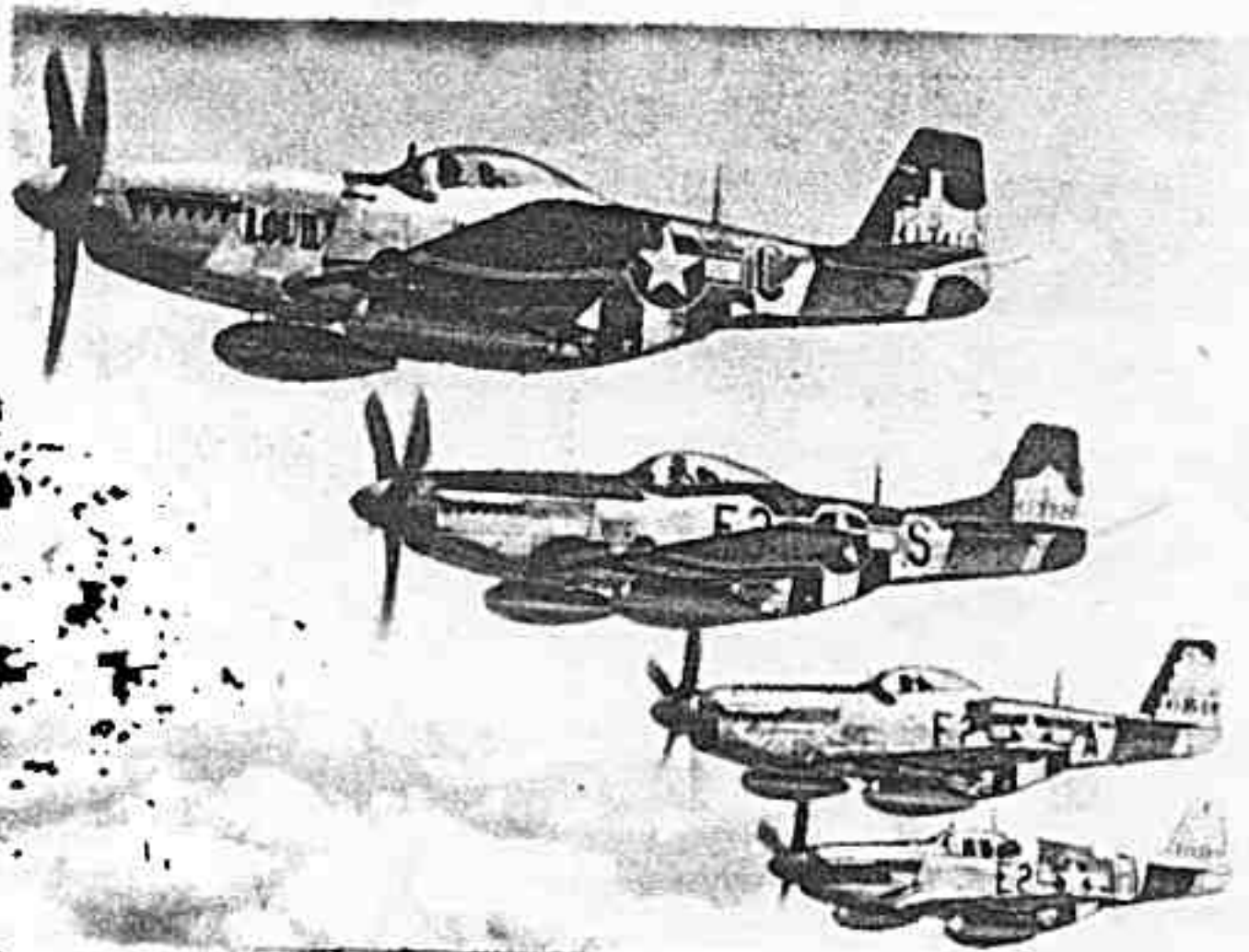


George Vandon Heuvel YAK

PIECES OF EIGHT.



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1st Lt George R Vanden Heuvel

376th Fighter Squadron

361st Fighter Group





GEORGE VANDEN HEUVEL

ABOUT 1943