

JACK H. BATEMAN, LT./COL. USAF RET.

I was born August 6, 1920 in McIntosh, Florida, a real small town between Gainesville and Ocala, Florida. I grew up in the little town and went to grade school there until 1937. Then I commuted daily to Gainesville to attend high school my last two years 1937-1938 and 1938-1939. I graduated from Gainesville High School on June 6, 1939 and entered the University of Florida summer school June 9, 1939.

I attended the University of Florida continuously until the summer of 1941. I took the summer off from college and tried to enter the Navy's Flying Program but was turned down because I was underweight. Then, in September, I returned to the University of Florida and was working on a degree in General Agriculture in preparation for County Agent work. When World War II started December 7, 1941, I knew I had to go because I was already 21 years of age in August 1941, so I looked for what I would like to do - fly. In late January 1942 the AAF sent an Aviation Cadet Selection Team to the University of Florida looking for pilot trainees, and I went down and applied, passed the test and a medical screening. The next step was to be sworn in as a private and wait on leave for a slot in a Cadet Class to start training. I was sworn in on March 8, 1942 in Jacksonville, and received a telegram to report to Camp Blanding on April 8, 1942. At Camp Blanding they gave us our uniforms and shipped us to Maxwell Air Base for pre-flight training. Upon arrival at Maxwell we were promoted to Aviation Cadet. That raised our pay from \$21.00 to \$75.00 per month. After April, May and June at Maxwell in pre-flight, I was assigned to Primary Flying School at the 63rd AAF - FTD in Douglas, Georgia in Class 43A.

After two months, I finished Primary and moved on to Basic at Greenville, Mississippi. While I was at Douglas, I dated a girl by the name of Margrette McCranie and we corresponded for a few years. I managed to see her three or four times between Primary and when I went to combat in October 1943. At Basic Flying School I had difficulty passing the Morse Code requirements and was washed back a class to 43B. I left Greenville at the end of November 1942 and went to Advanced Single Engine Flying School in Dothan, Alabama for December and January 1943. I graduated February 16, 1943 and was commissioned 2nd Lt. in the Reserves (Pilot).

About the 26th of February 1943 six of us were sent to Westover Air Base in Massachusetts to check out in the P-47 aircraft. After about four or five weeks there I was assigned to the 359th Fighter Group, 370th Fighter Squadron and sent to Bedford Air Base, Massachusetts. We were there flying the P-47 from early April until the end of May. During this time the 359th Fighter Group and the other two squadrons, the 368th Fighter Squadron and the 369th Fighter Squadron were at Grenier, Manchester, New Hampshire.

From the first of June 1943 to early in September 1943 the 370th Fighter Squadron was stationed at Mitchell Air Base at Hempstead, Long Island (the Group and other two squadrons were at the Republic Plant in Farmingdale, Long Island) where we complete our OTU training in preparation for combat in England. We were moved back to Westover in September 1943 and embarked from New York October 8, 1943 for Europe.

We arrive in Greenock, Scotland about the 20th and went by train to our base at East Wretham, East Anglia, which is about halfway between Cambridge and Norwich and six miles from Thedford.

The officers were housed in a large manor house and we filled it up with 250. Later the ground support officers were moved out and left only the pilots and command staff. It took one and a half months to get ready for our first combat mission on December 13, 1943. We were the 8th Fighter Group to go operational in the 8th Fighter Command, 67th Fighter Wing from December 13, 1943 until April 30, 1944. I flew 50 combat missions in the P-47, mostly high altitude escorts for the bombers and three to five staffing missions on German air fields in Holland.

When the 8th Fighter Command decided to change over six P-47 Fighter Groups to P-51 at the end of April 1944, I volunteered to go to an Air Rescue Squadron with my P-47 and crew. This was Detachment "B" 65th Fighter Wing located at Boxted, three miles north of Coldchester with the 56th Fighter Group. We has twenty-four P-47s (four from each of the six Fighter Groups). We were permanent spotters with two aircraft on station at the cross out point and the cross in point for each mission. Any time any aircraft got in trouble (mostly battle damage) and cried "May Day" we went to their assistance. I served two, three-month tours with Rescue until November 8, 1944 and received credit for personally helping save 29 airmen's lives during this time.

I completed my required time (276 hours) for a Combat Tour in the theater and was returned to the U.S. on December 15, 1944. I arrived home in McIntosh, Florida on New Year's Eve 1944. I was a 1st Lt. and after checking with my girl friend in Douglas I was sent to Yuma, Arizona to fly P-39s and P-62s (pinballs we called them) that were used for B-17 gunners to shoot at. While at Yuma, Arizona, VE Day came in April 1945 and I was transferred to Perry, Florida as a P-51 Instructor in May 1945. The Training Command was slowly closing down, and I closed Perry and went to Bartow and closed it and ended up in Savannah in October 1945. There was a need for P-47 instructor pilots in the Panama Canal Zone at this time, so with 700+ hours in the aircraft I volunteered for the assignment and left the U.S. for the Canal Zone December 15, 1945.

In Panama, I was shifted around so the Squadron could promote another 1st to Captain and ended up in Managua, Nicaragua from January 11, 1946 until August 8, 1946 as an Outlying Base Commander. There, we serviced aircraft that were being ferried to South American countries. I got what I considered a raw deal from the AAF out there and asked to be released from active duty. I returned to the U.S. on November 8, 1946 and was put on in active duty in the Reserves.

My terminal leave was over on January 8, 1947 and my girl friend that I had dated while in Boxted came to Florida to visit from Canada and we decided to get engaged on February 14, 1947. I went to Regina, Saskatchewan in May and we were married June 4, 1947. When were returned July 4, 1947 I went back to the University of Florida for one year for my degree in General Agriculture and graduated in June 1948. I had two fairly good jobs in 1948-1949 and 1949-1950, then I had four jobs that only lasted a few months each. So in December 1950, I decided to request recall in the new USAF. They had open promotions

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in the Reserves from 1st to Captain and my Reserve Unit put me in for Captain. I received it on April 25, 1951 and went on active duty on May 11, 1951. I attended Controllers School, Tyndal AFB, Florida eight weeks then returned two months later as an instructor. While at Tyndal for two years, I flew P-51-Hs and got over 300 hours in them. This made my single engine, single seater fighter time over 1,000 hours. I also checked out in the C-45 and flew it quite a bit at Tyndal.

My wife, Kit Larson Bateman, and I had started our family in McIntosh, Florida in 1947 and had four children in the next six years - a girl in May 1948, another girl in November 1950, a boy in June 1952, and other boy in July 1954.

In October 1953 the USAF decided I needed an overseas tour and sent me to Japan for 18 months as an Aircraft Control and Warning Controller and operations officer. My first assignment was commander of a small Early Warning Radar Site on the northern coast of Japan at a town called Komatsu. It was an old World War II air field and I had 50 enlisted men and myself. I went to Komatsu on December 26, 1953 and left August 8, 1954. At this time I was sent to a Ground Controlled Intercept Squadron out on the Tatayama peninsula southeast of Tokyo, about 30 miles by air. At this unit I was the Operations Officer and had 12-16 2nd Lts. working for me. I stayed there from August 1954 to April 1955 and returned to the United States.

The USAF decided that I needed more flying time for my rank, as I was a Captain with nine years service and only about 2,000 hours, so I was sent to Grenier AFB, New Hampshire to fly C-54 type aircraft. I was only there from June to October and got about 250 hours in the C-54. This was the Military Air Transport Service and in late October, 1955 they decided to close Grenier AFB and sent my squadron (83rd ATS) to McGuire AFB, New Jersey to fly the C-118 and the other squadron went to Charleston AFB, South Carolina.

At McGuire, I checked out in the C-118 over the Christmas holidays 1955, and flew the line as a 2nd and 1st pilot until November 1956 when I was upgraded to Aircraft Commander. I was able to stay at McGuire for six years - three as a Line Aircraft Commander and three as the Assistant Chief of Safety for the 1611th Air Transport Wing. I made Major December 25, 1960.

In January 1962 I was selected to go to Chataroux, France in an Airborne Command Post Squadron. We were to be the communications link between SHAPE in Paris and U.S. Central Command in Washington, D.C. My family and I had lived in Mount Holly, New Jersey for the six years at McGuire and I was able to take them to France after about seven months. We spent three years over there and returned to Patrick AFB, Florida in July 1965. I flew the Air Force Eastern Test Range for a little over a year and retired July 31, 1966 as Lt. Col. USAF Reserve. I flew the C-118 (DC 6A) for ten and a half years and accumulated over 6,500 plus 2,000 hours in-flight hours. I also made my Senior Pilots rating and my Commander Pilots rating while flying the C-118. Because I was a reservist I could only stay for 20 years active service with 24 years for pay.

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After retiring in August 1966 my wife and I, with three of the four children, went to Arkansas, near Fayetteville, where I had bought some land. The plan did not work out and I taught school for five months and worked on the land the other four then returned to Gainesville, Florida in June. I taught school as a Vocational Agriculture teacher for one year (1967-1968), then went to work for the City of Gainesville as a Personnel Assistant and Safety Supervisor for General Government in June 1968. This job was for five years until my wife and I broke up in November 1972.

I had made contact with my friend from Douglas, Georgia Primary Flying School days and dated her in Atlanta while getting my divorce. Soon after the decree was final, we were married May 26, 1973. She had a nice home in Stone Mountain. Soon after I arrived in Atlanta I got a job as Safety Supervisor with Dobbs House, Inc. on the ramp at Hartsfield International Airport and worked for them for four years. Then I left Dobbs and went to work for Marriott In-flight Services (May 1978) and worked there until I retired at the end of August 1982. I have lived in Stone Mountain with my wife, Margrette, for the past eighteen years, have a garden, berry patch, and lots of lawn to keep me busy for years to come.