

WILLIAM SKINNER 43A Feb 2, 1990  
16 LAKE Drive  
BOONTON, N.J. 07005

Dear Paul

Thank you for your call. I enjoyed talking with you about Douglas, Ga. and the 63<sup>rd</sup> AAF. FTD. It was a long time ago and the start of my career in flying.

It is very interesting to hear about the reunions you people have been having. Thank you also for your invitation to attend your next reunion in the fall of 1990. My wife and I shall do our best to attend and I'm sure we will enjoy it.

The 31<sup>st</sup> Fighter Group that I was in overseas 1943-44 also has periodic reunions. I attended one in San Antonio Tex that was outstanding as we also were able to go to Hartman, Tex + see the big Confederate Air Show. Spits, Me's, P-51's, P-47's, B-25's, B-17's even a B-29 all were flying. Took lots of pictures.

After I talked with you I brought out my book of the 63<sup>rd</sup> AAF. FTD and reviewed the pictures of the base, instructors, and students.

I was surprised how many of the staff I remembered both AAC + Civilian pilot instructors as well as ground school + PT instructors. I found your picture but I don't believe we ever met.

I was interested to read about your career at Douglas and afterwards. You certainly covered a lot of territory and a very large number of hours.

I haven't been in contact with any classmates from Douglas except Blair Watson occasionally. The only names and address I have are on my orders after I graduated.



2 From advanced flying school at Craig Field, Selma, Ala

Thank you for Charlie Sherrill's address and phone number. If I get down that way I shall surely give him a call and again thank him for his help + consideration during a very trying time. He rebuilt the self confidence of our group + all soloed and graduated from primary.

### Biography of William J. Skinner

Date of birth 7-11-18 Springfield, Mass.

Enlisted as Aviation cadet Feb. 1942.

March 1942 assigned S.E. Training Command Maxwell Field, Ala

April 1942 Testing Center Reception Center.

July 1942 Primary AAF TD Douglas, Ca. Inst. Sherrill

Sept. 1942 Basic Greenville, Miss BT-13

Nov 1942 Advanced Craig Field, Selma Ala. AT6(43A)

After a short leave I was assigned to 53 FG 15<sup>th</sup> Ftr Sqdn Pale Field, Ft Myers, Fla. P-39. Training. Aerobatics, gunnery, night flying etc.

April 1943 overseas by air (Pan Am) as a P-39 replacement pilot to Mediterranean Theatre. Transition base was south of Casa Blanca at Sand El Berrechid. There we were informed no more P-39s in combat due heavy losses. Germans loved them easy picking.

We were allowed to express our preference for following aircraft. Spitfires, P-40's, P-38's or A-36's used as dive bombers. I put down only Spits. After much bugging of Major Patten a friend, pilot, I was assigned to Spitfires to my delight.



3. I was assigned to the <sup>WM SKINNER 43A</sup> 31<sup>st</sup> Fighter Group 308<sup>th</sup> SqDN. At that time the Group was in Algeria where I joined them after a short check out in Spitfires.

Another short check out in Spitfire MK VC and then combat in Tunisia over Pantelleria.

Group moved to Malta to cover the invasion of Sicily. Then to Sicily and aerodrome at Gozo short range cover for medium bombers + bomb line protection thro Sicily to Palermo then east to Cape Millazzo. near toe of Italy.

Covered invasion of Italy at Salerno + flew into field at Monte Corvino near Salerno. As fighting moved up Italy we followed to Pomigliano airbase east of Naples then to Volturno River.

Group missions were invasion cover, bomb line patrol and escort for B, 25<sup>s</sup>, B 26<sup>s</sup> + A 20<sup>s</sup> on occasion escorted A 36<sup>s</sup>.

We operated close to front lines due to short range of Spitfires. We covered the invasion of Anzio and had one squadron over the beach head for a short time.

In May 1944 after 155 missions + 3 ME 109<sup>s</sup> destroyed I was returned to the States. I received the DFC and Air Medal with 16 Oak Leaf Clusters.

After return to the US. I was based in Miami for 6 months recruiting cadets for the AAF.



4 After Miami I was transferred to the Western Training Command. At first I went on the 6<sup>th</sup> War Bond Drive for 1 month. I had a P-51 and there was also a P-47, P-38, B-25, C-47, B-17 and we all toured around the West from Washington down to Arizona Texas + up to Colorado. We showed the planes, gave speeches and told of our experiences.

When the Bond tour was over I was assigned to Bakersfield, Cal where I instructed cadets until the end of the war in 1945. AT-63

I remained in the reserve and left the AAF to Civilian life in Sept. 1945.

I started working for Pan American in Dec. 1955. While with Pan Am I was based in Miami Brownsville, Texas and New York. I flew DC-3, CV-240, DC-4, DC-6, DC-7, + Boeing 707. I was with Pan Am for 32 years and retired in 1978 as a Captain. Flew to Europe, Africa, Near East, Far East + Pacific. Missed getting to Australia + New Zealand

In 1954 I married Dolores Fenstermaker from Allentown, Pa. She was a nurse and later became a stewardess for Pan Am where I met her

We have three sons + three daughters. One son recently left the Air Force and is flying for Pan Am

My hobbies are photography, meta detecting + traveling Pan Am. I also belong to a number



45) of Clubs whose <sup>WM SKINNER 43A</sup> members collect military items from WWII  
as WWI Civil war etc. I am, of course, interested in  
AVIATION items: US, German & Japanese.

I am enclosing a picture taken of me with my  
Spitfire in Italy in 1943. During the war I took color  
slides (825) <sup>size 35mm</sup> Overseas and after returning, I still have  
them as well as color prints I had made from them.  
I have an album of color + some black + white  
prints including some at Duxford + continuing  
til the end of the war. Some of my slides have  
been used in Air Combat + later in Air Classics

I hope this information + pictures etc of  
some interest and the former personnel of  
The 63 AAF-FTD

Yours respectfully

William J. Skinner

16 LAKE DRIVE

BOONTON, N. J. 07005

201-334-5247

SUMMER JUNE THRU OCT

357-W 5TH ST.

SURF CITY, N. J. 08008

609-494-2209





ABOVE  
1ST LT WILLIAM J. SKINNER  
DFC AM 16 OLC.  
308TH SQD. 31ST FIGHTER GP.  
12TH A.F. MEDITERRANEAN.  
SPITFIRE MK VIII  
PICTURE TAKEN AT POMIGLIANO  
AIR DROME NEAR NAPLES ITALY  
NOV 1943

LEFT  
WILLIAM & DELORES SKINNER  
TAKEN AT THEIR SUMMER HOME  
SURF CITY, N. JERSEY  
SEPT 1989