

43D

DELTA

EAGLE



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Dear Paul;

I was greatful for your quick reply to my letter, and happy to hear some news from or about the Douglas gang. I shall answer all of your questions, however if I repeat any news that I had already given to you, please forgive me because I did not keep a copy of the former communication.

I am enclosing the photo that you requested, the information concerning same is on the back. The airplane is of course, a B17 G, owned by the Confederate Air Force. They do, on occasion, come up to this area in drives for funds relative to support of the group, so I go to the airport to renew old acquaintances. Once in a great while, I run across somebody that I knew years ago.

I was very sad to hear of the death of Joe Thalman. As a 19 year old kid, Joe was my hero. I had him for most of the time at Douglas, as my instructor, but when he was promoted to a better position, I got Lloyd Sager. Lloyd scared the hell out of me, and as a result, I think that I did not perform as to the best of his opinion. Joe taught us to sing out the old check list procedure....SWITCH OFF, GAS ON, THROTTLE CLOSED MIXTURE RICH, BRAKES SET, ALTIMETER SET, TRIM TAB SET, CONTROLS UNLOCKED, CARBURETOR HEAT COLD. (pretty darned good, eh, that I still remember after all these years?)..... Well Sager did not want us to do the yelling out, so we did it silently. The day I remember in particular when he was displeased with me, was the day he changed the setting of the trim tab as I was taxiing out to take off. Hell, I thought I was o.k., because I had already set the tab. Naturally she was nose heavy, but I hung on to that stick for dear life. Sager yelled into the Gosport tube, "O.K., I got it" and he landed the Stearman and wrote me up. Then he said "Didnt you notice the plane was nose heavy?" "Yes sir, but I checked the trim tab before engine start and I set it then. Well, he called me a liar and I never forgave him for what I still think is not the mark of a good instructor. So be it.

I read about your notice for the 63rd AAFTC in the AFA Magazine. I have been getting it for years. O.K., here is my biography. After graduating from Advance multi engine training at Blythesville Arkansas, I went on to multi engine transition at Moses Lake and Ephrata Washington State, then to Rapid City, South Dakota. From there, (no leave) to a Liberty ship in



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Hampton Roads, Virginia, to a Liberty Ship, then to Casablanca, Africa, where I piloted a C 47 loaded with troops to Tunis, Tunisia. I was assigned, along with a group of other officers to Jimmy Doolittles 12th A.F., which, after a while was taken over by General Twining. Jimmy was sent to England, as you know. We were then in the 15th A.F. under General Twining. Assigned to the 5th Wing, 301st bomb group, 352nd Sqn. After a short stay in the 54th General Field Hospital for a case of yellow jaundice, I went back to duty. The group was moved to Sardinia, to Sicily, to Cerignola, Italy. I was on my 23rd mission in a brand new B17G on the way to a target consisting of an assembly factory for ME 109s at Steyr, Austria, when we were attacked by 147 ME 109s and Focke Wolfe 190s. Of our squadron of 12, we lost 2 planes, mine and another B17. Mine was a brand new one, only had about 5 hours on the engines. The tail gunner lost his jaw to a 20 mm cannon shot. One waist gunner took a 30 cal. through the body into his stomach and out his back. I instructed the waist gunner that was left to wrap the wounded in their parachutes and toss the wounded out of the plane. We were, at that time, on fire and under enemy attack. We lost 7 feet off the right wing as well as the aileron, and 4 feet off the left wing. We set up for automatic pilot and bailed out over the I.P.. Temperature, ? 65 degrees below zero. I was slightly wounded in the forehead, nothing serious. The Germans picked us up and sent the 2 wounded to the hospital. Both are alive today, as far as I know. I was a P.O.W. for 14 months, and when the Russians liberated us, I along with a buddy, walked 76 miles and did it in 26 hours. I was still a 2nd Lt., and so was my buddy, a navigator. We later received a promotion to 1st Lt. I was in a hospital in Stone England for 14 days. I weighed 126 lbs.. Now, I weigh 186 lbs and am 5 ft 11 inches tall. We were picked up by the 101st Paratroop Division at the Elbe river in Germany and returned to England. I was home in June, on my wifes birthday. I was separated from active duty in September, 1945, and placed into the Reserves, attached to the 2253rd Reserves at Pittsburgh until 1957, at which time I figured that they wnted me out because I was getting too close to receiving a pension. They asked me to resign, but I said hell no, I worked too hard to get the commision, and if they wanted me out to go ahead and kick me out. I received a nice letter of thanks for a job well done. My total hours is low compared to yours, but I had 600 total. They never recorded the time I had in C 119s and C 46s. You can add about another 300 to the total.



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The DELTA EAGLES is the group of pilots who graduated with the class of 43D. The Greek letter DELTA is the 4th letter of the Greek alphabet, tying in with the fourth month of the year, April, which is the month that the Pilot class of 43 D graduated hence THE DELTA EAGLES. You do remember that each class (you mentioned the class of 42 K) had a chronological number corresponding with the year and month (by number) of graduation so, then the class of 42 K graduated in the month of November, in the year 1942..... I am not trying to be sarcastic, please believe me. The pilot class of 43D was the largest class of pilots to graduate (over 6,300) in the history of pilot training.

After leaving active service, I returned to my former job at the Westinghouse Electric Corporation In East Pittsburgh Pa.. I was, at the time war was declared with the Japs, working as a fitter of Circuit Breakers while waiting to get into an apprentice tool makers job which I had formerly had when I lied about my age at 15, and went to work while still attending school. I worked in the evenings. Thus, I had gained experience for the guts to apply at Westinghouse. When the Japs struck, I volunteered on December the 8th, 1941. I took all of the physical and mental tests and passed, inducted on March 29th, 1941, assigned in June, 1941 and was in Nashville, Tennessee the same month for classification. Rated pilot training and you know what followed. In August 1945, the Corporation decided that I needed training in the tool rooms, so thats where I went. During that time, I went to the University Of Pittsburgh, at night. The Company generously gave me a position of Manufacturing Engineer, Mechanical Processing (Machining Eng.) which I enjoyed for 10 years, then the sent me to Welding School for Engineers (some seminars at Carnegie Mellon) and pronounced me as a Welding Engineer. Total time at Westinghouse was 43 + years. I retired in February, 1984.

I have several hobbies. Primarily, I build radio controlled models of aircraft. I also build stage coaches, (models) paint in oils and do photography. My wifes first name is Willa. She is, unfortunately, inflicted with multiple sclerosis and diabetes. I generally stick close to home . I did attend the reunion of the class of 43D at Colorado Springs in April, 1987.....By the way, on November 9th, 1942, I soloed the P.T. 17, 46 years ago. I know that I can still fly that @r any

other aircraft that I once flew.

I have a daughter, Beverly, 42.. I have no Grandchildren.

Roscoe Turner ? I feel that I knew him well. I know that he worked for the Gilmore Oil Company, wore a pink flying suit, and had a lion in the cockpit of his Wedell Williams racing plane where ever he went. I am sorry to jump around in this letter, but I leave this computer and forget what I had written to you in the other letter, so please forgive me. Willa and I were married on December 5th, 1942.....

I do have some information on some of the other guys who graduated with our class, but I have had no contact with those who are still around. Perhaps I did not try hard enough, These are the ones that I know about. Killed in action : Paul Bradnan, E.L.Dyer, G. Gardner... T.J. Brady, who was a N.Y. policeman , got himself stinking drunk and on a bet, tried to ride a bicycle on a 20 foot long, 10 foot high, 10 inch wide brick wall at the Remington Arms Hotel in London, England, and fell to his death by breaking his neck.

I was also unhappy with Julian H. Kohn, 2nd Lt. and Commandant of Cadets who, after giving me permission to go off the base in order to marry Willa who came down from Pittsburgh by bus with her mother, changed his so called mind because some Cadet violated one of the rules. Kohn thereby reneged on open post except for those Cadets who had washed out. I had a buddy, W.J. Bennett who had washed out and after learning of my predicament, volunteered to sleep in my bed. I went A.W.O.L. and used his pass then got married and had to rush back to the base before 5 A.M.. He was a friend, Kohn never will be.

I looked up your photo in the 63rd A.A.F.T.D. graduation Annual. and saw that you were an Assistant Squadron Commander. Gee, I hope you dont turn me in!!!O.K., names of those who were in along with me ,who were lucky to get Joe.(no insult intended to you).Myself, of course, Sam Araps, William F. Band, Van H. Barnes (Gainsville, Florida at that time)also a nice fellow whose last name was Archibald, but washed out. Don't remember his first name, he washed out early. I do not remember any one in Lloyd Sagers group. I was petrified of the guy and severely depressed. He was overbearing. So long for now....

Ed

Be Happy!

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