

EARL THOMPSON Y3F

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Dear Paul,

I am finally answering your letter of April. Our home was loaned to our daughter and family, hence many of our belongings were temporarily packed and put away. After they moved, I finally located my missing log book. Incidentally, when I wrote to Fred Sundheim, I mentioned that the flight school at Douglas, Georgia was called the Raymond-Brinkerhoff School of Flying. Fred remembers it as the Raymond-Anderson School, but I am enclosing a small copy of a signed page from my book. Now I'll give my biography and please excuse the typing errors...I am a two-fingered non-typist.

I grew up in the San Francisco Bay area and was working at the Mare Island Navy Yard when Pearl Harbor was attacked. So, in March of '42 I enlisted as a prospective Aviation Cadet. I wasn't called until early November to the Classification Center at Nashville, Tennessee and then assigned to Primary Flight at Douglas, Georgia in December and my first orientation flight was on the 31st of December of 1942.

My instructor was Sam Topous--I believe he was from Detroit at that time. It was a great experience for me, but the cold weather of January and February in an open cockpit really kept oneself alert, if not freezing. I survived Primary and was sent to Basic Training at Gunter Field at Montgomery, Alabama and flew the old Vultee Vibrator - at least they weren't so touchy about groundlooping. I still wasn't washed out so I continued on to Advanced Single Engine School at Napier Field at Dothan, Alabama. I began training for S.E. fighters with P-38's or P-51's as my first choice. I did well in aerial gunnery and was really excited about getting into a fighter-type aircraft; however, my greatest disappointment occurred when a shortage of troop carrier pilots happened at this crucial (to me) time. So, my whole class of 43F was graduated and assigned to the 89th Troop Carrier Group at Bergstrom Field at Austin, Texas. I will not, to this day, forgive them for making an airborne truck driver of me, although I did survive o.k. After training at Bergstrom I received a short leave at home in San Francisco and was assigned to the 403rd Troop Carrier Group, 63rd Squadron of the 13th Air Force; and from Hamilton Field we (that is Chas. A. Vogel as Pilot in command, myself as Co-pilot and Wm. F. Machie as navigator) took off on a cold rainy November 22nd without any formation headed for Hickam Field, Hawaii and then on to Christmas Island,

Canton, Fiji Island and then on to New Caledonia, where we re-grouped and went on to Pekoa Air Field in the New Hebrides which was our base for many months. We carried much cargo, personnel, etc. for the combat areas to the North: Guadalcanal, Bougainville, the Admiralty Islands, Munda, New Guinea, Biak and part of the Phillipines. After a move to the Admiralty Islands, we moved our camp to Biak Island, just off the New Guinea North Coast. I flew 110 combat missions some with escort (mostly Marine F 4 U's); quite possibly we had Pappy Boyington's men occasionally, as the Marine bases were all scattered through the Pacific Islands. I met Col. Charles Lindbergh on a stop at Treasury Island, a Marine Fighter base, and I got him to sign my short snorter dollar bill. We lost more airplanes due to weather than any other cause as did all other branches of aviation. The hurricanes we encountered were massive things and all entered without any forecast or warning. In '44 I became first pilot, but stayed with the rank of 2nd Lt. through the war.

In February of '45, our tour was up and we boarded a ship at Biak to head home. We were on the old captured German motorship, the "Bremen". Twenty-one days later we landed at Angel Island in San Francisco Bay and after a leave at home, I was assigned to George Field, Illinois and after checkout in the C-46 began flying them as flight instructor for troop carrier pilots. At that time the C-46 was the largest twin engine plane with R 2800's. It would move out pretty strong; the manual rudder was a job to handle, though, and kept your leg muscles well used. In August of '45 the Pacific war ended, and I requested discharge so by November, I was discharged and returned home. I was with the Air Force Reserve, flying out of Hamilton Field until June of '50 when I became interested in helicopters and located a school in Hartford, Connecticut, became rated and began flying for Kern Copters at Bakersfield, California until 1955 when I joined Aero Copters of Seattle. The flying was mostly mountain flying for the USGS, USC&GS, Army Map Service, several oil companies, mining and geophysical companies in Alaska, all the Western and South-western States from Texas to Point Barrow.

I became a 'copter pilot for Bonneville Power Administration, a Federal power agency, in 1966 and retired from them the last day of 1983.

I acquired a total of 41 years of flying, 33 of which were in helicopters, with a total of 24,000 hours in the air.

I have been married for 40 years to Thelma and had two daughters and three granddaughters.

My hobbies are sailing, fishing, old cars and RV-ing with a 5th-wheel trailer. I built a 30' sailboat to cruise in the summer (this took over 5 years to construct). I do all my own auto and truck repairs; having A & P ticket, I'm mechanically inclined, but not much with this typewriter--it must be defective--it makes lots of mistakes.

I forgot to mention the type plane I flew in the Pacific area, it was the C-47, a good, stable plane. I have the Asiatic-Pacific and Phillipines campaign ribbons and 3 Air medals, lost all too many friends in the war and many more in peace time, so I guess I'm one of the lucky survivors,

I don't know if I have a military photo, but I will send what I do have to date. I looked for a C.W. Summers in the Klamath Falls phone book but he is not listed so I will still make some calls.

We'll do our utmost to attend the next reunion. Sorry to take so long and hope that we see everyone then.

Sincerely,

