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I ENLISTED IN THE ARMY AIR CORPS IN DECEMBER 1942. I RECEIVED FLIGHT TRAINING IN TEXAS, OKLAHOMA, KANSAS AND TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA WHERE I TRAINED IN A P-40 FIGHTER PLANE IN PREPARATION FOR OVERSEAS ASSIGNMENT TO FLY P-51 FIGHTERS.

I WENT OVERSEAS IN MAY 1944 AS A REPLACEMENT PILOT AND WAS ASSIGNED TO THE 86TH FIGHTER GROUP ON THE ISLAND OF CORSICA. THIS GROUP HAD BEEN OVERSEAS SINCE THE INVASION OF NORTH AFRICA AND HAD FLOWN CLOSE-SUPPORT IN AFRICA, SICILY, AND ITALY FLYING THE A-36 WHICH WAS A P-51 WITH A DIVE BRAKE. AS WITH A LOT OF THINGS THE MILITARY DOES, THE WEEK I WAS ASSIGNED TO THE 86TH THE A-36s WERE REMOVED AND REPLACED WITH THE P-47. I HAD NEVER SEEN ONE. WE HAD ONE WEEK STAND-DOWN TO LEARN THIS NEW PLANE.

FROM CORSICA WE FLEW SUPPORT FOR THE INVASION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE. AFTER THAT WE WENT BACK TO ITALY AND FLEW FROM AN AIRFIELD AT PISA IN SUPPORT OF THE 5TH ARMY'S DRIVE FOR THE NORTH APENNINES AND THE PO VALLEY.

IN JANUARY 1945 WE MOVED TO AN AIR STRIP SOUTH OF NANCY, FRANCE AND LATER TO GROSS GERAU, GERMANY FROM WHICH WE FLEW UNTIL THE WAR ENDED. OUR MISSIONS WERE ASSIGNED TARGETS SUCH AS BRIDGES, FACTORIES, RAILROAD YARDS, AIR FIELDS AND ARMED RECONNAISSANCES FOR TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY SUCH AS TRAINS, TANKS, CONVOYS, ARTILLERY AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT EMPLACEMENTS. WE WOULD DIVE BOMB AND STRAFE THESE TARGETS FLYING IN FLIGHTS OF FOUR, EIGHT OR TWELVE PLANES. ON A FEW OCCASIONS WE FLEW ESCORT MISSIONS FOR MEDIUM AND HEAVY BOMBERS SUCH AS THE B-25, B-26, AND B-17.

OF THE EIGHT PILOTS WHO HAD TRAINED
WITH ME AND BEEN ASSIGNED TO
THE 86TH FIGHTER GROUP IN 1944,
FOUR WERE KILLED IN ACTION. AT
THE END OF THE WAR, I HAD FLOWN
86 COMBAT MISSIONS, BEEN AWARDED
THE AIR MEDAL WITH 5 OAK LEAF
CLUSTERS AND THE DISTINGUISHED
FLYING CROSS.