

309th FIGHTER SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

309th Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) constituted, 21 Jan 1942
Activated, 30 Jan 1942
Redesignated 309th Fighter Squadron, 15 May 1942
Redesignated 309th Fighter Squadron, Single-Engine, 20 Aug 1943
Inactivated, 7 Nov 1945
Activated, 20 Aug 1946
Redesignated 309th Fighter Squadron, Jet, 15 Jun 1948
Redesignated 309th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 20 Jan 1950
Redesignated 309th Fighter Escort Squadron, 16 Jul 1950
Redesignated 309th Strategic Fighter Squadron, 20 Jan 1953
Redesignated 309th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 1 Apr 1957
Redesignated 309th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 1 Jul 1958
Redesignated 309th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron, 1 Jul 1982
Redesignated 309th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 1 Oct 1986
Redesignated 309th Fighter Squadron, 1 Nov 1991
Inactivated, 31 Dec 1993
Activated, 1 Apr 1994

STATIONS

Baer Field, IN, 30 Jan 1942
New Orleans AB, LA, 6 Feb–19 May 1942
High Ercall, England, 12 Jun 1942
Westhampnett, England, 1 Aug–23 Oct 1942

Tafaraoui, Algeria, 8 Nov 1942
La Senia, Algeria, 14 Nov 1942
Thelepte, Tunisia, 6 Feb 1943
Tebessa, Algeria, 17 Feb 1943
Youks-les-Bain, Algeria, 22 Feb 1943
Kalaa Djerda, Tunisia, 26 Feb 1943
Thelepte, Tunisia, 11 Mar 1943
Djilma, Tunisia, 7 Apr 1943
Le Sers, Tunisia, 12 Apr 1943
Korba, Tunisia, 17 May 1943
Gozo, 3 Jul 1943
Ponte Olivo, Sicily, 13 Jul 1943
Agrigento, Sicily, 21 Jul 1943
Termini, Sicily, 5 Aug 1943
Milazzo, Sicily, 5 Sep 1943
Montecorvino, Italy, 21 Sep 1943
Pomigliano, Italy, 14 Oct 1943
Castel Volturno, Italy, c. 19 Jan 1944
San Severo, Italy, 4 Apr 1944
Mondolfo, Italy, 4 Mar 1945
Triolo, Italy, 15 Jul–5 Aug 1945
Drew Field, FL, Aug–7 Nov 1945
Giebelstadt, Germany, 20 Aug 1946
Kitzingen, Germany, c. 30 Sep 1946–25 Jun 1947
Langley Field, VA, 25 Jun 1947
Turner Field (later AFB), GA, 4 Sep 1947
George AFB, CA, 15 Mar 1959
Homestead AFB, FL, 1 Jun 1962–13 Dec 1966
Tuy Hoa AB, South Vietnam, 16 Dec 1966–Oct 1970
England AFB, LA, c. 9 Oct 1970
Homestead AFB, LA, 30 Oct 1970 (operated from Shaw AFB, SC, 23 Aug–30 Sep 1992)
Shaw AFB, SC, 1 Oct 1992–31 Dec 1993
Luke AFB, AZ, 1 Apr 1994

DEPLOYED STATIONS

Manston RAF Stn, England, 26 Dec 1950–25 Jul 1951
Misawa AB, Japan, 20 Jul–16 Oct 1952 and 7 Nov 1953–9 Feb 1954
Eielson AFB, AK, 5 Jan–9 Feb 1957
Aviano AB, Italy, 9 Jul–15 Nov 1960
Spangdahlem AB, Germany, 9 Oct–26 Nov 1961
Kadena AB, Japan, 7 Jul–22 Dec 1962
Itazuke AB, Japan, 26 Sep–31 Dec 1963
Cigli AB, Turkey, 5 Aug–27 Nov 1964 and 18 Jan–24 Apr 1966

ASSIGNMENTS

31st Pursuit (later, 31st Fighter) Group, 30 Jan 1942–7 Nov 1945
31st Fighter (later, 31st Fighter-Bomber; 31st Fighter Escort) Group, 20 Aug 1946
31st Fighter-Escort (later, 31st Strategic Fighter; 31st Fighter-Bomber; 31st Tactical Fighter) Wing, 16 Jun 1952
4403rd Tactical Fighter Wing, 9 Oct 1970
31st Tactical Fighter (later, 31st Tactical Training; 31st Tactical Fighter; 31st Fighter) Wing, 30 Oct 1970
31st Operations Group, 1 Nov 1991
363rd Operations Group, 20 Nov 1992–31 Dec 1993
56th Operations Group, 1 Apr 1994

ATTACHMENTS

31st Fighter-Escort Wing, 27 Jul 1951–15 Jun 1952
Alaskan Air Command, 5 Jan–9 Feb 1957
Unkn, 9 Jul–15 Nov 1960 and 9 Oct–26 Nov 1961
18th Tactical Fighter Wing, 17 Jul–22 Dec 1962 and 26 Sep–30 Dec 1963
7231st Combat Support Group, 5 Aug–27 Nov 1964 and 18 Jan–31 Mar 1966
41st Combat Support Group, 1–24 Apr 1966
363rd Operations Group, 28 Aug–19 Nov 1992

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-40, 1942
P-40B
P-39, 1942
P-39D
P-39F
Spitfire, 1942–1943
Spitfire Mk VB
P-51, 1943–1945
P-51B
P-51D
P-51C
P-80, 1946–1947
P-80A
P-51, 1947–1948
F-84, 1948–1957
F-84C
F-84E
F-84G
F-100, 1957–1970
F-4, 1970–1986
F-4D
F-4E

F-16, 1986-1993

F-16C

F-16D

COMMANDERS

Maj Harrison R. Thyng, 30 Jan 1942
Maj Frank A. Hill, 12 May 1943
Maj Carl W. Payne, 13 Jul 1943
Cpt Robert E. McCarthy Jr., 14 Oct 1943
Maj Garth B. Jared, 9 Nov 1943
Maj John M. Meader, 18 Apr 1944
LTC Victor E. Warford, 22 May 1944
Maj George T. Buck Jr., 12 Oct 1944
Maj Simon H. Johnson Jr., 16 Feb 1945
Maj Julius D. Shivers, 9 May 1945-unkn
Unkn, 20 Aug 1946-Oct 1947
LTC Robert W. Stevens, Oct 1947
Maj Arthur D. Thomas, Nov 1948
Maj William R. Young, c. 1950
Maj Don V. Booty, Apr 1951
LTC Charles W. Lenfest, Jan 1952
LTC Hayden C. Curry, Jun 1953
Maj Adrian E. Drew, Jan 1955
Cpt David W. Williams, Oct 1955
Maj Donald W. Maggert, Apr 1956
Maj James E. Bean, 11 Oct 1957
Maj Arthur H. Johnson Jr., 25 Apr 1958
LTC Louis R. Vogt, 15 Mar 1959
Maj John B. Butler, 1959
Maj Herbert L. Prevost, 1960
LTC Garth L. Reynolds, 13 Dec 1961
Maj Aubrey C. Edinburgh, 1 Apr 1963
LTC Garth L. Reynolds, 9 Sep 1963
LTC Tom L. DeGraffenried, 8 Jun 1964-5 Nov 1965
LTC Carlos O. Beasley, 1965
LTC Freddie L. Poston, c. 7 Jan 1966
LTC Daniel J. Sheehan Jr., 1 Nov 1967
LTC David S. Renshaw, 1968
LTC Lawrence W. Whitford Jr., 6 Feb 1969
LTC Ronald A. Berdoy, 26 Sep 1969
LTC Clarence D. Glenn, 24 Aug-c. 15 Oct 1970
LTC Charles W. Hetherington, 30 Oct 1970
LTC Donald V. MacKellar, 10 May 1972
LTC Steve Braswell, 10 Mar 1973

LTC Donald A. Elliott, 24 May 1974
LTC Edward S. Joiner, 9 Sep 1975
LTC Ralph E. Beekman, 31 Dec 1977
LTC Michael G. Major, 26 Nov 1979
LTC Travis E. Harrell, 3 Apr 1981
LTC Thomas R. Lanum, 13 Jul 1982
LTC William D. Ray, 24 Jul 1984
LTC David L. Haas, 12 Jun 1986
LTC Robert D. O'Dell, 7 Jun 1988
LTC Thomas B. Poole, 29 Dec 1989
LTC Thomas A. Gilkey, Jul 1992-31 Dec 1993
LTC Charles B. Oltman, 1 Apr 1994
LTC Randy S. Wenzel, 13 Jul 1995
LTC William D. McConnell, 31 Jan 1997
LTC Philip A. Oppenheimer, 1 Feb 1999
LTC Christopher P. Biscrove, 25 Feb 2000
LTC Neal R. Carbaugh, 1 Oct 2001
LTC Roy D. McMickel, 19 Mar 2003
LTC Keith S. Miller, 23 Mar 2004
LTC Peter F. Davey, 12 May 2006
LTC Peter Bilodeau, 23 May 2008
LTC Daniel T. Lasica 21 May 2010
LTC Stephane Wolfgeher 24 May 2012

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

World War II

Air Offensive, Europe

Algeria-French Morocco with Arrowhead

Tunisia; Sicily with Arrowhead

Naples-Foggia

Anzio

Rome-Arno

Normandy

Northern France

Southern France

North Apennines

Rhineland

Central Europe

Po Valley

Air Combat, EAME Theater

Vietnam

Vietnam Air Offensive

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase II

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase III

Vietnam Air/Ground

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase IV

TET 69/Counteroffensive

Vietnam Summer-Fall 1969

Vietnam Winter-Spring 1970

Sanctuary Counteroffensive

Southwest Monsoon

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

None

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations

Rumania, 21 Apr 1944

Poland, 25 Jul 1945

Presidential Unit Citation

Vietnam, 1 May–31 Dec 1968

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat "V" Device

1 Jun–16 Dec 1966

17 Dec 1966–30 Apr 1968

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

4–16 Jul 1952

1 Mar–30 Nov 1962

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards:

4-16 Jul 1952

1 Mar-30 Nov 1962

1 Jul 1994-30 Jun 1996

1 Jul 1996-30 Jun 1998

1 Jul 1998-30 Jun 2000

1 Jul 2001-30 Jun 2003

1 Jun 2003-30 Jun 2005

1 Jul 2005-30 Jun 2006

1 Jul 2006-30 Jun 2007

1 Jul 2007-30 Jun 2008

1 Jul 2008-30 Jun 2009

1 Jul 2009-30 Jun 2010

1 Jul 2010-30 Jun 2011

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm
[16 Dec] 1966–Oct 1970

EMBLEM



Over a disc shaded from Light to Dark Blue, on the upper section of the disc the North Star, and

the stars in the Big Dipper all White, issuing from the base of the disc a demi-sphere Light Blue, with land areas Brown, grid lines Black, over all "Donald Duck" in fighting mood, wearing Air Force Blue jacket, Air Force Blue and White helmet flying off head, and Air Force Yellow lightning bolt in his upraised left hand, piercing through a White cloud; and holding board with nail protruding from it in right hand. COPYRIGHT—Walt Disney. (Approved, 3 Nov 1955; replaced emblem approved on 27 Nov 1944; newest rendition approved on 18 July 1995)

Azure blended per pale Celeste to sinister, Donald Duck in animated anger Proper garbed in a flight jacket and P-3 crash helmet Light Blue and Argent grasping in dexter hand a board bendwise sinister with a nail in the end Proper and in sinister hand a lightning flash bendwise above his head Or, above a demi-globe issuant from base, Celeste grid lined of the first land masses Brown and below in chief a mullet of eight Argent; in dexter the constellation, Ursa Major in mullets of four White; all within a diminished bordure of the first. Attached below the disc a White scroll edged with a narrow Blue border and inscribed "309th FIGHTER SQ" in Blue letters. Blue and yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The disc is blended dark to light blue indicating the unit's day and night defense capabilities. The single star and constellation depict the squadron's pioneering efforts in the establishment of celestial navigation as a viable and integral method of navigation for fighter units. Donald Duck in flight gear grasping a lightning bolt and board with nail, symbolizes the lineage of the unit as a fighter squadron and its defense and striking capabilities through in-flight refueling. It also implies the squadron's participation in two historic long range ocean crossings.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

Wild Ducks

OPERATIONS

Training at Luke, the 309th runs a standard pilot training syllabus that prepares pilots and ground crew for active duty units. The 309th's mission statement is 'Training the world's finest fighter pilots and maintenance technicians.'

The 309th Fighter Squadron was activated as part of the 31st Fighter Group at Baer Field, Fort Wayne, Indiana on Jan 30, 1942. Lt. Harrison R. Thyng was appointed the Squadron's first Commanding Officer. On February 6 they moved to New Orleans Army Air Field and were equipped with P-40B Tomahawks for a short while before switching to P-39s. Transferred to the 8th Air force in mid May, they shipped for England in early June and established themselves at High Ercall, England on June 11, 1942. The Squadron was equipped with Spitfire and assigned the squadron code WZ. They familiarized themselves with their new Spitfires, training and learning RAF methods until August 1 when they moved to Westhampnett, near Tangmere, and became integrated with active RAF squadrons. No enemy aircraft were sighted during fighter

sweeps to France on the 9th, 10th and 15th.

The 309th's first official operational mission took place on August 17th when they flew a fighter sweep to Lille, France. The Luftwaffe did not oppose this mission either. Three missions were flown during Operation Jubilee, the Dieppe operation on August 19. Flying with Nos. 130 and 131 RAF on their first sortie of the day, the 309th got into a dogfight with about 25 FW-190s over the invasion ships. Lt. Sam Junkin shot down a FW-190 but then was himself shot up, wounded, baled out, and rescued. Lt. Junkin's victory was the first by an 8th AF fighter pilot flying from the UK. Major Thyng scored a probable. Unfortunately, Lt. Collins was lost. For their second mission of the day the 309th flew with Nos. 81 and 131 squadrons escorting Boston bombers attacking gun positions. They met with little opposition this time.

The 309th flew convoy cover for their third mission of the day where Capt. Thorsen teamed up with Lts. Biggard and Payne in damaging a Do-217. In the weeks following the Dieppe action the squadron flew routine patrols as well as Circus 221, an escort mission of A-20 Bostons, to Le Havre on October 2nd. Two weeks later the squadron was off operations, transferred from the 8th to 12th AF, and by October 23 were on board ships enroute to North Africa.

Operation Torch, the Invasion of North Africa, commenced on November 8, 1942. The ground echelon went ashore at Arzeu that afternoon. The pilots flew their Spitfires from Gibraltar to Tafaraoui, Algeria on the 9th. Just as the 309th was landing at Tafaraoui, four French Dewoitines bounced the squadron killing Lt. Byrd as he was touching down. The last flight of four up tore after the D.520s and shot down 3 of them with Major Thyng and Lts. Kenworthy and Payne scoring victories.

The 309th saw action against French ground targets prior to the French surrender on the 11th. The squadron moved the 5 miles to Le Senia, Algeria on the 14th where they flew routine and uneventful patrols in their sector for the remainder of 1942. On February 7th the 309th moved to Thelepte, Tunisia, much closer to the fighting. Finally, after months of waiting the 309th got a crack at the enemy on February 15. Returning from a P-39 escort mission the squadron engaged a mixed formation of 16 ME-109s & FW-190s attacking Thelepte. Major Thyng and Capt. Kenworthy each shot one down. Two days later the 309th had to evacuate Thelepte in a hurry as the field was about to be overrun by the advancing German Army. They moved to Tebessa, leaving much of their equipment and supplies behind at Thelepte. On the 21st they moved again to the British airfield at Canrobet, Algeria, then yet again to Kalaa Djerda, Tunisia on the 25th. Once the German drive had been thwarted the 309th was able to return to Thelepte, arriving on March 11.

On the 20th six Spitfires of the 309th got into a scrap with eight ME-109s, claiming 3 damaged while Lt. Barber had to crash land. The next day they ran into 17 Stukas while escorting A-20s to Kairouan. The temptation was too great and the squadron went after them with Capts. Payne, McDonald, and Paulk each knocking one down. Staging out of Gafsa on the 29th Major Thyng and Lt. Lupton each destroyed a ME-109 in a battle over the front lines. Major Thyng got another ME-109 on April 1st. Lt. Kelly also claimed a 109, however Lts. Juhnke and Strole were

both killed. With the German forces in retreat the 309th moved with the 31st to Djilma on April 7th, to be closer to the front lines. The allied advance was moving so fast that by the 14th the front line was now 50 miles away, so the 31st packed up and moved once again to Le Sers. The 309th also took possession of their first Spitfire Mk IXs on the 14th. The 309th came out on top of an engagement on April 22, with the squadron shooting down 3 enemy aircraft, Major Hill sharing two with Lts. Payne & Rahn, while Lt McRaven accounted for the third. Three days later Lt. Meldeau added to the 309th tally by shooting down a ME-109 while flying a sweep with P-39s over the lines.

The 309th's best success of the war so far came on May 6 when they destroyed 7 enemy aircraft for no losses in a brawl over Tunis. Lt. Col. Harrison Thyng downed his fifth. Major Hill got three ME-109s, and a Macchi 202 probable. Capt. Payne, Lt. Shafer and Lt. McCarthy rounded out the scoring with one each. The Germans were through in North Africa and surrendered the last of their forces on May 11th. The next day Lt. Col. Thyng was promoted to 31st XO and Major Frank Hill took over command of the 309th. The final tally for the 309th up to the German surrender in North Africa was 27 victories against 5 pilots lost in combat, best in the entire 31st FG.

On May 17 the Squadron began moving to Korba on the Gulf of Tunis. Pantelleria, a heavily fortified Italian held Island east of Cape Bon, would be the focus of the 309th efforts during the period May 26 through June 11. The squadron's best day of the battle for Pantelleria came on June 10th. The 309th was flying a sweep over Pantelleria harbor when they saw 13 Macchi 202s attacking allied bombers. The 309th dove in and, despite being harassed by a covering force of ME-109s and FW-190s, shot down six of the Italian fighters. Major Hill, Capts. Payne and Chandler, and Lts. Shafer, Rahn, Keith were each given credit for downing a Macchi 202. In addition Lt. Swiger destroyed a ME-109 while Lt. Meldeau claimed one FW-190 as probably destroyed from the attacking Luftwaffe flight.

With the fall of Pantelleria on June 11th the allies next began making preparations for the invasion of Sicily. On June 30 the 309th flew their Spitfires onto the island of Gozo, located 2 miles from Malta and 80 miles from Sicily. On July 10 the 309th flew convoy cover for Operation Huskey, the invasion of Sicily.

The next day Major Hill and Capt. Chandler teamed up to bring down a JU-88 attacking the convoy. Capt. Payne also knocked down one of the ME-109 escorts. On July 14 the squadron moved to Ponte Olivo, Sicily where Capt. Payne took over command of the 309th from Major Hill. A series of attacks by German Bombers wrecked the field. A week later they were located at Agrigento then moved to Palermo on the 27th. All through this period the 309th was flying as many as six missions a day in support of the ground effort.

On August 5, the 309th moved again to Termini on the northern coast of Sicily, putting Italy within the range of the Spitfires. Sicily fell on August 17 and the squadron anticipated moving to Italy right on the heels of the ground forces. This was becoming a familiar pattern. The squadron saw virtually no action flying from Termini, but it was a pleasant enough place. With

the invasion of Italy imminent the squadron had moved to Milazzo, on the eastern tip of Sicily by September 5, expecting to stage there for a few days before moving to Italy. Milazzo was a dust bowl, the field was bad, and the squadron was stuck there longer they they liked. A number of the squadron's pilots pranged their Spitfires trying to negotiate Milazzo's rough landing strip.

The invasion of Italy at Salerno took place on September 9 with the 309th tasked with covering the beachhead. The next day the 309th attacked a mixed flight of 46 German and Italian 109s and 190s. Capt. Shafer shot one down and damaged another while Lts. Burton and Hughes shared one destroyed. Lt. Keith claimed one as a probable. Lt Weismuller got on the scoreboard when he shot down a FW-190 over the Salerno beachhead on the 14th. Finally, by September 21 the Salerno beachhead was secure enough for the 309th to make the move to Monte Corvino, Italy. The Luftwaffe did not put up much of a fight at Salerno after the beachhead was secured.

The 309th spent the next three weeks flying routine patrols in the Salerno area with little contact with axis aircraft. Heavy rains during the second week of October had turned the grass strip at Monte Corvino into an unserviceable mire of mud. By the 14th the 309th had moved to Pomigliano which had a concrete runway as well as much appreciated housing for the men. For the rest of October, the 309th continued to perform tactical duties flying daily patrols, escorting medium bombers over the lines, and covering ground operations. The month ended with a claim against enemy aircraft.

Major Garth Jared was named squadron leader on November 9. The German made a big push towards Naples starting on November 10, 1943. The Luftwaffe chose to participate in this fight. Pomigliano was rocked twice by Me-109s and FW-190s attacking the field two days later. The following day, the 13th, a four ship flight from the 309th engaged the Luftwaffe near Gaeta. Lt. Weismueller attacked a FW-190 sending it down into the sea. Lt. Hurter blew the left wing off of a ME-109 and witnessed the pilot bail. Towards the end of November the German offensive stalled and the ground battle was at a stalemate. The 309th was kept busy patrolling over the front lines, covering naval vessels, and escort duties.

The 309th finally had a big day on December 7th when a flight of six of them attacked 12 German planes near Casorcia, destroying six of them. Lt. Ainley shot down a ME-109, blew the wing off a FW-190, and hammered another ME-109 claiming it as probably destroyed. Meanwhile Major Jared shot up a ME-109 which then disintegrated, put a good burst into a ME-109 which he claimed as probable and chased another 109 near Manani, peppering it until he saw it crash. Lt Blumenstock attacked a FW-190 and saw the pilot bail out. Captain Barr finished off the scoring by downing a ME-109. The squadron suffered no losses in this engagement. Not a bad days work! Given the opportunity to engage the enemy, which was frustratingly rare, the squadron certainly was capable of dishing out punishment. Their next crack at the Germans came on the 11th. Eight ME-109s bounced the low flight of Spitfire Mk Vs. The Mk IXs, flying higher cover, then dove into the fray with Lt. Potter sending one down to crash and shooting up another which was last seen spewing heavy white smoke. Lt. Faxon opened up on another at

very close range, having to break off to avoid a collision. He only claimed this as damaged.

A further engagement occurred 4 days later over Cassino when eight German fighters bounced the 309th from out of the sun. Lt. Lyman lost his engine and bailed over allied lines. Capt. Barr put a long burst into a FW-190 sending it down to crash. Lt. Walker, flying Capt. Barr's wing, became separated and didn't return to base. Deteriorating weather restricted flying the last two weeks of December. The missions that were flown during the remainder of 1943 were routine and uneventful.

The routine for the 309th was much the same with the advent of January 1944. The squadron was putting up three to four missions a day, primarily patrols of the front lines, with the occasional escort job thrown in. There were enemy about and the squadron got into a number of scraps with the Germans during the first couple of weeks of the year.

On January 8 six Spitfires from the squadron tangled with a flight of twelve-plus Germans in the Cassino-Venafro area where F/O Belmont shot off the canopy and hit the engine of a ME-109 which he claimed as probably destroyed. On January 12 Lt. Blumenstock was credited with destroying an ME-109 near Pozilli. During another mission that day near Venafro Lt. McMillan knocked some pieces off a ME-109. On January 18 the 309th moved to Castel Volturno, a PSP covered strip located near the Volturno River on the Gulf of Gaeta, 21 miles northwest of Naples.

The Allies landed at Anzio on January 22. The 309th flew three missions covering the landings. During the last mission of the day the squadron intercepted 7 FW-190s attacking the invasion force, with Major Jared claiming one as damaged. The Luftwaffe was quite active over Anzio during the last week of January. Even though the 309th was very active flying beach patrols and escorting bombers to tactical targets they just were not having much luck. The 309th skirmished with the Luftwaffe over Anzio during the first week of February but didn't draw blood until the 7th. On their first mission that day they sighted 35 enemy aircraft making for the beachhead. The 309th engaged this formation with Lt. Benzing closing to 100 yards of a FW-190 and firing. He saw the pilot bail out. Lts. Harmeyer and O'Brien each claimed FW-190s damaged in the ensuing brawl. Unfortunately two 309th pilots didn't return.

On another mission later that day escorting B-26s the 309th engaged a flight of 18 enemy aircraft attacking the bombers, driving them off. Lt. Harmeyer had a bit of good luck on the 13th when he was able to saddle up behind two FW-190s that were apparently unaware of his presence. He opened up on the first from 250 yards and sent it down in flames then promptly moved over to the second and sent it down as well. Three days later the squadron got into a dogfight with four German planes thought to be strafing the lines. Major Jared scored by shooting up a FW-190 that crashed near Valmontone. The Germans were pressing hard at Anzio and sightings of Axis aircraft were becoming a rather commonplace occurrence. On the 18th while flying patrol over Anzio the squadron engaged a mixed flight of 12 to 18 bomb carrying 109s and 190s. Lt. Blumenstock was able to down one of the ME-109s.

The following day the 309th had a series of encounters with flights of enemy aircraft, with F/O Belmont claiming a ME-109 destroyed and Lt. Ainley claiming another as damaged. More inconclusive sparring with the Germans continued over Anzio through February 29 when the 309th got into an all-out dogfight with 10 to 15 FW-190s near Cisterna. Capt. Benzing dove down to clear a Spitfire that was being attacked. The 190 foolishly attempted to out turn Benzing's Spitfire and was sent down in flames. Lt. Faxon also knocked down a FW-190 that was taking violent evasive action. Lt. Porter fought a duel with another FW-190 and came out the victor but did sustain injuries in the process. Lt. Nisbet was forced to bail after being shot up. It was a hard fought battle with the 309th coming out on top. March was a disappointing month for the 309th. Despite daily patrols over Anzio and later in the month to Cassino, they were unable to score against the Axis. During the last week of March the pilots were sent to North Africa to ferry up the squadron's new plane; the P-51 Mustang.

The 309th parked their trusty Spitfires at Pomigliano and flew their P-51s to a new base at San Severo on April 4, 1944. San Severo was located on the eastern side of Italy, 20 miles north of Foggia. Transferred to the 15th Air Force, their primary task would now be escorting heavy bombers to strategic targets in Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Italy, and Germany. They would also be flying most of their missions with the entire 31st FG. During their Spitfire days most of the missions were of squadron strength. The 309th's first mission in their new planes was a 4 3/4 hour bomber escort to marshaling yards at Turnal Severin, Yugoslavia on the 16th. No enemy aircraft were sighted, however a B-24 opened fire on Lt. Baetjer, forcing him to bail out. The next day the 309th flew with the 31st on a bomber escort mission to the marshaling yards at Sofia, Bulgaria. 25 to 35 109s and Macchi 202s made passes at the bombers.

The 309th engaged the interceptors with Capt. Brown destroying one and Lt. Grose claiming one as damaged. Lt. Loving destroyed a Me-109 during a mission to the Udine area of Northern Italy on the 18th. The 309th suffered a terrible setback however when Major Jared, the squad CO, was hit by flak and lost. Major John Meader took over command of the 309th on the 19th and on the 21st led the squadron to Ploesti, Romania where they shot down 7 Axis aircraft. The pilots scoring on this first mission to Ploesti were Major Meader a Fw-190 destroyed, Capt. Brown 2 Fiat G-50s destroyed, Lt. Ainley a G-50 and 109 destroyed and a G-50 probable, Lt. Harmeyer a G-50 destroyed and another damaged, Lt. Felton a 109 destroyed, and Lt. Carey 1 109 probable. The aircraft factory at Weiner Neustadt Austria was the target on the 23rd. Lts. Ainley and Grose each shot down a ME-110 intent on attacking the B-17s. Lts. Ainley and Grose scored again the next day when they teamed up in shooting down a He 111 during the squadron's second mission to Ploesti.

On the April 28 escort mission to Piombino, Italy Lt. Ainley shared another German plane destroyed, a ME-109, this time with Capt. Brown. Lt. Harmeyer also downed a 109 while Lt. Faxon damaged a third. Capt. Brown shot down a ME-109, as did Lt. McLaughlin, during an escort mission to marshaling yards at Toulon, France on the 29th. That made 20 1/2 victories for the 309th during their first month of flying the P-51!

The 309th kept their hot streak going into May. On the 2nd during an escort mission to Castel

Maggiore, Italy they engaged 13 Macchias resulting in a victory for Lt. Faxon and another damaged by Capt. Brown The refineries at Ploesti were the target for the 15th AF on May 5. This was the third visit to Ploesti for the 31st FG and 309th FS. 75 to 100 enemy planes were reported to be attacking the bombers. The 309th managed to shoot down 4 of them with victories going to Lts. McLaughlin, Wilhelm, Harmeyer, and Ainley. That made 8 all told for Lt. Ainley, who had made ace back on April 21. Lt. Richard Faxon made ace as did Capt. Sam Brown when they each shot down IAR-80s during a mission to Bucharest, Romania on May 7. Lt. Harmeyer was next to make ace when he scored on the May 10 mission to Wiener Austadt, Austria. It was estimated that the Germans had put up 120 fighters to counter this strike. Lt. Wilhelm also claimed one enemy aircraft destroyed while Lt. Adams claimed one as damaged. Three escort missions to Northern Italy during the second week of May were designed to help the summer ground offensive. Then it was back to Ploesti for the 4th time on May 18. The axis opposition was weaker this time and the only claims made by the 309th were IAR-80s damaged by Major Warford and Lt. Wilhelm.

Three more uneventful missions to Northern Italy followed then one to Munchendorf, Austria on the 24th. Enemy resistance was fierce with an estimated 100 German aircraft putting up a fight. The other two squadrons in the 31st had good success but the 309th only managed 2 probables (Wilhelm and McLaughlin). Three escort missions to marshaling yards in France on May 25, 26, and 27 were notable for the distance, some 600 miles. The 309th met no enemy opposition. The Luftwaffe put up a fight however when the 309th flew the mission to Wallersdorf Airdrome, near Wiener Neustadt. Lt. McLaughlin destroyed a ME-110 and damaged another while Lt. Dustrude also accounted for a ME-110 destroyed. Uneventful escort missions to Ebreichsdorf Aircraft factory in Austria and marshaling yards at Oradea, Romania completed the 309th's activity for the month of May.

The marshaling yards at Oradea, Romania was the target again on June 2. The 309th met with no enemy opposition then nor during the next two missions to marshaling yards in Northern Italy. The enemy did make an appearance during the June 6 mission to Ploesti. 15 Axis planes attacked the bombers in the 309th coverage area, with Major Warford (now 309th CO) and Lt. Carey each shooting one down.

The 309th flew their first mission to Germany, bomber escort to Oberpfoffenhopen and Wessling airdromes near Munich, on the ninth. Oberpfoffenhopen airdrome was targeted again on June 13, this time the enemy putting up some resistance. Capt. McLaughlin shot down 2 ME-109s making him an ace. Lt. Carey also scored shooting down an FW-190. Lts. Loving, Thompson, and Wilhelm all landed shots on other attackers. Missions to Budapest and La Jasse airdrome France were uneventful for the 309th. The squadron got some action during the June 16 mission to the synthetic oil refineries at Vienna, Austria. Lt. Grouse and Major Warford each shot down an ME-109. The 309th flew to Ploesti for the 7th time on June 23. The other two squadrons in the 31st had good success but the best the 309th could do was a probable claimed by Major Warford.

They had better luck on the June 26 mission to Vienna, Austria with F/O Bratton and Lt. Loving

claiming victories while Lts. Warren and Shropshire shared a third. Their luck was good the next day too during the mission to Budapest with Capt. Murray McLaughlin knocking down a JU-88 while Lt. Cloutier and F/O Shipley each destroyed ME-410s. The June 28 mission to the marshaling yards at Bucharest, Romania proved fruitful for Major Warford who shot down a ME-109. Lt. Vashina chipped in with a probable. June ended with an uneventful, but long, 650 mile mission to Blechhammer, Poland.

Capt. David Wilhelm was credited with his 5th victory after shooting down an enemy aircraft during the July 3 mission to Bucharest. The 309th began receiving P-51Ds in early July. Missions to Brazov, Ploesti, Blechhammer, Markersdorf airdrome, Austria were uneventful for the 309th. Lts. Bradley and House shared a ME-109 destroyed on the July 14 mission to Budapest. Major Warford shot down a FW-190 during the July 18 mission to Freidichshafen, Germany with Lts. Dustrude and Dorsch sharing another destroyed.

The 309th took part in the Russia shuttle mission spanning the period July 22 through July 26. The 309th got into a scrap over Romania during the trip to Russia on the 22nd with Major Warford downing an FW-190 as well as a ME-109, and Lts. Thompson and Grouse getting one FW-190 each. Flying out of Piryatin, Ukraine to Mielec, Poland on the 25th Lt. Carey and F/O Shipley shared in the destruction of a Ju 88, with Capt. Loving and Lt. Zierenberg each bagging Ju 52s. The 309th didn't score on the return trip to San Severo but it was quite an accomplishment that all the planes that left for Russia made it back. Ploesti was the target on the 28th where Lt. Dorch downed a ME-109. July 31 was an outstanding day for the 309th. During the mission to Bucharest, Romania the squadron shot down ten enemy aircraft! Major Victor E. Warford knocked down two bringing his victory tally to eight. Capt. George G. Loving made ace by shooting down two. Lt. Dorch was credited with three destroyed. Lt. Shropshire and F/O Bratton each downed one while Lt. Grouse and F/O Vashina teamed up for another.

The Luftwaffe was seldom present during missions to France, however on August 2 the 309th had a bit of luck when Lts. Thompson and Zierenberg shot down the only enemy planes seen; two ME-109s. Lt. Robert Thompson scored again on the 7th, knocking down two ME-109s during the mission to Blechhammer. Lt. Lanyon got one there as well. It was back to Ploesti yet again on August 10. The 309th fought with 12 ME-109s with Lt. Freddie Dorch making ace by shooting down two. Lt. Cloutier also shot down two in this engagement. The 309th moved to Voltron, north of Rome on the 14th. They operated there for 4 days covering the invasion of southern France. Ploesti was the target for three days in a row beginning on August 17.

On the 18th Lt. Beeman shot down a ME-109 despite the fact that his canopy came off in a dive. Lt. Busley also scored when he forced another 109 to crash. The 309th suffered their first losses in a long time when Lts. Bratton and Sandler failed to return from the August 22 mission to Odertal, Germany. Romania surrendered on August 23. The 309th flew three missions to Romania during the last week of August, actually landing at Popesti Airfield, Bucharest on the 29th. For the record, the 309th's victory tally for the summer months of June, July and August 1944 was 51 enemy aircraft destroyed. That made 141 victories total for the war, 84 of them while in P-51s.

September was a bust for the 309th with the squadron not able to score any victories at all. It seemed that the past couple of months had clean knocked the Luftwaffe out of the war. They still flew their missions but the enemy was rarely encountered. During the first week of September they were busy escorting C-47s into Bucharest.

Missions to Munich, Athens, and to the Hungarian cities of Dobreczen, Budapest, Szab, Gyor, and Bekescaba were unopposed. Missions to Munich and Vienna during the first week of October were also unopposed. The 309th had a bad day on October 11 when their squadron CO, Lt. Col. Warford, was lost during a strafing mission near Vienna. Lt. Vashina shot down two FW-190s chasing after Warford but it was not enough and Warford's plane was seen to crash land. The next day Capt. George Buck transferred from the 307th to take command of the 309th.

The 309th put in a sterling performance during the mission to the oil refineries at Brux, Czechoslovakia on October 16. Flying at 32,000 ft the squadron sighted a huge formation of over 100 ME-109s at 27,000 ft making for the bombers. The 309th attacked against overwhelming odds shooting down 10 of them and sending the rest of them running, all at no loss to themselves. Newly appointed CO Capt. Buck shot down 3 of the 109s. Lt. Zierenberg and Capt. Dorch each downed two. Lt. Swing, Lt. Hackney, and Lt. Beeman each accounted for a ME-109 destroyed. The weather turned sour for the last half of October and the 309th only managed to fly missions to Blechhammer, Brux, Plzen, and Regensburg, all of which were unopposed.

November was a washout for the 309th. There was plenty of rain and no German fighters to rumble with. Missions to Vienna, Linz, Maribor, Yugoslavia, and Brux during the first half of the month went unopposed. Little resistance was encountered during escort missions to Munich and Northern Italy, and strafing mission to Yugoslavia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia during the second half of November.

A couple of the pilots in the 309th had an unusual bit of excitement when they encountered a pair of ME-262s while escorting an F-5 on a Recon mission to Munich. They had heard about the jets, but this was the first time anyone saw one. The next encounter with the ME-262 came on December 12 when a 3 ship flight was escorting an F-5 to Nuremburg. As before they were unable to make any claims and suffered no losses. Photo recon escort duties become a primary task for the 309th in December. They still got in a number of full strength escort missions when the weather allowed for it. Oil refineries and marshaling yards at Regensburg, Veinna, Rosenheim, and Brux were hit.

During an escort mission to the Blechhammer & Odertal oil refineries on the 17th the 309th finally encountered a flight of Germans with some fight left in them. The squadron engaged 15 to 20 ME-109s resulting in Lt. Rask downing 2 109s, while Lts. Cambell, Gibson, and Corwin destroyed one apiece. Escort duties to oil refineries at Osweicim, Blechhammer, Regensburg, Brux, Kraloupy, and Roundnice as well as missions to marshaling yards at Graz and Rosenheim

completed the year's activity for the 309th.

The weather was bad in January 1945. When it wasn't raining it was snowing. At one point San Severo was buried under a foot of snow. The only missions flown were to Trento, Klagenfurt, Vienna, Regensburg, and Mossbierbaum. These missions were flown without enemy opposition so the 309th finished the month with no victories, as did the entire 31st FG for that matter. The weather improved in February but not the opportunity to fight it out with the Luftwaffe. In fact the 309th never even saw an enemy aircraft during the entire month of February! Missions to Mossbierbaum, Regensburg, Vienna, Fiume, Amstetten, Klagenfurt, Bolzano, Linz, Zagreb, and Augsburg were, on the whole, uneventful and routine. Major Simon Johnson took over command of the 309th from Major Buck on the 16th.

The 309th, along with the rest of the 31st FG, moved to a new base at Mondolfo on March 3rd. The first major mission flown from the new field was a routine bomber escort to marshaling yards at Hegyshalom, Hungary on March 8. The next day's mission called for strafing in Northern Yugoslavia and south central Austria. Fortunately, no planes were lost.

On March 13, the mission was to Regensburg, Germany escorting bombers then strafing. Lt. Gumbert didn't make it back. An escort to the Weiner Neustadt marshaling yards in Austria went unopposed on the 16th. On the 19th the marshaling yards at Muhldorf, Germany were pounded. Four ME-262s were seen but nothing became of it. Neuberg Airdrome was the target on the 21st, and while 19 ME-262s were declared destroyed on the ground, the 309th saw no action in the air. The attack against the Ruhland, Germany oil refineries was significant in two ways. First it was the deepest into Germany the 15th AF had gone and secondly the ME-262s attacked the bombers with a force of 25 to 30. Up till then the ME-262s were only seen attacking recon flights in flights of two. Ruhland was the target again the following day only this time there was no opposition.

The Daimler-Benz tank factory in Berlin was the target on March 24. The 309th saw nine ME-262s making passes at the bombers but none were lost to the jets. Prague-Kleby Airdrome was hit the next day but the 309th encountered no enemy aircraft. March 31, 1945 marked the 309th's best day of the war. Assigned to strafe targets of opportunity in Czechoslovakia the squadron encountered over 30 ME-109s near Prague. In the fracas that followed the P-51s shot down 18 of them! Lt. Col. Stoffel and Major Shivers from Headquarters got 6 between them. Lts. Barton, Blank, Hackney and Moore each destroyed two of the 109s. Major Johnson destroyed one as did Lts. A. Johnson, Maze and Wheeler. This turned out to be the last time the 309th would shoot down an enemy aircraft during the war. The squadron's tally was now at 173 victories.

The primary targets of the 15th Air Force, oil refineries and marshaling yards, were largely pulverized by this time in the war. The 309th switched to helping the 12th Air Force by escorting tactical bombers, as well as strafing ground targets, in Northern Italy during April. The end of the war in Europe came when the Germans surrendered on May 7, 1945

Following World War II, the 309th moved to Langley Field, Va., and converted to the F-84. In 1948 the squadron completed the first jet fighter transpacific deployment and, as part of the 31st Fighter Wing, earned the first Outstanding Unit Award ever presented.

Then during the Berlin Crisis in October and November 1961, the 309th Fighter Squadron deployed to Spangdahlem AB, Germany to bolster the US military forces in Europe. In 1963 the wing earned a second Outstanding Unit Award in for achievements attained in 1962. During that time, they moved from George AFB to Homestead AFB, Florida, while simultaneously deploying a squadron to Kadena AB, Japan, for a four-month TDY without losing any operational capability. Then, during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, the 31 TFW planned operational missions and participated in events that ultimately led to the removal of the missiles from Cuba.

The Wild Ducks deployed to Southeast Asia in 1966 and flew combat operations there until 1970. Returning to Homestead AFB, Fla., and the 309th traded the F-100 for the F-4 and flew the Phantom II until 1986, when they converted to the F-16.

August of 1992 became an interesting month for the 309th Fighter Squadron's parent unit, the 31st FW. Hurricane season brought some bad weather to Florida with the worst culminating in Hurricane Andrew. With enough warning the 309th FS departed Homestead AFB on August 23rd for Shaw AFB. Sister squadrons - the 307th and 308th - went to Moody AFB, Georgia. This was to be a temporary move. Although Homestead AFB was semi-rebuilt with the AFRes 93rd FS returning, the active duty squadrons - including the 309th - never returned.

Starting on October 1st, 1992 the 309th FS was assigned to Shaw's 363rd FW. When Shaw AFB began converting to the block 50 in 1993, the 309th FS was involved receiving many examples. Although the squadron began converting to the block 50, it was short lived. The 20th FW in Upper Heyford, England inactivated and moved its Wing and associate squadrons to Shaw AFB. On December 31st, 1993, the 363rd FW inactivated and the same day the 309th FS inactivated.

F-16C, SERIAL NUMBER (S/N) 84-1311 309th FIGHTER SQUADRON (FS), LUKE AIR FORCE BASE (AFB), ARIZONA 16 JUNE 2000 On 16 June 2000, at approximately 0751 Mountain Standard Time (MST), the mishap aircraft (MA), an F-16C, S/N 84-1311 crashed on the Tohono O'odham Indian Reservation, approximately 13 miles South West of Sells, Arizona. The mishap pilot (MP), a lieutenant assigned to the 309th FS, 56th Fighter Wing, Luke AFB, Arizona, was on a basic operational training course syllabus air combat maneuvers (ACM) sortie as number two of a three-ship flight. The MP ejected safely, sustaining minor cuts and abrasions. The MA was destroyed upon impact with the loss valued at \$19,131,324.33. The impact area was in a remote desert area, the site has been thoroughly cleaned of debris, and to date, no claims for damage to private property have been filed because of this mishap. Shortly before impact, the MA engine quit. The MP attempted an airstart, but the engine did not restart. The engine remained in a stagnated condition. Upon reaching minimum ejection altitude, the MP ejected from the MA. Clear and convincing evidence showed the mishap aircraft (MA) engine quit due to the mishap pilot (MP) inadvertently shutting off the throttle. The MP did not correctly follow

Airstart Critical Action Procedures (CAPS), including achieving technical order recommended airstart airspeed or engaging the jet fuel starter (JFS). The MP ejected when he reached minimum ejection altitude. There were three occasions in the sequence of events where this mishap could have been avoided: Had the MP not inadvertently shut off the engine, airstart would not have been needed. The MP did not perform the fourth step in his Airstart CAPS, Airspeed - As Required. Required minimum airstart airspeed was 250 knots, and the MP had less than 200 knots throughout most of his airstart attempt. Maintaining 250 knots airspeed would have given the engine a chance to airstart without the need for the jet fuel starter (JFS). The MP did not perform the sixth step in his Airstart CAPS, JFS - Start 2 When Below 20,000 Feet And 400 Knots. The flight lead directed the student not to use the JFS. Using the JFS reduces the minimum required airstart airspeed down to 170 knots for maximum endurance airspeed. Starting the JFS would have given the engine a chance to airstart with the airspeed below 200 knots . There were two categories of factors directly contributing to this accident: human factors and cockpit/crew resource management (CRM), and two categories of factors indirectly contributing to this accident: training and supervision.

An F-16 assigned to the 309th Fighter Squadron at Luke AFB, Ariz., crashed in field just west of the base around 7 p.m. on June 26. Both pilots safely ejected; neither was injured, according to a base release. The pilots were conducting a routine training mission at the time of the incident. Brig. Gen. Michael Rothstein, 56th Fighter Wing commander, praised the members of Luke's police and fire departments which responded to the crash. "An incident like this highlights the close cooperation between our fire and emergency services and their counterparts in the surrounding community," said Rothstein in the release. The Air Force has not released a cause of the accident, which remains under investigation. 2013

Pilot Error Doomed F-16D A decision-making error by an instructor pilot after several low-altitude bird strikes led to the crash of an F-16D on June 26 just west of Luke AFB, Ariz., announced Air Education and Training Command. Both the instructor and student pilot were able to eject safely, suffering only minor injuries, according to the command's, which summarizes the findings of the command's accident investigation board report. The pilots, assigned to Luke's 309th Fighter Squadron, were on a training mission to practice touch-and-go landings when the F-16D's engine ingested several birds shortly after takeoff, resulting in degraded engine performance, according to the release. The instructor pilot "erroneously elect[ed] to make an immediate turn that robbed the aircraft of altitude and airspeed, rather than climbing straight ahead to achieve minimum maneuvering speed for aircraft recovery." There was limited damage to civilian property; total costs from the loss of the F-16D and the property damage are approximately \$22 million, states the release. 2013

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