

HOWARD'S GROUP BATTLES IN CLOUDS TO DESTROY THIRTEEN NAZI PLANES

Chasing in and out of heavy cloud banks in sub-zero temperature that coated their canopies with ice, P-51 Mustangs of Col. James H. Howard's pioneer Ninth Air Force group this afternoon destroyed 13 enemy fighters of a huge force which set upon heavy bombers on their way to targets in Germany.

The victories raised the group score to 221½ German aircraft destroyed in little more than four months of combat flying.

No sooner had Howard's Mustangs crossed the German border, when two waves of Nazi interceptors -- the first totalling about 30, the second almost 100 -- came out of the clouds to attack the heavy bombers and then turned upon the fighters. A moment later, the opposing fighters had broken off into more than 100 individual dogfights high above the clouds and all the way down to zero altitude.

Two German planes, one in a high-altitude battle and the other at tree-top level, were destroyed by 2nd Lt. Mailon A. Gillis, 134 East First Street, Ontario, Calif., who until today had flown almost twenty combat missions without destroying an enemy ship.

One of Lt. Gillis's victims, an FW-190 pilot, crawled onto the blazing wing of his plane to bail out at 500 feet, while the stricken fighter tore straight into the ground, plowing up trees and shrubbery for more than two hundred yards.

1st Lt. Glenn T. Eagleston, 3133 Poplar Blvd., Alhambra, Calif., Mustang ace, pulled so close to an FW-190 he had raked with fire that he could see "the pilot rip off his oxygen mask and hurry to bail out with panic written on his face."

Capt. Frank Q. O'Connor, 2355 Polk St., San Francisco, Cal., destroyed two FW-190s to raise his score to ten and two-thirds German aircraft destroyed. Capt. O'Connor nailed his first Focke-Wulf when he stopped short, let the enemy plane skim past him, and then ^{shots} poured into it from the rear.

1st Lt. Carl M. Frantz, Brownsville, Pa., the seventeenth member of Col. Howard's group to become an ace, shot down an Me-109 to bring his total to $5\frac{1}{2}$ German aircraft destroyed.

Other pilots of the original Mustang group who shot down enemy aircraft today were:

Capt. Charles W. Lasko, Nemacolin, Pa., -- two Me-109s.

1st Lt. Gilbert F. Talbot, Clackamas, Oregon -- an Me-109.

Capt. Wallace S. Farmer, 6304 St. Rosedale Drive, St. Louis, Mo. 63118, an FW-190.

2nd Lt. Woodsin M. Sullivan, Frostproof Fla., in an FW-190.

Capt. James Connor 215 North California St., San Jose, Calif. - 311 TW-120.

Capt. James Common, 215 North California, Stockton, Calif., -- an FW-190.