

# The 339th FG Versus The Jets!

Flaming those "Blow Jobs"!



By Stephen C. Ananian

# "Flaming" the Jets!



"Four Down and One to Go!" by Dave Ails, - print depicts the author downing a jet over Fulda.

## Mustangs of the 339<sup>th</sup> down 13 jets!

By S. Ananian, *pilot, 505<sup>th</sup> FS*

*The author has been in five separate encounters with ME-262s and is credited with having destroyed one and damaging two others!*

At a recent reunion in Nashville Leroy Steiger 505<sup>th</sup> pilot and I were reminiscing about some of our encounters with the German jets while partaking of a few "pints". We were discussing in particular the mission on 4 April '45 when Capt. Harry Corey (505<sup>th</sup>) downed a ME-262. Both Lt Steiger and I took part in that engagement. Leroy was behind Harry, protecting his tail when a piece of the disintegrating jet smashed Lee's canopy and ripped the goggles from his head! Fortunately Steiger was able to return and land his damaged "Bird" without injury to himself. Lee said, "People do not believe me when I tell them the only enemy aircraft

I fought were jets! Steve you have to write about it in the Newsletter. Tell them about our experiences with those "Blow Jobs"!"

This then, is that story as I experienced it.

Since jet-propelled aircraft, with flames blowing from the rear, bear a similarity to a plumber's "blow torch", they were referred to as "Blow Jobs" by Allied pilots. On the other hand the German pilots called the ME-262, "the Swallow" because of its birdlike appearance in flight! Although I personally, thought they should be called Vultures rather than the poor little Swallow!

The 339<sup>th</sup> was fairly successful in combating the German Messerschmitt 262! The Group was credited with having destroyed 12 (unofficially 13) jet-propelled fighters.

Making our Group the second highest scoring Fighter Group in the Eighth Air Force for the destruction of jets! One of our pilots, Capt. Nile C. Greer of the 504<sup>th</sup> FS even distinguished himself by destroying two ME-262s!

Unfortunately we lost four of our pilots to the "Blow Jobs" when they were bounced from behind by these high speed aircraft (560 mph max.). None of the unfortunate pilots recall seeing the "Swallow" that downed them. They never knew what hit them!

We never lost a pilot in an actual "Dog Fight" with those jets! "Twelve of theirs to four of ours" are pretty good odds - considering they were supposedly invincible! The "Swallows" wreaked havoc on the bombers by diving through their formations firing four 30mm canons (the heaviest armor of the world at that time). Flying at 100 miles per hour faster than the fastest conventional fighter, the ME-262s were the "King of the Hill". They were almost impossible to stop!

Question - "Where does a six hundred pound Gorilla sit?"

Answer - "Anywhere it wants to!"

The ME-262s were the "Gorillas" of the Sky!

Escorting fighters would drop their external wing tanks and give chase but they were far too fast to catch. The result was that the P-51s, having dropped their external fuel tanks in order to give chase, low on fuel, they had to turn back early, - Thus leaving the "Big Friends" open to attack by waiting conventional fighters.

This was the strategy of the German Luftwaffe. - Send up the jets early in the Allied bombing mission to shoot down bombers and in doing so; attempt to draw off the escorting Mustangs. This left the conventional ME-109s and FW-190s free to attack the unprotected bombers. It was demoralizing to say the least!



Lt. Leroy Steiger



The Eighth Air Force Fighter Command responded to this tactic by ordering all the escorting fighters to stay with the bombers and not chase the ME-262s unless individual fighters were directly attacked!

One must point out that these sub-sonic jets had some serious shortcomings too! They lacked maneuverability; in a "Dog Fight" they were no match with the highly maneuverable Mustang! Jet-propelled aircraft engines are "gas-guzzlers"! They had a limited range of about 40 minutes of flight! This was far too short for escorting long range bombers. Unlike the present-day jets, those delicate jet engines required constant maintenance, engine changes after twenty hours of use. It took many years until improvements in metallurgy and technology had conquered the very serious problems faced by the early jet-propelled aircraft. All they had was speed! But that was more than enough!



Kommodore of KG(J)54  
downed by the author in a  
dog fight at 15,000 feet on  
9 Feb '45. - Lorenze Rasse

If you were a Swallow pilot your tactic was to "Hit and Run"! Never turn into your opponent, because when you turned, the more maneuverable conventional fighter would have you in his gun-sights!

If you were an allied pilot you caught them on their return to base when they were out of fuel! They were "sitting ducks" and vulnerable to destruction. Practically all the jet victories were scored in this manner. Practically none in actual dogfights!

The Luftwaffe had another very serious problem. Too many of their jets were being lost in bad weather due to the insufficient training of German fighter pilots. This problem became so severe that the Luftwaffe decided to change their strategy and put bomber pilots at the controls of the ME-262. Bomber pilots were trained in "Flying Blind", so this made sense!

The Luftwaffe organized an "all-weather" fighter unit KG(J)54. This unit was led by German ace Oberstleutnant (1<sup>st</sup> Lt.) Volprecht Riedsel Freiherr zu Eisenach. The aircrews were all JU-88 and HE-111 pilots and had considerable experience in instrument flying but little or no training in fighter tactics.

Up to February 9<sup>th</sup> 1945 about 25 jets had been shot down by Allied pilots!

On February 9<sup>th</sup> '45 things Changed!

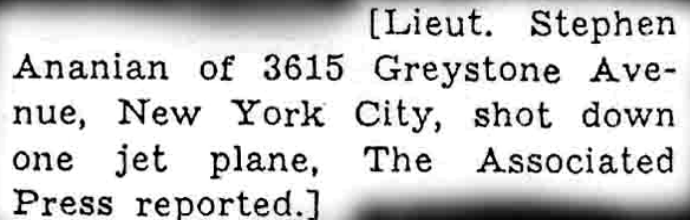
TEN jet fighters from the "All-Weather" unit came up to attack the stream of 1,300 bombers and 850 fighters. In a very short time FIVE of these jets were shot down by Allied pilots! This was unheard of! Never before had the "Elite" jet pilots

met with such a tragic loss! At days end, according to the New York Times, only nineteen Allied bombers and three fighters were lost!

I was lucky to be one of the victorious Allied fighter pilots that day!

What a thrill it was! I had engaged three ME-262s in a dog fight at 15,000 feet and shot down one while the other two took off! I became the first pilot of the 339<sup>th</sup> to shoot down a jet!

But later that day, Mustangs of the 339<sup>th</sup> flew a "sweep" during which a single ME-262 was sighted. The jet was chased and damaged by Lt. Jerome J. Sainlar of the 504<sup>th</sup> FS at 1700 hours. Unknowingly, he actually caused the



[Lieut. Stephen Ananian of 3615 Greystone Avenue, New York City, shot down one jet plane, The Associated Press reported.]

Clipping from the NY Times of Feb 10, 1945.

destruction of "White 18" of *III/EJG 2*, the German jet was piloted by Unteroffizier (2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.) Heinz Speck who was killed when his fighter crashed as he attempted to land his damaged craft. Thus Lt. Sainlar technically became the second member of the 339<sup>th</sup> to down a jet! This increased the German jet losses to SIX for that day! The 339<sup>th</sup> had downed two of them!

The truth is that I was Lucky! What we did not know at the time, was that the aircrews flying those ten ME-262s. on February ninth, were bomber pilots of the "All-Weather" KG(J)54, on their first combat flight in those jets.

Not knowing this, that air battle sent a message to Allied fighter pilots that these "much feared" jets were vulnerable - they could be destroyed in one-to-one combat. After that day, Allied fighters conducted sweeps looking for these jets and destroyed ME-262s with a vengeance. According to "Air Force" magazine the Germans were able to put up three hundred ME-262s in combat during WWII and Allied fighters shot down one hundred, - one third of them! On page eleven I have printed the actual claims of the pilots of the 339<sup>th</sup>. Most of those "damaged" claims were no more than picture taking encounters of those "seen but soon gone" ME-262s. That is except for Lt. Jerome J. Sainlar's claim which as stated previously was actually destroyed! But it shows how we actively pursued the enemy "Blow Jobs"! We made their lives miserable! Always dreading the possibility that there were Mustangs waiting for them when they returned, low on fuel, to base!

When one considers that we, the 339<sup>th</sup> FG, were instrumental in destroying 13 of these jets, John Henry's boys, "The Lads from Fowlmere" did quite well!

After the war, ME-262 Historian Lorenze Rasse, interviewed pilots of KG(J)54 who survived that 9 Feb '45 battle. They claim I had downed their leader, Ace Oberstleutnant Volprecht Riedsel Freiherr zu Eisenach, Kommodore of KG(J)54.

There are those that say if Hitler had used the ME-262 as a fighter earlier in the war that the end results would have been different. I question that premise! The war might have taken a few months longer, we certainly would have lost more bombers but we still would have won the war! Remember! The Atom Bomb was only a few months away!

I must also point out that during the Korean War we had Mustangs of the USAF fighting the Russian "Migs", a far superior jet compared to the Swallow. Hampered by a lack of guts the American politicians of that day refused to grant our pilots permission to attack "Mig" bases, where the jets were the most vulnerable! In spite of this serious drawback, the same Mustangs of WWII, piloted by veteran airmen, still maintained "air-superiority".

Which aircraft was the superior fighter? Who Knows? Probably in a one-to-one "Dog Fight" it would end up in a draw. In the Korean War, highly decorated, Maj. Gen. Bill Bryan (503<sup>rd</sup> FS) and Col. Owen P. Farmer (505<sup>th</sup> FS) both were experienced jet pilots but they volunteered to fly Mustangs in combat over jets. Bill Bryan commanded a P-51 Fighter Group and Owen Farmer led a Squadron under him. Both men ended up with over 900 combat hours in the P-51 Mustang! That is some sort of record!

I once asked "OP" why he chose to fly the Mustang rather than an F-86 Saber jet in combat. "O.P." Farmer told me, "I was more comfortable if my fuel gauges indicated gallons of gasoline rather than pounds of fuel. So I flew Mustangs!"

Who am I to disagree with "O. P."?

"Blue Skies smiling at me - - -"



# The Jet Killers!

These pilots of the 339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group are credited with having destroyed German Jet Propelled Fighters in the Air!



**Lt. S. C. Ananian**



**Lt. V. N. Barto**



**Lt. R. E. Irion**



**Lt. B. E. Langhor**



**Lt. R. F. Sargent**



**Lt. C. W. Bennett**



**Lt. K. B. Everson, Jr.**



**Capt. R. C. Croker**



**Capt. H. R. Corey**



**Lt. O. K. Biggs**



**Lt. J. C. Campbell**



**Lt/Col D. E. Shafer, Jr.**

Photos missing are those of Lt. N. C. Greer and Lt. J. J. Sainlar



# The Complete Score!



From the "ME-262 Diary"  
Total 339<sup>th</sup> FG Jet Claims

31 Dec 44	Capt A. G. Hawkins (503)		1 damaged
<b>1- 9 Feb 45</b>	<b>Lt. S. C. Ananian (505)</b>	<b>1 destroyed</b>	
9 Feb 45	Lt. J. J. Sainlar (504)		1 damaged
3 Mar 45	Lt. R.G. Johnson (503)		1 damaged
<b>2- 20 Mar 45</b>	<b>Lt. V.N. Barto (504)</b>	<b>1 destroyed</b>	
<b>3- 20 Mar 45</b>	<b>Lt. R. E. Irion (505)</b>	<b>1 destroyed</b>	
20 Mar 45	Lt. K. V. Berguson (504)		1 damaged
20 Mar 45	Lt. R. S. Hill (503)		2 damaged
<b>4- 21 Mar 45</b>	<b>Lt B. E. Langhor (504)</b>	<b>½ destroyed }</b>	
<b>4- shared with</b>	<b>Lt N. C. Greer (504)</b>	<b>½ destroyed }</b>	
25 Mar 45	Maj Shafer (503)		1 damaged
<b>5- 30 Mar 45</b>	<b>Lt R. F. Sargent (504)</b>	<b>1 destroyed</b>	
<b>6- 30 Mar 45</b>	<b>Lt. C. W. Bennett (504)</b>	<b>1 destroyed</b>	1 damaged
30 Mar 45	Lt S. C. Ananian (505)		1 damaged
30 Mar 45	Capt G. T. Rich (505)		1 damaged
<b>7- 4 Apr 45</b>	<b>Lt. N. C. Greer (504)</b>	<b>1 destroyed</b>	
<b>8- 4 Apr 45</b>	<b>Capt K. B. Everson (504)</b>	<b>½ destroyed }</b>	
<b>8- shared with</b>	<b>Capt R. C. Croker (504)</b>	<b>½ destroyed }</b>	
<b>9- 4 Apr 45</b>	<b>Capt H. R. Corey (505)</b>	<b>1 destroyed</b>	
<b>10 – 4 Apr 45</b>	<b>1/Lt. Robert C. Havighurst (504)</b>	<b>1 destroyed</b>	
5 Apr 45	Lt S. C. Ananian (505)		1 damaged
7 Apr 45	Lt R. V. Blizzard (504)	1 probable	1 damaged
7 Apr 45	Lt. P. E. Petitt (503)		1 damaged
7 Apr 45	Lt. L. M. Carter (503)		1 damaged
7 Apr 45	Lt. C. M. Mason (504)		1 damaged
7 Apr 45	F/O J. J. Rice (505)		1 damaged
9 Apr 45	Lt H. F. Hunt (504)		1 damaged
9 Apr 45	Lt. L. M. Orcutt, Jr. (504)		1 damaged
<b>11- 17 Apr 45</b>	<b>Lt. J. C. Campbell (503)</b>	<b>1 destroyed</b>	
18 Apr 45	Lt Col J. S. Thury (505)		1 damaged
<b>12- 18 April '45</b>	<b>Lt/Col Dale E. Shafer,jr. (503)</b>	<b>1 AR-234 destroyed</b>	
<b>13 – 9 Feb '45</b>	<b>1 / Lt. Jerome J. Sainlar (504)</b>	<b>1 ME-262 destroyed</b>	
<b>(unconfirmed)</b>			

*Note: - John Foreman and S. E. Harvey in their book "The Messerschmitt Combat Diary Me.262" write that Lt Sainlar actually shot down "White 18" of III/EJG 2, Unteroffizier Heinz Speck dying when his damaged fighter crashed at Zusmalthausen."*





## Appendix I

John Foreman and S. E. Harvey in their book "The Messerschmitt Combat Diary Me.262" write "Later in the day (Feb.9<sup>th</sup>) Mustangs of the 339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group flew a sweep during which a single Me.262 was sighted. This was chased and claimed damaged by Lt. Jerome J. Sainlar at 1700 hours. He actually shot down "White 18" of *III/EJG* 2, Unteroffizier Heinz Speck dying when his fighter crashed at Zusmalthausen."



Lt Jerome Sainlar

## Jet Killers of the 339<sup>th</sup> FG

13 - (12 confirmed, 1 unconfirmed)

*(The record from the book "ME 262 Diary")*

1 - 9 Feb '45	1/Lt Stephen Ananian (505)	1 ME 262
2 - 20 Mar '45	1/Lt Vernon M. Barto (504)	1 ME 262
3 - 20 Mar '45	Capt Robert E. Irion (505)	1 ME 262
4 - 21 Mar '45	Capt Nile C. Greer (504)	1 ME 262
5 - 30 Mar '45	Lt. Carol W. Bennett (504)	1 ME 262
6 - 30 Mar '45	Capt Robert F. Sargent (504)	1 ME 262
7 - 4 April '45	Capt. Kirke B. Everson, jr. (504)	½ ME 262
7 - shared "Kill"	1/Lt. Robert C. Croker (504)	½ ME 262
8 - 4 April '45	Capt Nile C. Greer (504)	1 ME 262
9 - 4 April '45	1/Lt. Robert C. Havighurst (504)	1 ME 262
10 - 4 April '45	Capt. Harry R. Corey (505)	1 ME 262
11 - 17 April '45	1/Lt. John C. Campbell (503)	1 ME 262
12 - 18 April '45	Lt/Col Dale E. Shafer, jr. (503)	1 AR 234
13 - 9 Feb '45	1/Lt. Jerome J. Sainlar (504)	1 ME 262 (unconfirmed)

*Claimed 1 ME 262 Damaged, but has since been reported in "Me.262 Diary" to have crashed, killing the pilot on landing.*



## Appendix II

Front page headlines of the New York Times for 10 Feb '45 tell the tale!

### *Jet Planes Hit U. S. 'Heavies' In Swirling Fight Over Reich*

By CHARLES E. EGAN

By Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LONDON, Feb. 9—Oil, armament and rail targets in the Reich were pounded today by an American Eighth Air Force armada of 1,300 Flying Fortresses and Liberator bombers escorted by more than 850 Mustangs and Thunderbolt fighters. For the first time, the enemy sent jet-propelled fighters up in numbers to attack the bombing planes. The opposing planes, flying in and out of the sun, followed "hit and run tactics" in which they lost five of their numbers. [Press service reports said the jet planes flew at a speed of ten miles a minute.]

Nineteen American bombers and three fighters were reported missing from today's operations.

The opposition by jet fighter planes was met notably at Weimar and Magdeburg and returning fliers reported having shot down five of the craft besides having destroyed sixteen other fighter planes in the air and forty-three on the ground [Lieut. Stephen Ananian of 3615 Greystone Avenue, New York City, shot down one jet plane, The Associated Press reported.]

Describing the attacks by the jet propelled fighters, Capt. Francis M. Smith, a Fortress co-pilot, said: "The jet planes would come diving out of the sun singly or in pairs or climbing up out of the clouds within about fifty feet of a fortress. There would be a quick burst of fire and then they would flip over and get away fast. They would strike just once and run for cover."

Today's strike continued the round-the-clock hammering of Germany that has been in progress since early last month.

The chief targets of the American planes today were a synthetic oil plant at Lutzkendorf, an armament and motor transport plant at Weimar and the railway yards and repair facilities in the industrial area of Magdeburg.

Today's attack upon the Lutz-

[Lieut. Stephen Ananian of 3615 Greystone Avenue, New York City, shot down one jet plane, The Associated Press reported.]

Note; -

I am mentioned in parenthesis!

The following article appeared on the front page of The New York Times of Feb. 9 1945.

## Jet Planes Hit U.S. 'Heavies' In Swirling Fight Over Reich

By Charles E. Eagan

*By Wireless to The New York Times.*

LONDON, Feb. 9 - Oil, armament and rail targets in the Reich were pounded today by an American Eighth Air Force armada of 1,300 Flying Fortresses and Liberator bombers escorted by more than 850 Mustangs and Thunderbolt fighters. For the first time, the enemy sent jet-propelled fighters up in numbers to attack the bombing planes. The opposing planes, flying in out of the sun, followed "hit and run tactics" in which they lost five of their numbers. [Press service reports said the jet planes flew at a speed of ten miles a minute.]

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The aerial offensive against Germany was being kept up non-stop tonight. Large numbers of Royal Air Force heavy bombers took off from eastern England shortly after dark, flying in a southeasterly direction.

The chief targets of the American planes today were a synthetic oil plant at Lutzendorf, an armament and motor transport plant at Weimar and the railway yards and repair facilities in the industrial area of Magdeburg.

Today's attack upon Lutzendorf synthetic oil plant leaves Germany with only three such plants in operation, according to army reports. All the Reich's crude oil refineries are believed to be inactive as a result of earlier attacks by the United States and Royal Air Force bombers.

By concentrating upon Germany's crude oil refineries and synthetic fuel plants, Allied forces believe they have dealt a serious blow to the enemy's war potential over the last several weeks, as a result of the aerial campaign and of the overrunning of oil plants and refineries by Allied troops, Germany's production of gasoline last month is believed to have fallen to the lowest point since the war began,

The campaign against the natural and synthetic oil targets in Germany in which Russian as well as R.A.F. and American planes have joined, has been the most sustained effort yet made by the airpower against a specific industry, officials said. It has been a test of whether airpower could so cripple or destroy a vital enemy industry as to cause serious dislocation of the Germans' fighting ability.

Lieut. Col. Daniel D. Mykee of Greenville, Miss., a mustang pilot who observed today's attack on Lutzkendorf said "it seems as if the bombs were falling into a sea of blazing oil."

The Allied attack upon Germany's oil resources was aided by Liberators and Flying Fortresses based in Italy, which bombed oil targets at Moosbierbaum, twenty-two miles west of Vienna. The aircraft flew through intense flak and bad weather to reach their target. Airmen were compelled to use instruments to pinpoint their objectives.

The R.A.F. reported this morning that more than 1,000 of its aircraft were out over Germany last night. Strong forces of Lancaster's made two separate attacks on synthetic oil plant at Politz near Stetin. Shortly before dawn, Lancasters attacked the railway yards at Hohenbudberg between Krefeld and Dusberg, to destroy rolling stock and to block lines leading to the battle area.

LONDON, Feb. 9 (AP)- The German's jet propelled Messerschmitt 262s literally flew rings around the American heavy craft today, returning fliers said tonight.

Baffled gunners aboard the Flying Fortresses and Liberators failed to shoot down any of these attackers.

Some fliers said, however, that the jets cut in and out of the bomber formations, firing at will from first one flank and then another. One witness told of a fortress crippled and forced to hide in clouds after a fifteen-minute attack by the jets had left the bomber's gunners dizzy.

A spokesman at United States air headquarters said this was the first time the jet planes had probed through the American defenses and attacked the bombers, which usually plod along the formation at about 150 miles an hour.

