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USAF SENIOR NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER ACADEMY (AU)

ENLISTED ACES

BY

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Fame, fortune, and glory, what does it take to make these part of a military persons life? We don't look for these commodities. Our reasons for what we do are really quite simple. We volunteered to serve our country out of a need to give something back to a country that has given us so much. Others serve because it is a way out of a troubling situation. Whatever our reasons, circumstances can sometimes lead us on a path which we didn't choose.

One such group of men who experienced circumstances beyond their control were the young enlisted gunners of the Eighth and Twelveth Air Force during World War II. Their purpose was to see to it that enemy aircraft did not send their bombers flaming from the sky. Overall they were extremely successful. Their success did not just happen. Reasons for what they did and accomplished are varied and need to be explained. (2:--) (4:--) (6:--) (8:--)

The purpose of the paper is to identify the training, equipment, reasons, and the men of the Eighth and Twelfth Air Forces who made a significant difference in winning World War II. The time period covered will be 1942-43. I will show that these young men were largely overlooked when ace status was bestowed.

During the course of this paper I will cover the reasons for failure to recognize enlisted aces. Enlisted gunners were not credited with ace status due to the number of planes and confusion in combat. In addition I will talk about their training as it relates to gunnery school and those parts of the training

which made them a force to be reckoned with. As with any war new improved technology was also a big help to increased numbers of downed enemy aircraft. There were five reasons for improved weapons. The area of operations was restricted due to the time of the conflict. The last two areas to be covered are the names of a few aces and the current work being done in the field. All of this will direct further research in the field.

What goes into the making of an ace? An ace is an individual that shoots down five or more enemy aircraft in air to air combat. In World War II It appears as if you had to be a fighter pilot or little recognition came your way. There are various reasons why enlisted gunners did not get ace status. The first reason usually cited is the vast number of planes involved in raids. Another was the large number of gunners on each aircraft all firing at the same time. (1:--) Thanks to unit historians some effort was made to preserve the identities of these men and what they accomplished. There are reasons for their skill and success.

Gunners during World War I experienced problems adjusting their rate of fire with the movement of enemy aircraft. At the time of World War II the rate of fire 800 rounds per minute, had not changed. If it had not been for other improvements the far faster aircraft, fighters in particular, would have had a field day. (3:--) The guns which were placed on all American bombers were greatly improved with the advent of new optical sighting devices which calculated aiming data. These guns were easier

to load, jammed less, and were less erratic. A final point that lead to better gunnery was the improved ballistics of the newer rounds. It should be noted here that gunnery was then and still is "more of an art than science." (1:--) Three other items helped improve our gunners accuracy.

American bombers were equipped with newer and better turrets. These turrets allowed for easier movement for gunners to fire on targets. The guns in the turrets were easier to repair saving time and the lives of many airmen. A third area of improvement was the recognition of enemy aircraft. (7:--) American gunners went through six weeks of gunnery school in which aircraft recognition was an integral part. (3:--) Enlisted gunner training was far greater in length than was given to pilots of bombers. Bomber pilots normally received one day of training. (7:--) The excellent training that gunners received made them successful wherever they flew.

This paper focuses mainly on the time period 1942-43. At this particular time most operations were taking place in North Africa and the Mediterranean. The bombers in this area normally faced German ME-109s, JU-52s, FW-190, Blohn Voss, and RE-2001. The American bombers were usually B-17s, B-25s, and B-26s. The most used bomber was the B-17. (See Attachment #1) When records are checked many enlisted gunners are listed with kills but these figures have never been compiled. (3:--) (4:--) (5:--) (6:--) (8:--)

In my research I found six men officially credited with five or more kills. (See Attachment #2) Their kills covered a wide range of aircraft types. It must be pointed out that this research covers only a narrow time period and geographic area. Jack D. Guerard was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC). John P. Quinlan was the tail gunner for the famous bomber the Memphis Belle. The other four men have not received the recognition they justly deserve. It is apparent that many enlisted gunners have not received their rewards for the excellent job they did in the skies around the world. (3:--) (4:--) (5:--) (6:--) (8:--)

Currently there are studies being done on enlisted aviation. Authorities stated that it would take ten years to do comprehensive research on the topic of enlisted aces. Col Dodd stated that this research is way over due and he is currently involved in such work. (2:--) Hopefully many more researchers will become involved in this work that is long overdue. The facts and figures are there, it will just take time to find them and compile what is needed.

The research can be done here at the academy. Granted, it can only be done in small degrees, but it is something which must be done. The enlisted personnel deserve the recognition that belongs to each individual, and also the pride which belongs to all enlisted personnel. I hope that in the future academy students will continue this very badly needed work.

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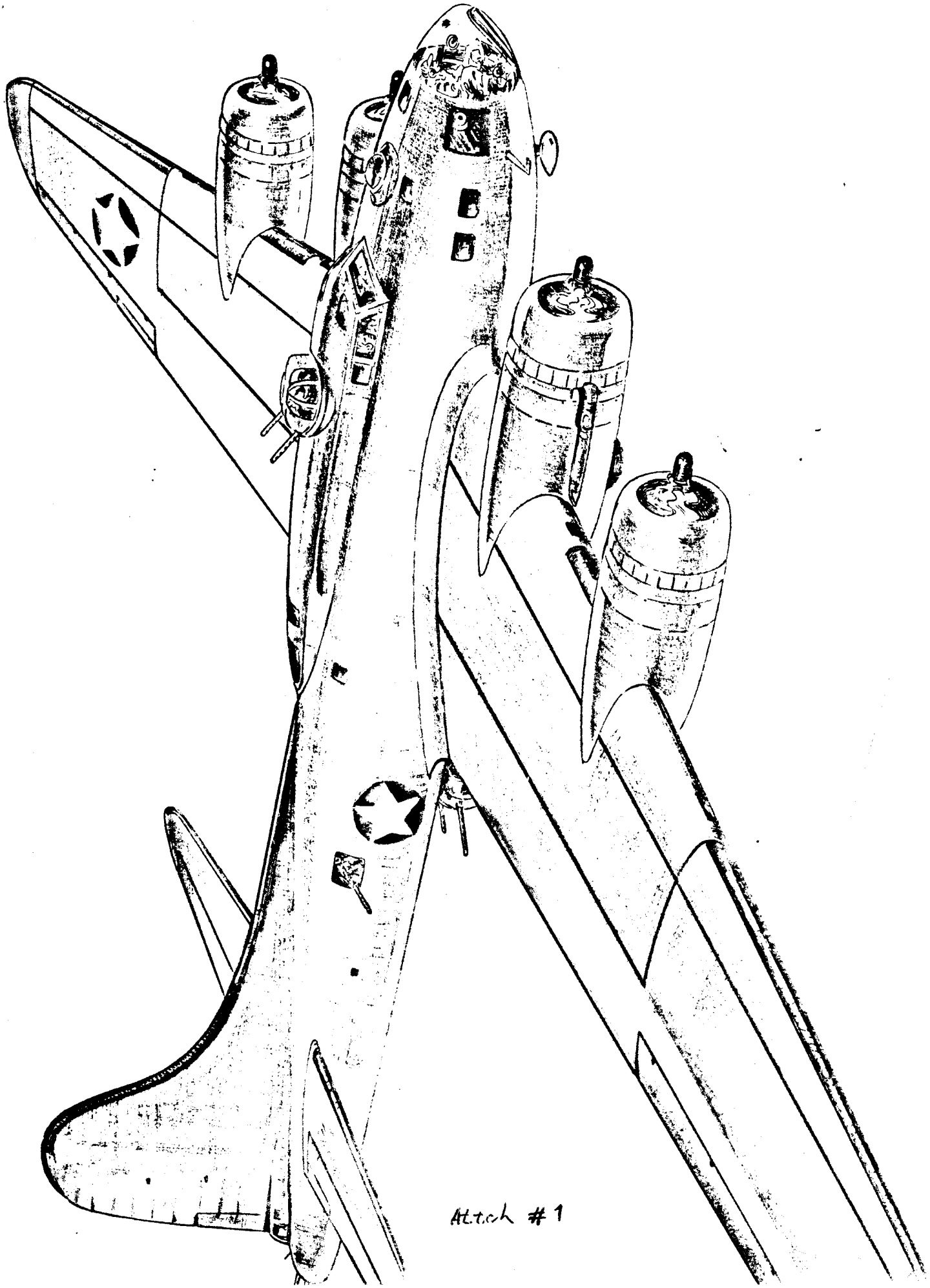

Attch #1

ENLISTED ACES

EIGHTH AND TWELFTH AIR FORCES

RANK	NAME:	ME-109	FW-190	JU-52	RE-2001	BLOHN VOSS
T/S	BRUNNER, ROBERT M.	3		1		1
S/S	GUERARD, JACK D.	4	1		1	
SGT.	BOUKER, FRED E.	4	1			
S/S	WARMER, BEN F.	5	1			
S/S	MYSHALL, JOESPH R.	3	2			
S/S	QUINLAN, JOHN P.	EXACT PLANES NOT COUNTED AT LEAST 5 KILLS (MEMPHIS BELLE)				

T/S=TECHNICAL SERGEANT

S/S=STAFF SERGEANT

ATTCH #2