

MS-120, Night Fighters of World War II Historical Collection

Collection Number: MS-120

Title: Night Fighters of World War II Historical Collection

Dates: 1942-2007 (bulk 1942-1978)

Creator: WWII Night Fighters

Summary/Abstract:

Consists of records from the Night Fighters Association, WWII Night Fighters organization, and personal papers from members of the organization, relating to Night Fighter Squadrons serving in World War II. Includes pilot tests, squadron reports, individual flight records, rosters, unpublished chronologies of the 6th and 417th Night Fight Squadrons, and photographs. The collection also includes an audio recording of the 1978 Night Fighter Reunion held in Dayton, Ohio, and photos and video from the 2007 Night Fighter Reunion held in Reading, Pennsylvania.

Quantity/Physical Description: 3.00 linear feet & 12.3 GB

Language(s): English

Repository:

Special Collections and Archives, Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435-0001, (937) 775-2092.

Restrictions on Access:

There are no restrictions on accessing material in this collection with the exception of audiotapes and electronic files.

Due to preservation concerns, original audio and video materials cannot be accessed in the reading room. Patrons may have access to reference copies. Items without reference copies can be digitized at the request of a patron for the cost of creating a digital copy. Please provide us at least two (2) weeks advance notice if you would like to request an audio or video reference copy. Call (937) 775-2092 or e-mail us at archives@www.libraries.wright.edu. Use of digitized content is subject to conditions governing use.

Electronic files in this collection are not accessible until the files are fully processed. Requests to prioritize processing of electronic records in this collection can be submitted for consideration.

Restrictions on Use:

Copyright restrictions may apply. Unpublished manuscripts are protected by copyright. Permission to publish, quote, or reproduce must be secured from the repository and the copyright holder.

Preferred Citation:

[Description of item, Date, Box #, Folder #], MS-120, Night Fighters of World War II Historical Collection, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio.

Acquisition: The papers were acquired from individuals who had served as night fighters in Europe and in the Pacific.

Accruals: Additions may occur in the future.

Separated Material:

Four drawings by Gary Olson (donated by Earl Tigner), are located in oversize Location 4, folders 9-12.

Four books on the Northrop P-61, donated by Earl Tigner, are available in the reading room:

- *Pilot's Manual for Northrop P-61, Black Widow* (1977). [TL685.3 N67](#)
- Warren Thompson, *Northrop P-61 Black Widow*. Warbird Tech Series, Vol. 15 (1997). [UG1242.F5 T465 1997](#)
- Garry R. Paper, with John M. and Donna Campbell, *Northrop P-61: black Widow; The Complete History and Combat Record*. (1991). [UG1242.F5 P36 1991](#)
- Garry R. Paper and Ronald C. Harrison, *Queen of the Midnight Skies: The Story of America's Air Force Night Fighters*. (1992). [UG1242.F5 P214 1992](#)

Other Finding Aid:

The finding aid is available on the Special Collections & Archives, Wright State University Libraries web site at

http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collection_guides/guide_files/ms120.pdf. It is also available in the OhioLINK Finding Aid Repository at <http://ead.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ead/>.

Related Material:

While this collection will be useful for a history of night fighters, it probably cannot stand as the sole source for such a history. The researcher should consult the National Museum of the United States Air Force in Dayton, Ohio, as well as the United States Air Force Historical Division at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, for additional material.

Processed by:

Randall D. Green, 1981 October. Additions processed by Lynda Kachurek, 2006 October; Garret B. Kremer-Wright, 2007 May; Patricia A. McEldowney, 2012; Lisa Rickey, 2017. Finding aid revised according to DACS in 2015 by Toni Vanden Bos.

Arrangement: The collection is arranged into 19 series by name of Night Fighter:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Series I: | Kent Blyler Papers, Undated |
| Series II: | Robert W. Boucher Papers, 1943-1946 |
| Series III: | Don Dessert Papers, 1976 |
| Series IV: | Dick Ehlert Papers, 1942-1944 |

- Series V: Joe Gonzales Papers, 1943
- Series VI: Edward F. Jones Papers, 1944-1945
- Series VII: George R. Ludlow Photographs, 1945
- Series VIII: William C. Odell Papers, 1942
- Series IX: Earl Tigner Photographs, 1945
- Series X: Thomas C. Tillman Papers, 1970-1971
- Series XI: Gordon T. Timmons Interview, 1978
- Series XII: Night Fighters' Reunion, 1978 June 30-July 2
- Series XIII: Gary Olson Drawings, 1988
- Series XIV: Earl Tigner Books on P-61, 2006
- Series XV: World War II Night Fighters Records, 1942-2001
- Series XVI: Frank Bosch Papers, 1943-2004
- Series XVII: William Graham Papers, 1942-1992
- Series XVIII: Richard Dawson Papers, 1942-1945
- Series XIX: Night Fighters' Reunion, 2007 Sep. 17-18

Historical Note:

As early as 1940, American strategists had an interest in night flying. British fighter pilots were flying aircraft designed for day and night flying. The aircraft they flew were painted black on one side and a pale finish on the other side. These early night fighters relied on moonlight, searchlights, and sometimes ground based radar, since there were no radar-equipped aircraft.

In October 1940, Northrop Aircraft Inc., of Hawthorne, Calif., was asked by the United States Air Corps to develop an aircraft that could be used specifically for night fighting. For the interim period, the Douglas P-70 Havoc bomber was used. It proved to be an ineffective night fighter. Some squadrons in Europe were flying British made Bristol Beaufighters, which also proved to be ineffective. By early 1944, the Northrop P-61 Black Widow was put into service in the Pacific. It was in use in Europe by the summer of 1944. The aircraft received its nick-name because of the semi-shiny black color it was painted. This radar-equipped aircraft proved to be an excellent night fighter.

One of the few training schools for night-fighting crews was in Florida at Orlando Air Base. The training center was under the direction of the Fourth Air Force. All night fighter personnel were volunteers, the pilots having had day fighter training. In 1943 the instructors consisted of specialists from the Bell Telephone Laboratories, British night fighter crews, and American crews who had trained in England. The pilots were trained in Douglas P-70 Havocs, and the radar operators were trained in Beech AT-11's.

In 1944, the entire program was moved to Hammer Field in Calif., with the Fourth Air Force still retaining command. At Hammer Field, British instructors were phased out.

The pilots and radar operators were officers, while the gunners and crew chiefs were usually enlisted men. It was necessary for the pilot and radar operator to work like a finely tuned machine, so it was important to avoid a conflict in personalities. Before coming to the school, the pilots were trained in North American B-25 Mitchells, with intensive work on instrument flying. During night

fighter training, the pilot learned high and low altitude night fighting, evasive maneuvers, and aerial gunnery. It was necessary to establish close cooperation with Ground Controlled Interception. The GCI was important, since it brought the fighter to within close proximity of the target.

After graduation, the crews were sent overseas where they were attached to larger units. Once the crews left for overseas duty, the Fourth Air Force relinquished command of them. Night fighter squadrons served in the Pacific and in Europe.

In 1951, the Night Fighter Association was formally organized by former members of WWII night fighter squadrons. In 1984, the WWII Night Fighters organization was incorporated as an independent non-profit veterans' organization with the purpose to promote and conduct fraternal activities by those who served in Night Fighter Squadrons during World War II, and to give financial assistance, when appropriate, to family members of deceased Night Fighters. The organization was dissolved in 2001.

Scope and Content

The collection is composed of official records of the Night Fighters Association incorporated in 1951, the WWII Night Fighters organization incorporated in 1984 which dissolved in 2001, as well as personal papers from members of various night fighter squadrons. A series was established for each individual donor to the collection, most of whom were night fighters. These papers are not comprehensive, but among these individual series are pilots' tests and certificates, squadron reports, individual flight records, rosters, transfer orders, unpublished chronologies of the 6th and 417th Night Fighter Squadrons, photographs, and some miscellaneous material.

Series XV contains official records and financial records of the Night Fighters Association and the WWII Night Fighters organization, including articles of incorporation, minutes, newsletters, and correspondence. The collection also includes cassettes and a reel-to-reel tape of the 1978 Night Fighters Reunion held in Dayton, Ohio, and a taped interview with Gordon T. Timmons, who was at one time, commander of the 415th Night Fighter Squadron.

Series I: Kent Blyler Papers, Undated

A poem which Mr. Blyler found in his old diary. He maintained the diary while stationed on Guadalcanal with the 6th Night Fighter Squadron.

Series II: Robert W. Boucher Papers, 1943-1946

Pilots' tests and certificates, squadron reports, individual flight records, photographs, and miscellaneous material. Mr. Boucher served with the 421st and the 548th Night Fighter Squadrons.

Series III: Don Dessert Papers, 1976

An article copied from Air Classics, August 1976, titled, "Night Lightning." Mr. Dessert is mentioned in the article.

Series IV: Dick Ehlert Papers, 1942-1944

First draft of a chronology taken from Mr. Ehlert's diary. It gives a good account of his experiences as a night fighter in the Pacific. He was a member of the 6th Night Fighter Squadron.

Series V: Joe Gonzales Papers, 1943

A copy of a chronology of the 417th Night Fighter Squadron. It gives a good account of their training, and experiences while being transported overseas. Many of the men in the squadron are mentioned, as well as their ranks. The chronology ends abruptly, the rest having been lost.

Series VI: Edward F. Jones Papers, 1944-1945

Rosters, transfer orders, and commendations pertaining to Mr. Jones' participation in the military.

Series VII: George R. Ludlow Photographs, 1945

Three photographs of German concentration camp victims at Furth, Germany.

Series VIII: William C. Odell Papers, 1942

One copy of an Individual Flight Record and one copy of a page from a diary. The two pages seem to indicate that there was a night fighter squadron in existence as early as April, 1942.

Series IX: Earl Tigner Photographs, 1945

This series contains approximately 33 original photographs of Iwo Jima and the 549th Night Fighter Squadron which was stationed there. A CD containing digital copies of these images was added to the series in 2006.

Series X: Thomas C. Tillman Papers, 1970-1971

Several papers pertaining to the retirement and death of Thomas Tillman, an award that he received in 1970, and a pamphlet containing his biography.

Series XI: Gordon T. Timmons Interview, 1978

An interview with Gordon Timmons, who was at one time, commander of the 415th Night Fighter Squadron. He also served with the 421st Night Fighter Squadron. The interview was conducted by Susan Smith sometime between June 30, and July 2, 1978.

Series XII: Night Fighters' Reunion, 1978 June 30-July 2

Two cassette tapes and one reel-to-reel tape of the speeches made at the reunion, which took place June 30-July 2, 1978. The reel-to-reel tape is a duplicate of the cassette tapes. The speakers include

Jimmy Doolittle, Colonel Richard Upstromm, who is the director of the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio (as of October 1981), and individuals who served as Night Fighters.

Series XIII: Gary Olson Drawings, 1988

Donated in 2006 by Earl Tigner, this series contains four black ink drawings of aircraft flown by Night Fighter programs. The drawings are #74 of a limited production series. The four aircraft include the Northrop P-61B, the Douglas P-70, the deHavilland Mosquito, and the Bristol Beaufighter.

Series XIV: Earl Tigner Books on P-61, 2006

Donated in 2006 by Earl Tigner, this series contains four books about the Northrop P-61. These books are cataloged and available in the Archive's Reading Room collection.

Series XV: WWII Night Fighters Records, 1942-2001

Donated in March 2005, this series consists mainly of financial records of the organization. Also included are correspondence.

Series XVI: Frank Bosch Papers, 1943-2004

These papers were donated by his wife in 2005. They consist of material relating to the Night Fighters Association. This series contains some issues of the Night Fighters Newsletter, correspondence, articles pertaining to the Night Fighters, and rosters of the men who served in the various Night Fighter Squadrons.

Series XVII: William Graham Papers, 1942-1992

These materials were donated to the archives in 1999. Items in this series consist of photographs, a brief biography of William Graham, and some of his records.

Series XVIII: Richard Dawson Papers, 1942-1945

These materials were donated by his son Peter Dawson in 2017. This series includes Richard Dawson's enlistment papers and special orders, dated April 1942. It also includes 11 photographs of the 415th Night Fighter Squadron, of which Richard Dawson was a member, serving in North Africa, Italy, France, and Germany, from 1943-1945.

Series XIX: Night Fighters' Reunion, 2007

These materials were donated by Peter Dawson in 2017. This series includes digital photographs and video from the Night Fighter 2007 Reunion, held at the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum in Reading, Pennsylvania, September 17-18, 2007. The materials appear to have been created and originally distributed by Richard H. Ziebart, who organized the reunion. The materials include 4 video DVDs featuring speakers at the reunion, 1 DVD of over 400 digital photographs, and 1 CD containing a

PDF of reunion photographs. There is also a newsletter, which includes page-by-page captions for the photographs included in the PDF.

Subject Terms:

Persons/Families

Blyler, Kent
Bosch, Frank
Boucher, Robert W.
Dawson, Richard
Dessert, Don
Ehlert, Richard
Gonzalez, Joseph
Graham, William
Jones, Edward F.
Ludlow, George R.
Odell, William C.
Olson, Gary
Tigner, Earl
Tillman, Thomas C.
Timmons, Gordon T.
Ziebart, Richard H.

Organizations:

Night Fighters Association
WWII Night Fighters

Conferences

Night Fighters of World War II Reunion.

Subjects (General)

Night fighter planes
World War, 1939-1945 – Aerial operations
World War, 1939-1945 – Veterans – United States
Black Widow (Night fighter plane)

Material Types:

Audiotapes
Photographs
Newsletters

Collection Inventory

Box	File	Description	Date
Series I: Kent Blyler Papers			Undated
1	1	A Night Fighter Poem	Undated
Series II: Robert W. Boucher Papers			1943-1946
1	2	Pilots' Tests and Certificates	1943 Sep.-1946 Dec.
1	3	Squadron Reports of the 421st N.F.S.	1944 Sep.
1	4	Squadron Reports of the 548th N.F.S.	1945 Jun.-Aug.
1	5	Individual Flight Records	1943 Mar.-1946 Dec.
1	6	Photographs of P-61 and crews	Undated
1	7	Miscellaneous papers	1943 Oct.-1945 Feb.
Series III: Don Dessert Papers			1976
1	8	"Night Lightning," Air Classics	1976 Aug.
Series IV: Dick Ehlert Papers			1942-1944
1	9	Chronology of the 6th N.F.S.	1942 July-1944 Feb.
Series V: Joe Gonzales Papers			1943
1	10	Chronology of the 417th N.F.S.	1943 Feb.-Oct.
Series VI: Edward F. Jones Papers			1944-1945
1	11	Rosters, Transfer Orders, and Commendations	1944 Mar.-1945 Oct.
Series VII: George R. Ludlow Photographs			1945
1	12	Photographs of World War II Holocaust	1945 May
Series VIII: William C. Odell Papers			1942
1	13	Photographs, Individual Flight Record, and one page from diary	1942
Series IX: Earl Tigner Photographs			1945
1	14	Photographs of Iwo Jima and the 549th N.F.S.	1945
	ms120_e0008	Digitized images of Iwo Jima and the 549th N.F.S.	1945
Series X: Thomas C. Tillman Papers			1970-1971
1	15	Papers of Lt. Col. Thomas Tillman	1970 Dec.-1971 Feb.
Series XI: Gordon T. Timmons Interview			1978
1	16	Interview with Gordon Timmons (one cassette tape)	1978

Box	File	Description	Date
Series XII: Night Fighters' Reunion			1978 June 30-July 2
1	17	Night Fighters Reunion (two cassette tapes)	1978 June 30-July 2
1	18	Night Fighters Reunion (one reel-to-reel tape)	1978 June 30-July 2
Series XIII: Gary Olson Drawings			1988
2	1	Numbered Certificate for Gary Olson Drawings	1988
OS 4	9	Northrop P-61B by Gary Olson	1988
2	10	Douglas P-70 by Gary Olson	1988
2	11	deHavilland Mosquito	1988
2	12	Bristol Beaufighter	1988
Series XIV: Earl Tigner Books on P-61			2006
2	2	List of 4 Northrop P-61 books cataloged into collection	2006
Series XV: WW II Night Fighters Records			1942-2001
2	3	Articles of Incorporation and Tax Status	1984
2	4	Organization Dissolution	2000-2001
2	5	Roster of Squadron Representatives	1996
2	6	State of California Tax Exemption	1988-2000
2	7	Financial Statements	1994-2000
2	8	Check Registers	1988-1998
2	9	Tax Return	1997
2	10	Tax Return	1998
2	11	Tax Return	1999
2	12	Tax Return	2000
2	13	Memorabilia Price Guide	1998
2	14	Correspondence: Donations	1998-2001
2	15	Correspondence: Organization Tax Exemption	1991-1994
2	16	Correspondence: Assumption of Office	1997
3	1	Historical Material	1942-1945
3	2	Constitution and Organizational Chart	Undated
3	3	History of Organization	1959
3	4	Minutes	1958-1959
3	5	Minutes	1986, 1990-1998
3	6	Financial Material	1986-2000
3	7	Convention Material	1968, 1988-2000
3	8	Convention 2000: Registration Roster	2000
3	9	History of Night Fighters	Undated
Series XVI: Frank Bosch Papers			1943-2004
3	10	Roster of Night Fighters	1943, 1994, 2003
3	11	Newsletter	1970-2000
3	12	"The Dim View"	1943

Box	File	Description	Date
3	13	“The Rendezvous”	1955, 1966, 1968
3	14	Correspondence	1955
4	1	Correspondence	1957-1958
4	2	Correspondence: Night Fighter Convention	1958
4	3	Correspondence	1959
4	4	Correspondence	1959
4	5	Correspondence	1960, 1994-2003
4	6	Correspondence: Frank L. Bosch	1968-2003
4	7	Speeches	1957, Undated
4	8	Memorial Programs	1989-1996
4	9	Death Notices	Undated
4	10	Photographs	Undated
4	11	Articles about Night Fighters	Undated
4	12	Unknown Articles	1943-1945, 1983-1992
4	13	Photographs	Undated
4	14	Eulogy	2004
Series XVII: William Graham Papers			1942-1992
4	15	Photographs	1942, Undated
4	16	Biography and Records	1944, 1978, 1992
Series XVIII: Richard Dawson Papers			1942-1945
5	1	Enlistment Papers & Special Orders	1942 Apr.
5	2	Photographs of 415 th Night Fighter Squadron	1943-1945
Series XIX: Night Fighters’ Reunion			2007 Sep. 17-18
5	3	Newsletter, including captions for PDF of photographs in ms120_e0007	2007 Sep. 17-18
ms120_e0002- ms120_e0005		Speaker Videos, DVDs 1-4	2007 Sep. 17-18
ms120_e0006		Photographs (400+ JPG files)	2007 Sep. 17-18
ms120_e0007		Photographs PDF (283 pages)	2007 Sep. 17-18