

The
Greatest
Pilot

by Samuel Warren

Now honestly, I never thought I would do this. I had no idea, yet now I am a World War II flying ace. I started off as a farm boy, poor and always hungry, until harvest time, of course. Then some soldiers came and took me away. I haven't seen my family since. When I was 16 they said I was going to be a pilot. "You have good reflexes", my instructor said once, and it was true. Back at the farm I could kill a fly, like you could add two-plus-two equals four. And I love to fly. I already knew what airplanes were, but I didn't know how to fly one. My favorite type of airplane is the P-51 Mustang, though I am flying the Corsair F-4U. When I was still young, I was shot down. Now if you are interested in this sort of thing, ask me about it. I was cruising in the air, just practicing, when suddenly five enemy planes surrounded my plane. Now, I already had had three years of training, but there were five of them. I shot down two, but the other three shot me down. I was lucky I survived and made it back to safety, but I broke my leg, arm and nose. Halfway through the stage of healing, my flying instructor, who

carries the name of Frank, came to see me. "You are lucky have gotten out of there alive, Brian!", he said. "I know, I know. Let me ask you, did any of the planes, were any of them green?" "Yup, that was the main plane that shot me down." "I hate the Green Falcon." "Oh, and there was one other", I said, as he was turning to leave. "Yes"? There was one with a red cross. I remember that guy. I was going to get shot down by him but since I stuck with him I didn't get killed. So now here I am. But he gave me something. And he took off his shirt and there on his back was a scar the size a baseball bat. I was so stunned, I couldn't talk. I asked him how did you get that? He replied, Brian, nobody's ever asked that because nobody's ever seen that. I night I had that close call, I woke up and I was in a plane. A bomber I think and I was tied up. I instantly knew what was going on. I was taken by that guy. they tortured me to know what I knew. They used red hot steel, a knife and a bull whip, Oh, and they used a screw press. The red hot steel and bull whip were most active though the knife hurt much also. I told them some of what I know, not including the flight plans, in which they say what, where, why, how and most importantly when.

Now, when I was able to fly again and I was healed up, one day I was practicing flight drills with my squadron. I am a flight leader of 25 fighters, protecting a total of 20 bombers. That day, when I was practicing air drills, we did something I'll never forget. We were practicing a formation, when we spotted an enemy plane, what we also call a bogie. Obviously, we shot it down, but one pilot said, "Sir, does that look like a postal plane to you?" "Yes, that is a postal plane." So we followed it down. It was smoking, but not too badly. We took the men out of the postal plane, and the mail as well. When we got back, the men in the plane told us what they knew. They didn't know much, but the mail told us a lot. There was an envelope mailed to an Admiral, and when we opened it up, the navigator gasped. I said, "What's going on?" "That letter, sir, is a map to a small town with a secret factory that makes enemy planes, and is one of the main factories for enemy planes." I said, "That factory makes bogies?" "What's a bogie?", asked a nugget. (A nugget is pilot who has just earned his wings, a new pilot) "A bogie is an enemy plane."

The next morning my squadron and the bomber crews gathered

around. The night before we had gathered more information, also from the letter. Part of the letter read:

"Sir, there are fighters in groups of five, each a mile apart. Surrounding that area are about 100 planes, of which 50 are on the ground, always pointing towards the runway, ever ready for takeoff. Although they are gathering dust because they aren't being used, that could all change, but only if the Americans intercept this letter. Then, they could attack."

We were discussing a raid, and we got many of those despised "no, that's suicide!" sort of looks. I talked them into it, though. We all agreed to do something no squadron had ever done. We were going to raid, ***tomorrow night!***

"Good luck, Brian," said my flight instructor. I was feeling pretty nervous, since I was going on an extremely dangerous raid. The date was

September 7, 1942. We checked our planes, got in, and started the engines. Like usual, we had to wait a few seconds for our propellers to start up. But they were running very well, so we taxied and took off. I was feeling very nervous about the raid. 'Remember Brian, don't fly in a straight line', I thought to myself. We were in the air now, and all of a sudden, I saw three bogies out of the corner of my eye. They were pretty close, only about a mile away, and that's close when you are flying a plane. I said on my radio, "Peter, I am pulling closer to those bogeys over there, over." Replied the navigator, "It wouldn't surprise me that you would see those bogeys. The town is pretty close." "Well, I'm pulling over for a closer look", I said. I went over, and they surrounded me, and one pulled up over me, from the left, got on my tail, and shooting at me. "Shoot! He's on my tail!" "Goddgangit!" "All right, just hit the brakes and he'll fly right by", I said out loud. I stopped the accelerator and he flew right past, and I accelerated and got on his tail. I shot his wing, and that blew him up. "Come and get some planes over here, and don't be lazy!", I yelled. Four planes came in and shot down the two that were left over. "Whew!", I sighed, wiping my forehead. "That was close." "You should watch yourself, Brian." "And

you should send me some help over a little faster, next time." "Brian," one of the other pilots said over the radio, "you are a *really* good pilot!" "Why should I send some help over, when you could down three?", he asked. "What if there were ten of them?" I asked. "Good point", he said.

We were communicating on the radio the whole time, and didn't notice five more bogeys at our 5 o'clock position until a pilot from one of my bombers noticed them. "Bogies, 5 o'clock!" he said. "Cheese and rice, there are bogies everywhere", one pilot exclaimed. I banked to the left, followed by three other planes, to give the bandits what they needed. They banked to the right, in an attempt to get on our tails, and we followed them, got on their tails instead, and fired our guns. I hit one of their wings, and it blew up. The other guys shot the rest down. "That was easy", said a pilot. "It's not as easy as it looks." "Really?" he asked. "Really really", I replied. We were cruising at 30,000 feet now, and the navigator suddenly called out, "Keep your guns loaded, boys!" "Wow, that's closer than I thought", I said.

Suddenly 30 bandits came out of the clouds, from nowhere. "Shoot!"

I said loudly. "We're going to need everyone here, excepting the bombers!" "Roger that", said a pilot. My whole squadron rolled to the left, and then scattered. "There's bandits everywhere!" a pilot exclaimed. "Yes, I'm aware of the that", I replied. Two of them passed over my head, and they got on my tail. "How about a little help here?" "Sorry, we can't," replied a pilot. "You're going to have to do it yourself." I slowed down, and sure enough, they flew past. I got on their tails and shot them down! By then a lot of the bandits had been either shot down, or, had flown out of the aerial battle. There were only two left, which were taken care of easily by some of my squadron. "That's just too close," said a pilot from a bomber. "It's closer than you think," I said. "One minute 'till target," called the navigator. Suddenly, 70 bandits flew into the sky. "SHOOT!", I shouted. "This ain't good," I said. "Everybody attack!", I yelled into my microphone. It was 25 against 70. You would think we would lose right away, but if you have seen the movie **300**, you would think differently. We were like those mighty Spartans, except we were pilots. Two flew over my head to join the five ahead of me, which became seven. I shot at them horizontally, so that they would be shot at side-to-side. They fell down and blew up.

“Nice going!”, called a pilot. By then there were only 50 of them left. I banked right, toward their formation, followed by nine other planes. I went toward 25 of them, whom didn’t notice me at all because they were busy trying to shoot down our bombers. I shot again horizontally, but from both sides. Only until they began losing a plane *every second* did they notice me. Five planes turned around, but were shot down before they could breathe. As for the others, they had already taken care of the rest of the bandits. “Nice going, man!”, they praised me. “Bombs away!”, the navigator called out. We dropped the bombs and got out of there. As for the rest of the flight, we had a smooth journey. I went back to the base, and suddenly I was a hero in aviation history. One day I said to myself, ‘Do I have to be a hero? I didn’t plan to, but it looks like I did.’

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