

417th Night Fighter Squadron Illustrated History

Addendum



The Black Widow*

SNARES AN AXIS "FLY"!



* Black Widow is the name of America's newest, most deadly night fighter... the cartoon-flying P-61

An Axis raider dromes toward its target, unaware that far ahead... the Black Widow is waiting! Busy Axis hands prepare to release their cargo of destruction. Straining Axis eyes peer out into the night... where the Black Widow is waiting! But they see nothing, no sign of danger, until suddenly... a huge, dark shape appears from nowhere! There's a burst of cannon fire, a blinding explosion, an Axis plane flaming downward... the Black Widow has struck!

The P-61 Black Widow is the first American plane to be designed, from the very beginning, as a night fighter. It has everything...

speed to catch an enemy unawares, electronic devices to search in the dark, fire-power enough to pulverize anything that flies!

Fire-power is our specialty at Oldsmobile. Automatic aircraft cannon, such as we have built by the tens of thousands, help give the Black Widow its "poisonous sting." Other Oldsmobile war products include cannon for tanks and tank destroyers, high-explosive and armor-piercing shell, parts for aircraft engines and heavy-duty military vehicles... plus other "censored" weapons which are already doing much to "Keep 'Em Firing!"

The Widow's
MIGHT
is Fire-Power!

The Black Widow packs the Fire-Power of fast-firing 20 mm. automatic aerial cannon that can smash any enemy plane that flies.

YOUR BONDS HELP PROVIDE IT

Give our fighting men the Fire-Power they need to fight with. Buy more War Bonds and Stamps to Keep 'Em Firing!

OLDSMOBILE DIVISION OF GENERAL MOTORS

FIRE-POWER IS OUR BUSINESS!

At the 417th NFS Reunion in Reno, NV, September 11, 2001 a number of Squadron members brought their personal scrapbooks and allowed scanning their best pictures for the Squadron History. The following pages present a selection of those pictures, ones otherwise new to the available history of the Squadron and its men. The entire collection of 108 new photos is included in the photo CD-ROM. Our thanks to Squadron members Terry Carter, Jack Chooljian, Morris Dalton, Earl "Sleepy" Hissett, and Mike Lamoreau for sharing their memories with us all.

From Jack Chooljian's Photos



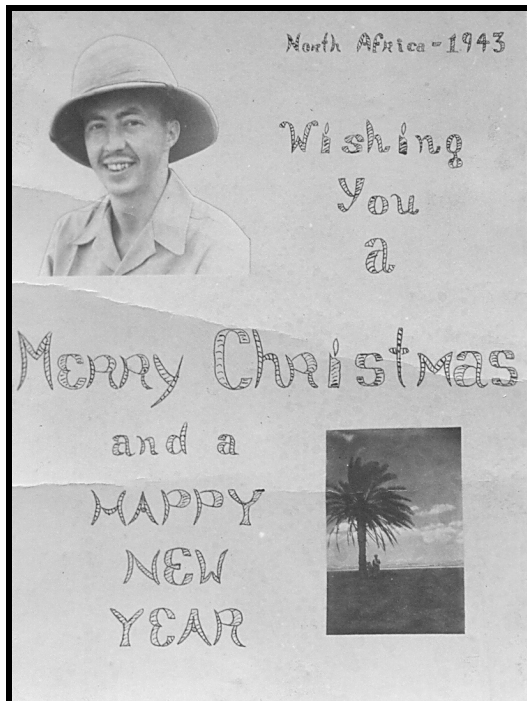
Our Camp, Hollywood" on Corsica, January 1944. Notice the "Lister" bag on the tripod out front. The water tasted bad, but that was all there was.



Jack is in the deep shadows, while working on Beau "Lois Mae II". The Squadron followed many British conventions, including placing "nose art" on the starboard side of the fuselage.



The 417th NFS fielded excellent ball teams throughout the entire war. This is the team when in Tifarouhi.

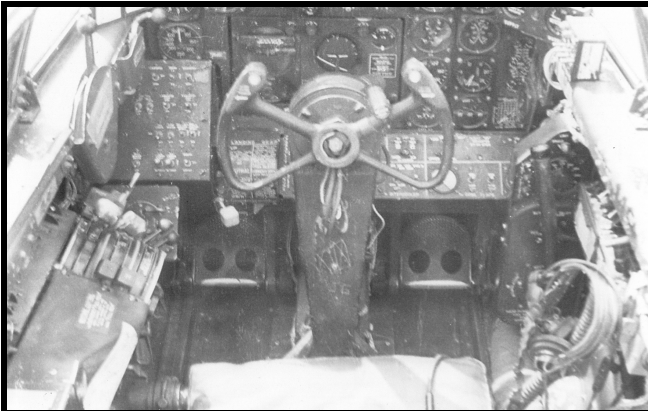


No one knew when this Christmas card was used by the Squadron in 1943 how many more would be sent before they made it home. There would be four Christmas cards.

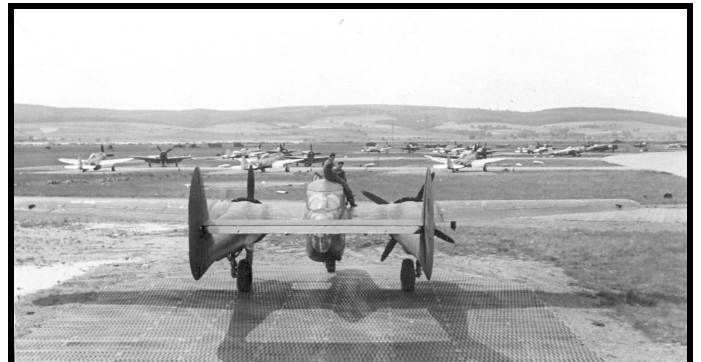
From Morris Dalton's Photos



P-61 Flight Line in Germany. Note the mix of both turret equipped and flat-top airplanes.



Cockpit of the Northrop P-61. A busy place at night and in bad weather.



Even from the rear the P-61 was an attractive aircraft.



German Messerschmitt Me 410 and the similar Me 210 were often the nighttime adversaries for the 417th nightfighters.



From Morris Dalton's Photos

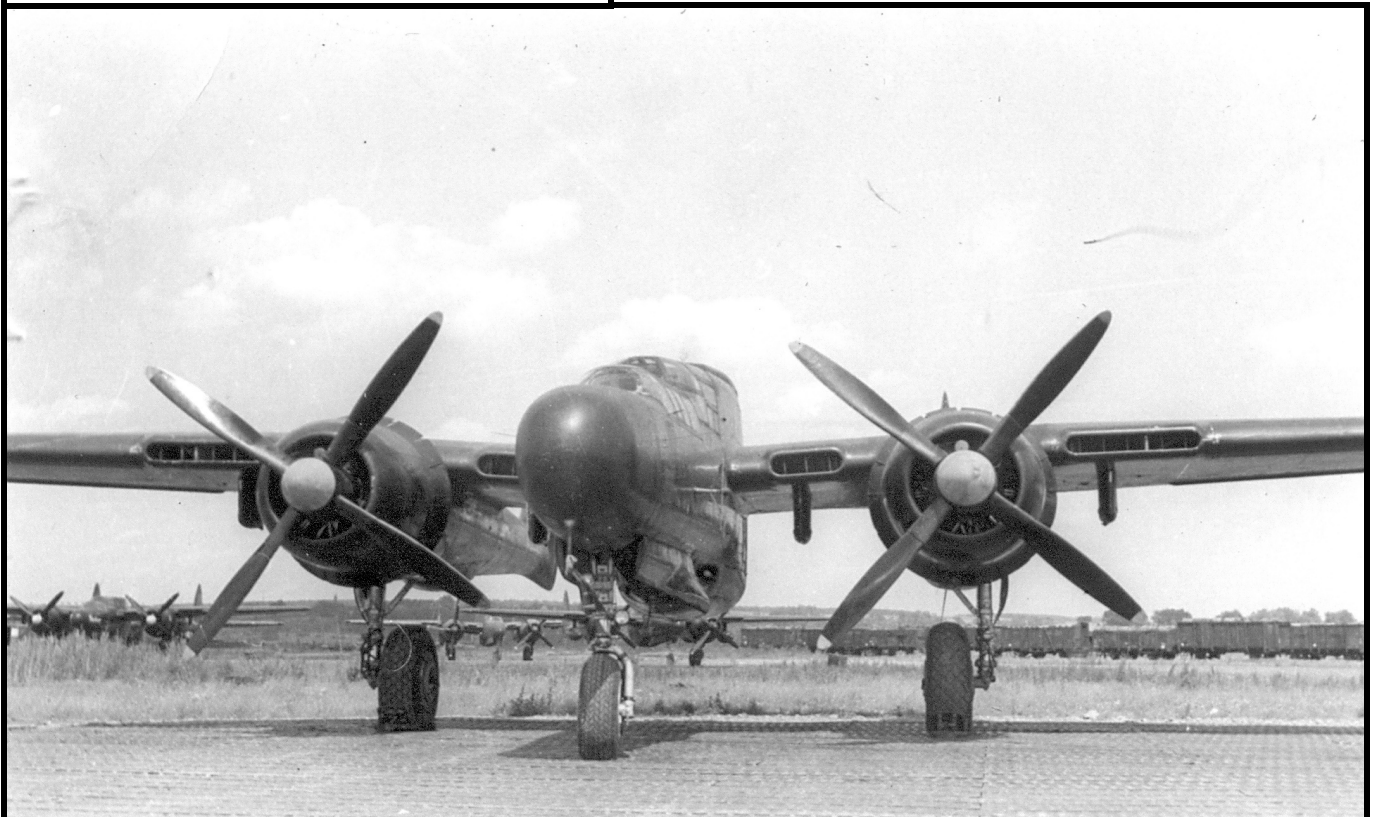


417th NFS P-61B



Bob Condon with the Squadron AT-6 trainer, used for proficiency and administrative duties.

Another 417th NFS Black Widow, in fresh gloss black paint.



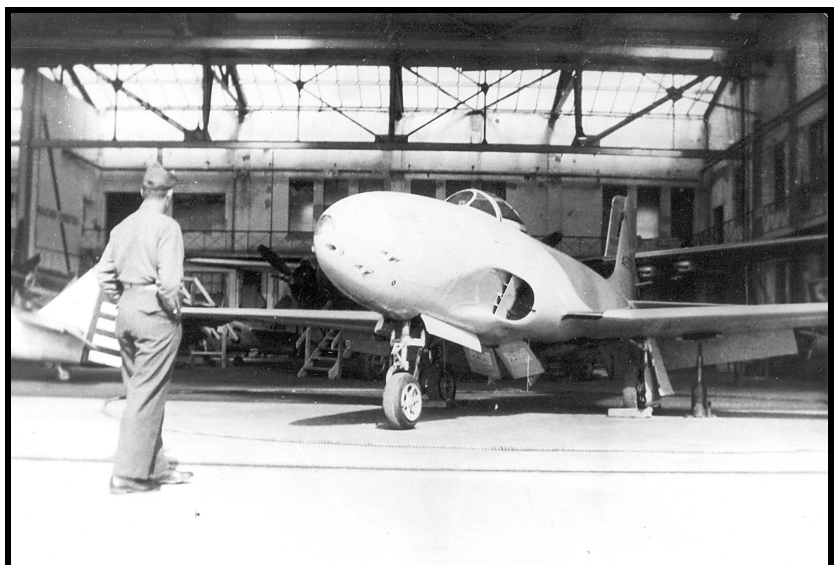
From Mike Lamoreau's Photos



417th NFS P-61 "Carolyn"



417th NFS Ground Crew in North Africa



A visit by one of the first Lockheed P-80 jet fighters in Europe, while the Squadron was at Schweinfurt..

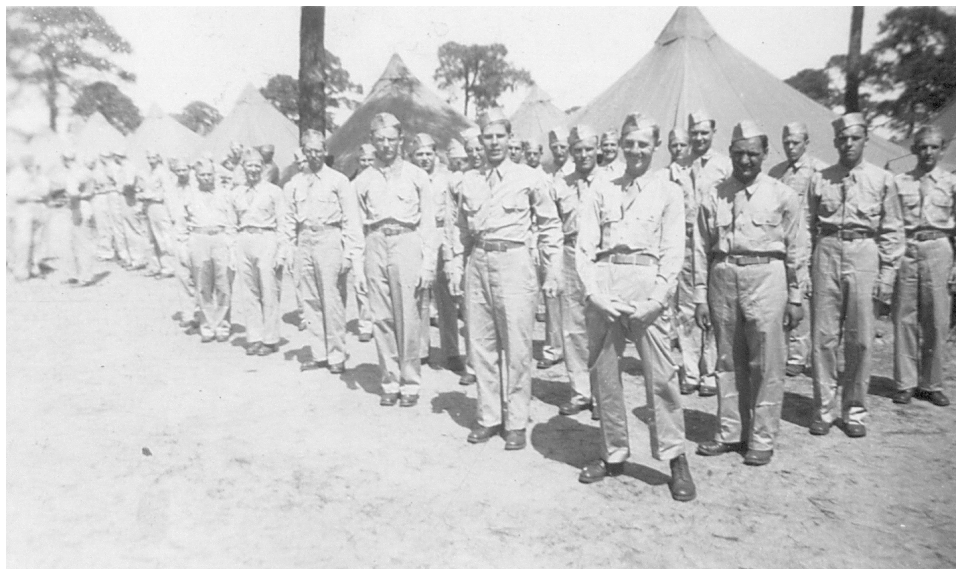
From Earl “Sleepy” Hissett’s Photos



Crew Chief “Sleepy” Hissett with his first Beaufighter, T3227, still in its British codes U-YD.



“Sleepy” with John’s Beaufighter, named “Hi Doc”



The Squadron forming up at Kissimmee, Florida, spring 1943.

From Earl “Sleepy” Hissett’s Photos



John (?) and Rich Ziebert in North Africa with a Beaufighter Mk VI fitted with the new Mk VIII AI radar.



417th NFS Flight Line Shack. Typical of Army temporary structures is this classic “tarpaper” shack. “Sleepy” is holding back one of the walls.



Hastings, “Sleepy” and “Snow Job” with one of the “liberated” cars that were with the Squadron in France for a

From Earl “Sleepy” Hissett’s Photos



Ed Arikie in front of Bosshart's Beau while doing a runup in France.



One of the new P-61s at LeVallon, France.

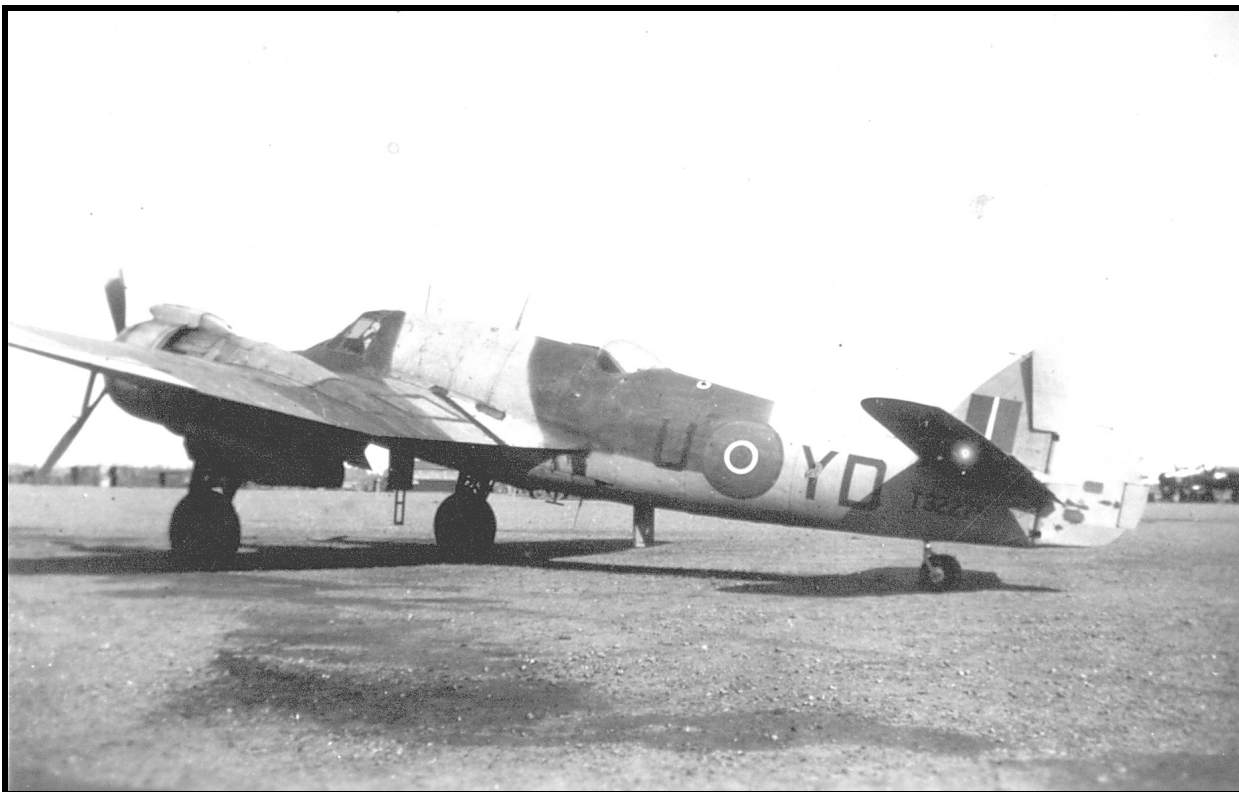


March 1945 the first of the new P-61s on the LeVallon flight line, next to Beaufighter V8828. Note the “Hi Doc” fuselage artwork.

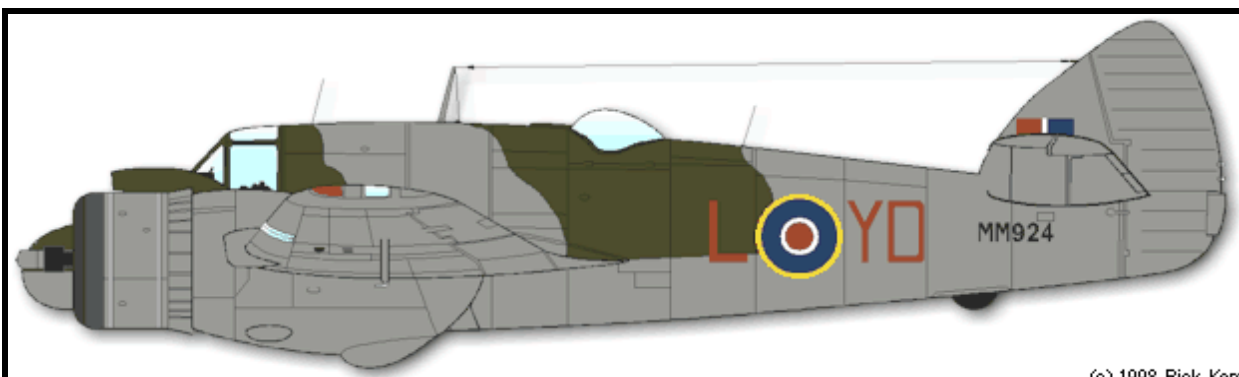


P-61 in flight over Arel, France. View is from the RO's position.

From Earl “Sleepy” Hissett’s Photos



Another view of one of the Beaufighters “Sleepy” crewed, T3227, recently turned over by the British and still wearing its old fuselage RAF 255 Squadron codes U-YD assigned when located at Bo Rizzo, Sicily through August 1943. This aircraft was originally built as a Beaufighter Mk IF, and then refitted to the Mk VIF standard and equipped with radar. The comments by 417th NFS members that their Beaufighters were war weary castoffs dating from the Battle of Britain (Fall-Winter 1940-1941) are validated by this picture.



(c) 1998 Rick Kent

This painting of a RAF 255 Squadron Beaufighter Mk VIF is most interesting. Found on the internet, the accompanying story relates as how it went into service with 255 Squadron in August 1943 while the Squadron was located at Bo Rizzo, Sicily. The serial number MM924 shows it to be a recently produced aircraft, and when issued to the British squadron obviously allowed them to reissue their old airplanes to the new USAAF squadrons (414th, 415th, 416th, and 417th NFS) just arriving in the Theatre.

From Terry Carter's Photos



P-61 "Midnight Menace" #594 with Lt. N.C. Wheeler and Rich Ziebart doing the work



"Lucky" the Squadron Mascot at Rothwestern, Germany.



End of the line for the 417th NFS *Black Widows* was at Schweinfurt, Germany in 1946. Several Squadron members had been on a mission to Switzerland in an effort to sell them on obtaining and operating P-61s as a part of their defense forces. The men had a good time on the trip, but there was no help for the *Black Widows*.