



The Great Rat Race For Europe: Stories of the 357th Fighter Group Sortie Number One

Joey Maddox

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The Great Rat Race for Europe: Stories of the 357th Fighter Group (Sortie One) tells the true stories of the Yoxford Boys of the 357th Fighter Group; arguably the best Army Air Force fighter group in the European Theater during World War Two. Aces Kit Carson, Bud Anderson, Johnny England, Pete Peterson, Chuck Yeager and others from this elite group of "tigers" eventually became famous after the war, while other Yoxford Boys just melted back into the scenery that was the American post war years. Those were the lucky ones as scores of these brave, young American lads flying their P-51 Mustangs into combat against the Luftwaffe never saw home again as the result of this epic air war over Europe. Their stories are all here including Leonard "Kit" Carson's account of The Great Rat Race which helped to break the back of the Luftwaffe (from his fantastic book Pursue and Destroy), the strange and sad end of decorated fighter ace Dittie Jenkins who safely returned from his last mission against the Nazis only to be killed while celebrating with an impromptu air show over Station 373 at Leiston, and the first hand account of life in a Stalag Luft (prisoner of war camp) with Colonel Henry Spicer, the irascible commanding officer of the American section of the POW camp (and one-time 357th Fighter Group Commanding Officer) who drove the German officers to the brink with his rock solid spirit of rebellion and the love and admiration of his men. Fly into weather so thick that the ducks are walking with Pete Peterson, one of the leading aces of the Group, as he walks you through a hair-raising landing on Leiston Field with zero visibility and three inexperienced pilots on his wing. Then 357th fighter pilot Joe Shea recaptures the common boredom ridden hours and terror stricken moments faced by replacement pilots of the Group during their first combat missions, including Shea's account of his last encounter, eyeball to eyeball, with a German pilot in an Me-262 jet fighter as it slid over his wing and lined up perfectly in his gun sight. Relive the greatest (as well as the worst) days of the 8th Air Force's first long range Mustang fighter outfit in short stories written by the pilots of the 357th Fighter Group, their families, and this author in this collection of memories and tall tales of the famous Yoxford Boys.

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