

Aug 29, 1994

Collier County Museum
3301 Tamiami Trail East
Naples, Florida 33962

Reference Diane's phone call to me a few days ago, I am enclosing ten (10) photos taken during my assignment to Naples Air Base during the period December 1944 until the end of November 1945.

These are the only mementos I have of my stay in Naples, and I ask you to please return them to me after you have copied them.

Our mission at Naples Air Base, where we flew P-39 Airacobras and P-63 Kingcobras, was to provide training for gunners on B-24 and B-29 aircraft stationed at Buckingham Air Base, Ft. Myers. We had orange colored, armor-plated P-63's in which we flew curves of pursuit against the B-24's and B-29's. Their gunners would fire frangible (plastic) bullets at us. Whenever a bullet struck our aircraft,

a light would illuminate in the nose of our aircraft so the gunner could see his accuracy, and a device in our fighter's would register each hit. Consequently, our armor-plated P-63's were called "Pinball Machines."

I cannot locate any orders (paperwork) listing names of other pilots assigned there during this period. I do remember my commanding officer's last name was Wojcik (not certain of spelling). I also had a good friend named Pat Treacy who was from Upper Montclair, New Jersey.

Sometime in 1945 - around June - we rode out a hurricane which came across Miami. All personnel living off base were ordered on base where we spent the night. It was frightening but the greatest force of the storm turned north on the east side of Naples. We flew some of our aircraft to northern locations but could not evacuate all of them so our maintenance personnel dug holes in the sand between the ramps and runway and placed ~~over~~ the wheels of the aircraft in the holes to prevent damage to the aircraft.

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If you intend to publish a book about this era, I would be interested in obtaining a copy.

If I can be of any further help, please contact me.

Sincerely

Norman J. Bittner



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