

I can't remember exactly when I heard this story, but it has stuck with me for at me for at least 50 yrs. Two photos previously sent and included in the album relate to this story. The picture of (Lt.) Col. Gormly and Gen. Spatz fixes the time as early 1943, soon after Sam relieved Col. Walker of Command of the 301st taken on the day of the event, and around the same the picture of the British Spitfire pilots (note the sweaters) was taken.

Provided by Jim Gormly, nephew

A Great Day for the Germans

Not long after Sam assumed command, Gen. Spatz scheduled an inspection of the 301st. Because of the limited air fields and close proximity of the Front, the Germans had not yet been driven out of North Africa, in addition to the 301st, the field was shared with one American P38 Squadron and one British Spitfire Squadron. The General was flying out from his headquarters in an unarmed Twin Beach. As his plane was making its approach the Air Raid Alarm sounded. The two fighter squadrons immediately responded, as it turned out the Americans were at the upwind end of the field while the Brits were at the downwind end. Under normal conditions the Americans had the "right of way" for normal takeoffs, but the Brits some of whom had been in the Battle of Britten had no intention of getting caught on the ground. As the General's pilot lowered his gear he was suddenly confronted with a element of Spitfires heading down the runway towards him.

The Twin Beach was about to touch down so the pilot decided not to abort, almost immediately upon landing he attempted turn off the active runway, but his speed was to great and he ground looped the Beachcraft. Sam who had been waiting for the General's arrival was horrified at the utter disaster, which in a way reflected upon him as the senior officer at the field. Immediately he and others raced to the scene of the crash and forced open the cabin door of the Beachcraft and extracted the General, who although a bit shaken, was uninjured. Once out of the plane, according to Sam , the General stood up, took off his garrison cap threw it to the ground and exclaimed "***God Damn, what a Great Day for the Germans. "***"