

All-Negro Fighter Squadron Ready For Action

They're tough, smart and rarin' to go. Meet the flying "Black Panthers"



Oscoda air base on Lake Huron's sandy pine shores is unique among Army posts. Readying itself there for combat is the only all-Negro group of fighter pilots in the world.

The men received their primary and advanced training and last fall won their wings at the new \$2,000,000 airfield in Tuskegee, Ala. At Oscoda, sub-base of big Selfridge Field near Detroit, they polish up their flight and gunnery tactics. Next step will be the ultimate test of their training and courage: pursuit and battle in the skies over Europe and Asia. These pictures of one of the squadrons are first to be taken during the final, critical, and dangerous stage preceding combat.

'At this period, as before, their duty routine duplicates that of every U. S. fighter squadron. Off-duty, they "shoot the breeze" in the pilots' room, in the two-bed "hutments," the mess hall. Or they pile into cars and go to one of the nearest villages for a movie or bowling. The quiet resort towns have welcomed the Oscoda men with warm sincerity:

The pilots come from all parts of the United States. Almost all are college graduates, a number of them leaving professions to join the Air Forces. Most of them now hope to make it their lifetime career. How do they fly and fight? Intelligently, bravely, and skillfully, their instructors say. Some exceed and some only equal the high average the U. S. requires of its fighting airmen—just as is true of any other American squadron.

They undoubtedly will reach a combat area this summer. One squadron of Negro pilots—the 99th—has arrived overseas already. The Oscoda pilots, whose insignia is a flame-spewing black panther, are rarin' to join them. They want to roar a personal answer to the Axis "race superiority" lies.



ARMORERS LOAD P-40 with .50-calibre ammunition and guns which give this plane its fearful, converging fire. Bullets go in tops of wings, guns are inserted from below. Crew here belongs to 96th Service Group, which maintains Oscoda fighter group's ships.



VERY PILOT should know the effects of a diminishing oxygen supply as he climbs in battle. Capt. J. P. Ramsey, of Philadelphia, Pa., group surgeon (left) reviews the facts with the aid of a blackboard in room where pilots keep chutes and other flying gear.

Hard work, college, and athletics helped mold these pilots



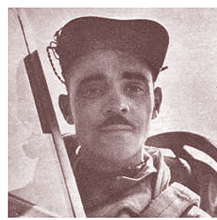
SQUADRON LEADER, the 100th's key man, is Lt. George L. Knox, 26, of Indianapolis—"Skipper" to the other pilots. He's graduate of Fisk U.



SECOND in squadron command is operations officer, Lt. Elwood Driver of Trenton, N. J. Twenty-one years old, he's 100th's youngest member.



LEADER of Flight A is Lt. Robert Deiz, 23, of Portland, Ore. At U. of Oregon he was track star, musician. Most of pilots were college athletes.



LIGHT A operations officer is Lt. Edward C. Gleed, 26, of Lawrence, Kan. Kansas U. alumnus and law student, he first was in cavalry.



FLIGHT C leader, Lt. Melvin T. Jackson, 24, of Warrenton, Va., was intercollegiate boxing champ, put himself through school, worked for FSA.



LT. P. C. VERWAYNE, 25, of N. Y. C., passed AAF's stiff education exams by hard study at home and night college. He's ex-railway mail clerk.

E.O.



LT. H. A. LAWSON, 26, of Marysville, Calif., was intercollegiate boxing champ three years, football end, news cameraman at Fresno State.



LT. COL. S. W. WESTBROOK, of Albany, Ala., is only white officer to be member of unique Negro pursuit group while it trained. He's executive officer.

"Black Panthers"



BULL'S-EYE! SAND CLOUD SHOWS THAT LT. JEROME EDWARD'S FIRE HIT GROUND TARGET

