

Clay W. Baker, Jr.



Clay W. Baker, Jr. Graduated from Garfield High School in 1939. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, he was working at the Goodyear Aircraft Corporation in the sheet metal department. He has always wanted to learn to fly, so he enlisted in the Army Air Forces. However, because he did not meet the minimum weight requirement, the AAF would not accept him. After several more attempts, he was finally accepted. A few days later he received a draft notice for the infantry.



Clay Baker spent 18 weeks in the Army Air Force's College Training Detachment in South Carolina. Training came in five stages.

Classification lasted 1 to 2 weeks and the education and training stages were 9 weeks each. Each 9 week stage was divided into two 4.5 week (63 day) halves: a lower half and an upper half. The lower half was made up of students just beginning the stage and the upper half was made up of the students who were half-finished. The more experienced cadets would (hopefully) help the new cadets get through the section before they were promoted to the next stage.

1. Classification stage processed the cadet and issued him his equipment. This was the stage where it would be decided whether the cadet would train as a navigator, bombardier, or pilot.
2. Pre-Flight stage taught the mechanics and physics of flight and required the cadets to pass courses in mathematics and the hard sciences. Then the cadets were taught to apply their knowledge practically by teaching them aeronautics, deflection shooting, and thinking in three dimensions.
3. Primary Pilot Training taught basic flight using two-seater-training aircraft. Performed at civilian-operated flight schools for primary training. At peak strength there were 56 such schools in operation. The most popular primary trainers were the Stearman PT-13 and PT-17 "Kaydet," the Fairchild PT-19 "Cornell," and the Ryan PT-20 "Recruit."
4. Basic Pilot Training taught the cadets to fly in formation, fly by instruments or by aerial navigation, fly at night, and fly for long distances. Cadets flew aircraft such as the Vultee BT-13 "Valiant" and were evaluated to determine who should go into single-engine advanced training and who should proceed to twin-engine training.
5. Advanced Pilot Training placed the graduates in two categories: single-engined and multi-engined. Single-engined pilots flew fighters and fighter-bombers. Multi-engined pilots learned to fly transports and bombers. First they flew Trainer aircraft, then transitioned to front-line aircraft. Those students selected for single-engine training flew the AT-6 "Texan," and those who went

into twin-engine training flew the Curtiss AT-9 "Jeep," the all-wood Beechcraft AT-10 "Wichita," or the Cessna AT-17 "Bobcat."

Clay Baker earned his wings and a commission as an officer at Moody Field, Georgia. The "newly minted" Second Lieutenant transitioned to the B-17 "Flying Fortress" at Fort Myers, Florida where he was paired with his crew for further training.

In October of 1944, the crew received orders to deploy to England as part of the 8th Air Force. Based at Podington, England with the 92nd Bomb Group (Heavy), Clay Baker flew 35 bombing missions over Hitler's "Fortress Europe". Each bombing mission averaged 8-½ hours round trip. Hundreds of B-17's would form-up over southern England, climb to 20,000 to 30,000 feet and head to their target. Because of the frigid temperatures (down to -50 degrees Fahrenheit) at these altitudes, B-17 crews had to wear heavy, electrically heated flight suits. Oxygen masks were also necessary at these altitudes, but could freeze up causing the pilot or crewman to pass out and possibly die from anoxia (lack of oxygen). As they approach enemy territory, each B-17 became a target for anti-aircraft artillery (FLAK) and enemy fighters. However, because of the tight formation of the bomber group, no evasive action could be taken against these threats.

BAKER, Jr., Clay W. 2nd Lt. 0828907			OPERATIONAL MISSIONS		
(NAME)			(RANK)		
NO.	DATE	TARGET	NO.	DATE	TARGET
1.	31 Dec 44	Hordsh, Ger.	25.	20 MAR 45	HAMBURG, GER.
2.	1 Jan 45	Wilmshurst, Ger.	26.	22 MAR 45	ROTTMUND AERD, GER.
3.	2 Jan 45	Birzburg, Ger.	27.	23 MAR 45	HOFHELDT, GER.
4.	5 Jan 45	Medelmannsh, Ger.	28.	24 MAR 45	ACHNER, GER.
5.	7 Jan 45	Euro-Norckem, Ger.	29.	30 MAR 45	SEE FRAGE, GER.
6.	13 Jan 45	Halsbrun, Ger.	30.	3 APR 45	KIEL, GER.
7.	17 Jan 45	Faderborn, Ger.	31.	4 APR 45	HAMBURG, GER.
8.	21 Jan 45	Flors, Germany	32.	6 APR 45	ROTHENBURG, GER.
9.	27 Jan 45	Koblenz, Ger.	33.	10 APR 45	ROTTMUND AERD, GER.
10.	1 Feb 45	Audunghausen, Ger.	34.	11 APR 45	WILDEN, GERM.
11.	6 Feb 45	Saarlouis, Ger.	35.	25 APR 45	PILSEN, CZECHOSLOVAKIA
12.	16 Feb 45	Dortmund, Ger.	36.		
13.	24 Feb 45	Munich, Ger.	37.		
14.	25 Feb 45	Munich, Ger.	38.		
15.	26 Feb 45	Bevila, Ger.			
16.	27 Feb 45	Leipzig, Ger.			
17.	3 MAR 45	Bolln, Ger.			
18.	3 MAR 45	Chemnitz, Ger.			
19.	7 MAR 45	FULDA, GER.			
20.	7 MAR 45	ESSEN, GER.			
21.	10 MAR 45	LEHN, GER.			
22.	12 MAR 45	BERLIN, GER.			
23.	16 MAR 45	BERLIN, GER.			
24.	16 MAR 45	BRUCH, GER.			

LIST OF LT. BAKER'S 35 BOMBING MISSIONS
 Because of strict security, letters containing any information about missions were censored. So when writing home to his wife, Lt. Baker would enclose a stick of chewing gum to indicate he would be going on another mission.

FLAK, enemy fighters, mid-air collisions, mechanical malfunctions, and fighting the controls of a 4-engined bomber for 8 ½ hours was just another day at the office for Clay W. Baker, Jr.

Clay left active duty on 13 June 1946 and was discharged from the United States Air Force Reserve on 28 September 1957. Clay Baker died on October 4, 1994 in Tallmadge, Ohio.