



Distinguished Flying Cross
Recipient
and
Prisoner of War in Germany

Birth: July 13, 1924

Death: March 23, 2004

John Thomas Golden

Branch: U.S. Army Air Corps

Theatre: WWII

(National has no Citation) Research Information: After escorting bombers to Berlin and not encountering enemy fighters, we did not have to drop our external tanks and had plenty of fuel. We escorted the bombers back to friendly territory and the 479th group broke up into squadrons to pursue targets of opportunity. At our pre-flight briefing, we were advised that there were many planes at a pilot training base in the Danube River Valley. The 434th Squadron, composed of 4 flights of 4 aircraft each, led by Major Olds, headed back to Germany. As we approached the field, this was confirmed. One aircraft was dispatched to make a high speed pass at the flight line while we circled and made notes as to the location of the main defensive gun emplacements that fired on the P-51 on a high-speed pass. The commander kept his flight circling top cover and dispatched 2 flights to take out the 2 gun towers. The fourth flight, of which I was the element leader, was assigned the flight plan destruction duty while the other two flights were keeping the gun towers busy. I made three passes destroying an aircraft each time. Our armament consisted of six 50-caliber machine guns bore sighted to converge on a target 100 yards away with armor piercing bullets and incendiaries every 10th round. The incendiaries would ignite the fuel after we made it leak. Pulling up from my 3rd pass, my wingman informed me I was streaming coolant from the aft coolant radiator. I leveled off and headed for the front lines with my coolant temperature gauge needle going up very rapidly. My 12-cylinder engine overheated and froze up in less than one minute. That was not enough time to make the front lines. I deadsticked, wheels up, belly landed in Germany and became a Prisoner Of War. My three aircraft destroyed that day were confirmed and are the basis for my *Distinguished Flying Cross*.