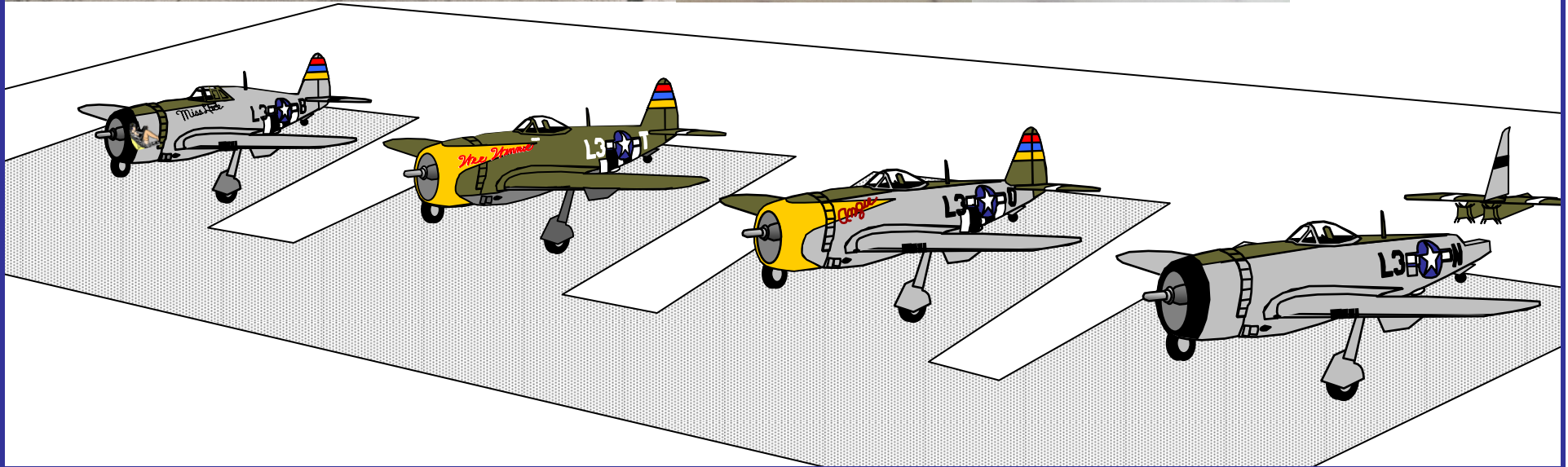


Another 512th Fighter Squadron Diorama

The photo of 2Lt William Cunningham sitting in 42-26860 L3-O at A-80 Mourmelon-le-Grand around Thanksgiving 1944 shows the frozen mud that was soon covered with snow. The other 3-photo sequence shows 44-32749 L3-N getting a replacement horizontal tail. The second event almost certainly occurred during the Battle of the Bulge. The first photo provides the layout and the second set provides the event, time, and weather conditions. Together, they inform the diorama that honors the "Saviors of Bastogne."



I love this photo! It is rich in detail. Every plane has a story and this photo has many hints to those stories.





Left: P-47 44-32749 L3-N pictured in late spring 1945 with full Squadron markings.

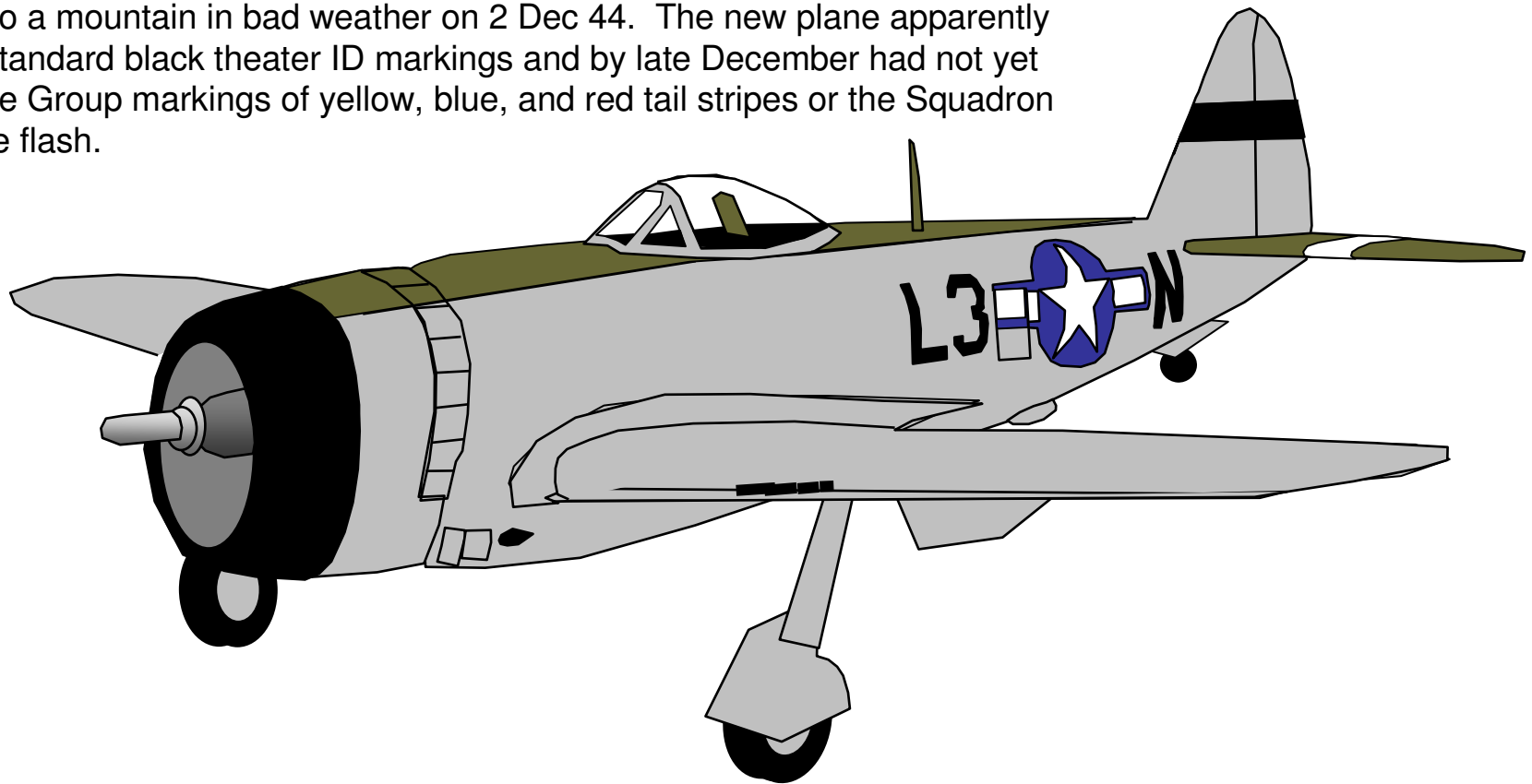
Below:

On 28 December 1944, after 5 days of direct support to the 101st AB Div at Bastogne, the entire 406th Fighter Group had only twelve P-47s that were flyable. The three-photo sequence gives a rare look at the extraordinary efforts expended by the maintainers to get their planes back in the air. Amazing!



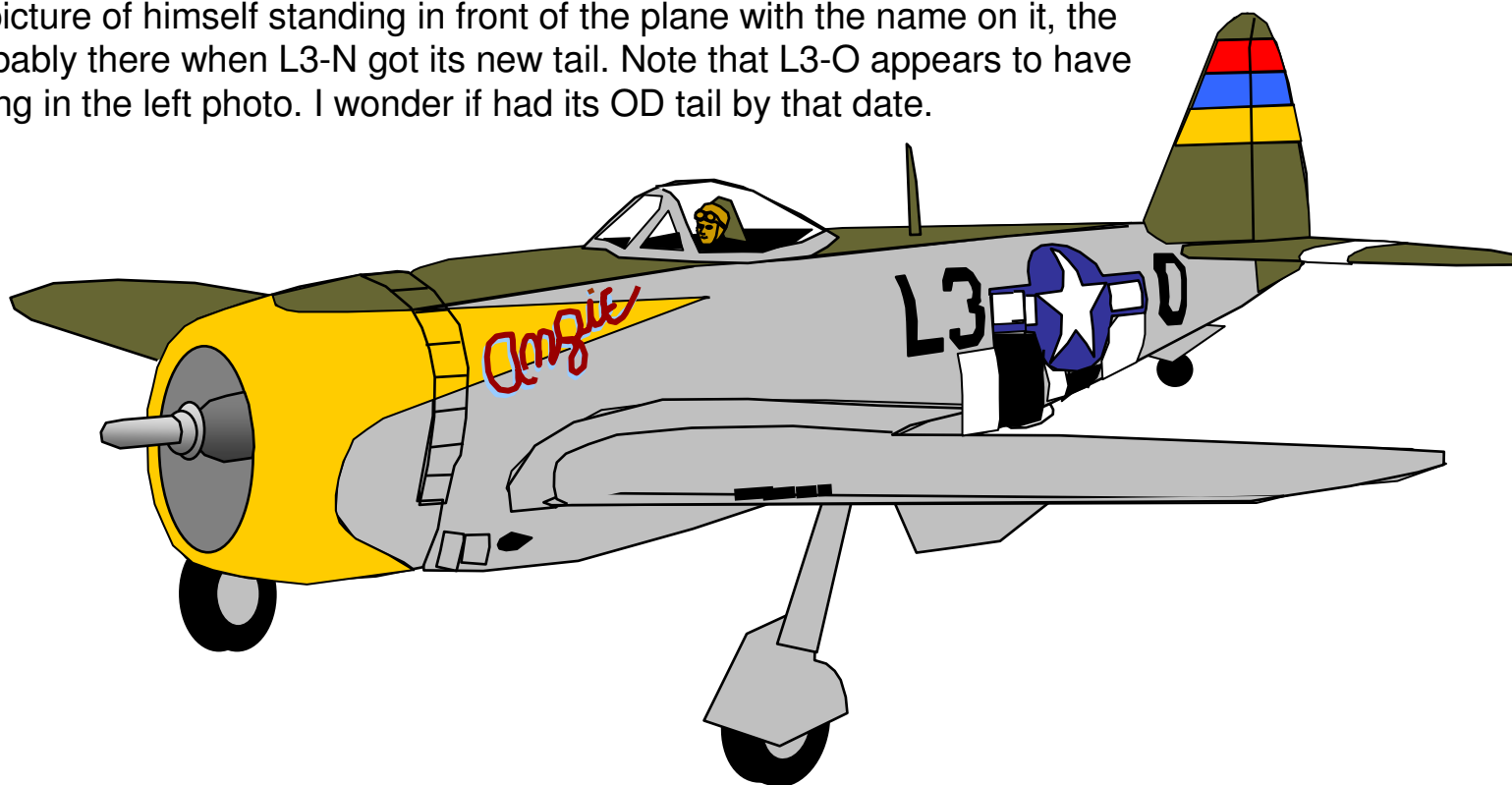


P-47D-30 44-32749 L3-N apparently replaced P-47D-28 42-29179 L3-N which crashed into a mountain in bad weather on 2 Dec 44. The new plane apparently arrived in standard black theater ID markings and by late December had not yet received the Group markings of yellow, blue, and red tail stripes or the Squadron yellow nose flash.





The name "Angie" had not yet been painted on 42-26860 L3-O at the time of the left photo, but since 1Lt Walker Diamanti rotated back to the States on 13 January 1945, and he has a picture of himself standing in front of the plane with the name on it, the name was probably there when L3-N got its new tail. Note that L3-O appears to have an OD right wing in the left photo. I wonder if had its OD tail by that date.





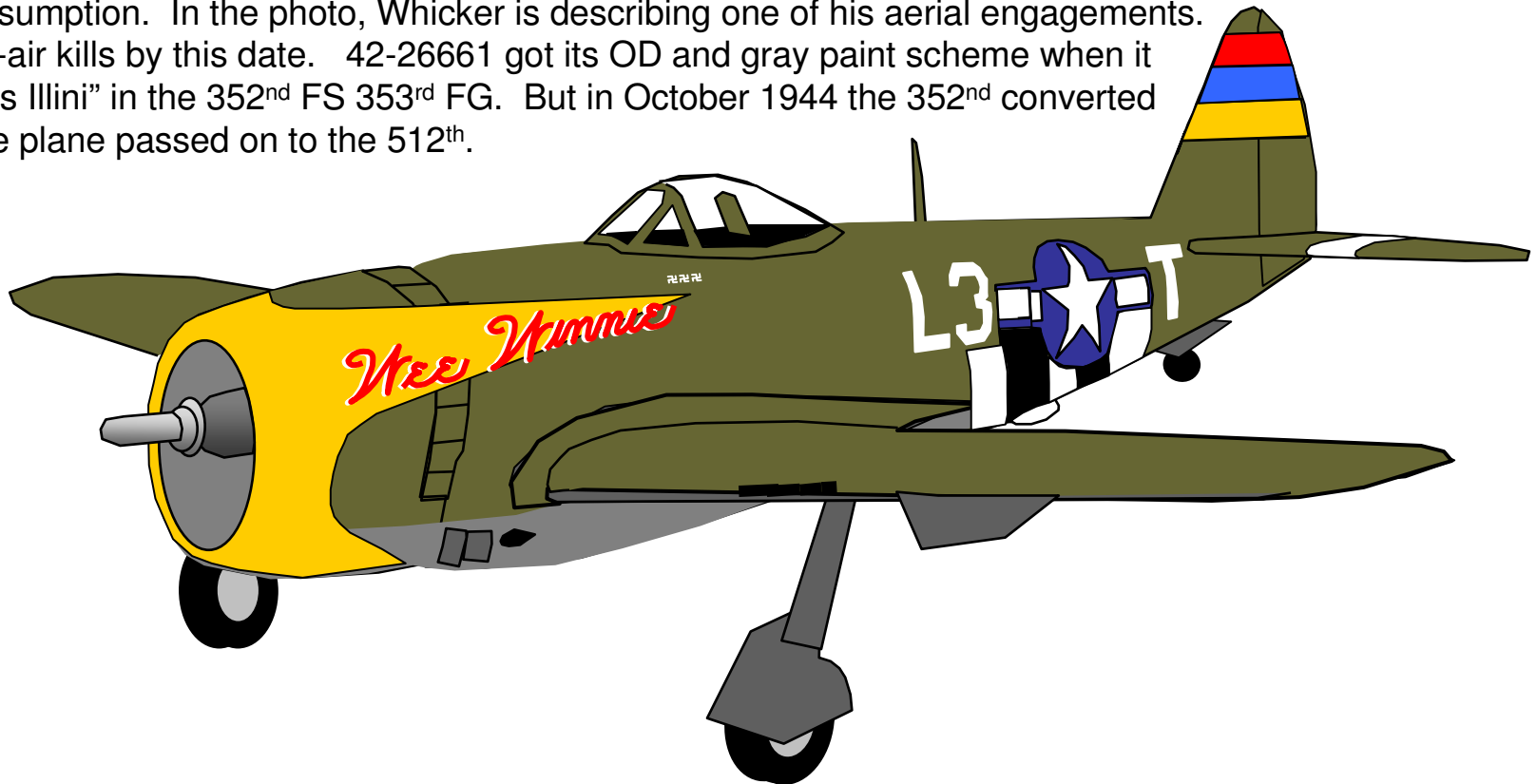
2Lt Donal G. Whicker

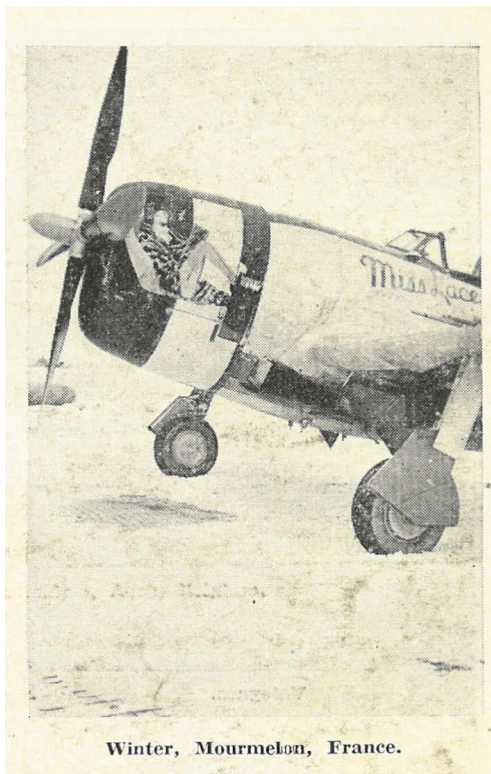


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Wee Winnie was the personal mount of 2Lt Donal (not Donald!) Wicker, one of four pilots in the 512th hailing from Iowa. 9th Air Force public relations staged a photo of the four pilots for home front consumption. In the photo, Whicker is describing one of his aerial engagements. He had 3 air-to-air kills by this date. 42-26661 got its OD and gray paint scheme when it was SX-M "Miss Illini" in the 352nd FS 353rd FG. But in October 1944 the 352nd converted to P-51s, so the plane passed on to the 512th.



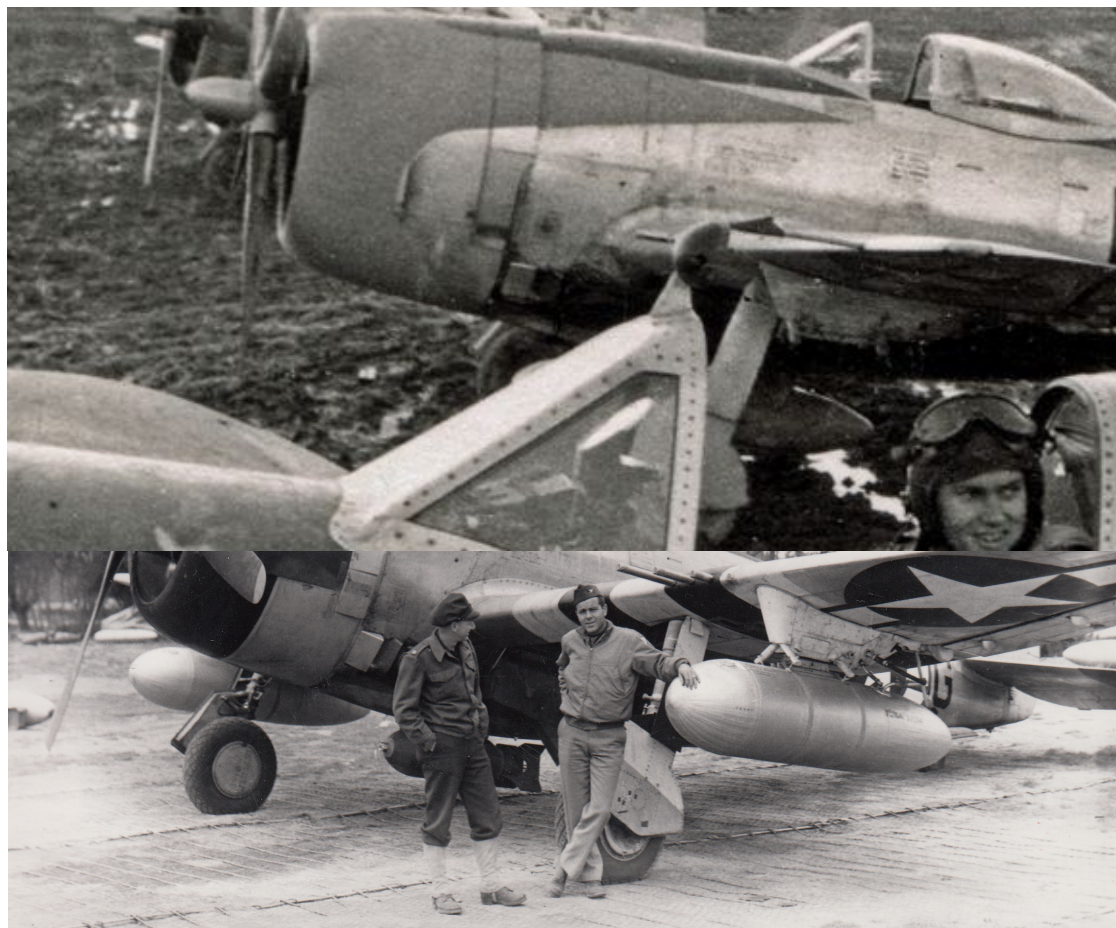


2Lt Donal Wicker in Miss Lace after a flight

One of the more interesting aircraft to serve with the 512th FS at Mourmelon-le-Grand was "Miss Lace," named after the Milt Caniff cartoon character and sporting a very good likeness of her. Apparently the same aircraft as 42-25683 F4-C in the 492nd FS, 48th Fighter Group, I would love to know how this aircraft came to the 512th. In any case, as the yearbook photos show, it was with the 512th during that cold winter of 1944-45 and also still with them at Y-29, Asch, Belgium, in the spring.



Wire Mesh Hardstand – Not PSP



Note how an engine run by “Miss Lace” has blown away the snow under the aircraft’s nose, revealing the characteristic wire mesh hardstand-stabilizing layer. This differs from the layer of mud seen in the November photo, where the mesh, if it is there, has sunk into the mud until it is completely submerged. On the other hand, if the mesh is not there, the mud must be well-frozen or those heavy P-47s would sink much deeper!

