

AAC & AAF Civil Primary Flying Schools 1939-1945

Part V LINCOLN PRIMARY

by Robert F. Schirmer, Col. USAF (Ret.), Class of 40-A

Lincoln, Nebraska (Air Corps Training Detachment).
Lincoln Airplane & Flying School, Municipal Airport.
Established 1925: as Lincoln Standard Aircraft Corp.
Later: Lincoln Aeronautical Institute (corporate name for both flying and mechanics schools—1938).
Operator: Mr. Ernest J. Sias (1877–1955).

Preface—The Lincoln Aeronautical Institute, under the direction of the pioneer Nebraska aviation school owner, Ernest J. Sias, contracted with the Army in 1939 to train cadets in primary flying. Flying Cadets learned to fly here in Stearman PT-13As. Twenty-three cadets arrived in Lincoln as the first group of trainees in June 1939. Two classes, 40-A and 40-B, passed through Sias' school from 1 July to 4 November 1939.

First Supervisory Personnel—First Lieutenant Roy T. Wright, A.C., was the first Commanding Officer. Later, as a Colonel, he was CO of Advanced Flying School, Malden, Missouri. Wright had one other officer, 2nd Lt. Oliver E. Ford, A.C.* The Medical Officer, Capt. Scott M. Smith, M.C., and five enlisted men completed his Lincoln staff in 1939.

At that time there were nine civilian instructors, all graduates of the Central Instructors' School at Randolph Field, Texas. These were under Clem F. Whittenbeck, then Flight Director of the Lincoln School.

Only 10 of the 12 PT-13As that were used to train the first class of 25 students (40-A) were on hand at start of training. During July two more PT-13s were flown in for delivery to Lincoln Primary, bringing the total to 12. Later several more were delivered in preparation for training two classes at once: 40-A and 40-B.

Students in Class 40-A—(Quota 25, actually 23 on hand). 1) Coen, Robert B. 2) Crossen, Morris C. 3) Harte, Ronald A. 4) Herrman, George R. 5) Mizicko, John P. 6) Prentice, George W. 7) Reay, David N. 8) Sands, Harry J., Jr. 9) Schirmer, Robert F.** 10) Springer, Robert W. 11) Stephenson, Mac B. 12) Strauss, Allison W. 13) Thomas, Harold W. 14) Trees, Earl C. (Plus nine others who washed out—eight in Primary and one in Basic.)

School Officials—President/Operator, E.J. Sias; School Mgr./Supt., C.P. Bowers; Ground Course Instructors, Charles A. Pierce, Dickson J. Hazelrigg and Eugene D. Freeman. Chief Mechanic, Mr. King. Flight Dispatchers, Schmidt and Westcott. Flight Instructors, Clem Whittenbeck (Director), Capt. Wm. J. Chapman, Myron N. Larkin, Richard G. Beeler, Roy Lanning, James L. Hurst, William Kimsey, W.L. Amos and M.D. Holman.

Selection of Lincoln School: 1939—Political pressure was exerted to get a school at Lincoln, Nebraska. The head of the

school, Mr. Ernest J. Sias, was an ex-preacher, and (it was understood) had never been up in an airplane. He was not a desirable man to head a school, yet because his school had the oldest continuous flying history of any in the country, it was hard to turn him down. It was felt that weather made the selection of this school inadvisable.

The Lincoln, Nebraska site was disapproved by all the Air Corps inspectors prior to the opening of any of these contract schools; however, it was approved at the last minute due to political pressure from Washington, D.C.

Establishment of School—Part of the information regarding the early history of this school is shown in official historical records as having been furnished by (then) Capt. Roy T. Wright, A.C., first Commanding Officer at the Lincoln A.C. Detachment (1939-40); and from Mr. Marion D. Holman, former flight instructor at the original contract school at Lincoln, Nebraska, in July 1939 (when both were assigned to Lakeland, Florida, in 1940-42).

Mr. E.J. Sias started and financed the original flying school in Lincoln, Nebraska, about 1925, and on 1 July 1939 it was one of the nine original civilian contract schools selected by the Army Air Corps to give primary flying to Army Flying Cadets under training supervision.

The operator, while he maintained a flying school for a period of some 14 years, knew little about running an Army Flying School or selecting the personnel to do so.

In order to improve the quality of instruction and instructors at the civil schools, the idea of having the instructors come to Randolph Field was conceived. This was one method of ensuring that the flight instruction to be given flying cadets in the first classes of the new civil school program would measure up to standards set up by the system of check-rides with the AC Tactical Officers stationed at each civil school. This worked out fairly well.

But the schools and instructors were afraid, however, and the best pilots came first. This accounts for the high rate of elimination of the third and last class. The schools were scraping the barrel for instructors at that time.

Instructors' School at Randolph: 1939—In February 1939, it was decided that approximately 125 students would be sent to Randolph for the special flying instructor course. The contractors were informed that it would be at their own expense except in cases where the students were reserve officers.

A curriculum for this instructors' school was approved

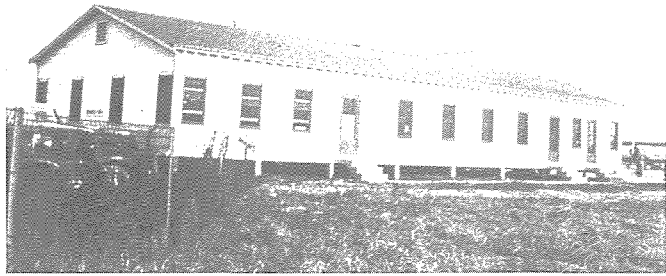
Notes: *On 7/44, Col. Oliver E. Ford, 33, KIA flying P-38 over Bucharest, Rumania. He was CO, Lincoln Primary 1940-41. From 1941-42, he was CO, Corsicana Primary, Texas. In March 1944 he left for Italy to fly P-38s in combat.

**Had first forced landing in Primary at Lincoln.

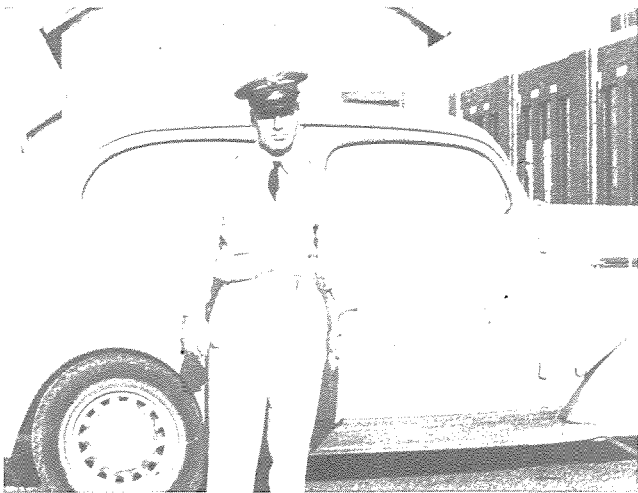


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1 M.D. "Doc" Holman, Instructor at Lincoln Primary for Dave Reay, 40-A.
(Reay, 40-A)

2 Classroom building where Class 40-A attended ground school. The U.S. Army Air Corps considered this to be a minimum facility since it was too near the flight line noise at the airport.
(Coen, 40-A)

3 Bob Coen and other 40-A cadets at the flight line in front of the only hangar on the airport, July 1939.
(Coen, 40-A)

4 First Lt. Roy T. Wright, Commander, Air Corps Training Detachment at Lincoln Primary, July 1939-August 1940. He went to Lakeland, Florida, as CO of new Air Corps Training Detachment.
(Coen, 40-A)

5 R. Frank Schirmer. (Found on the back of this photo, written in Sept. 1939: "I'm finally learning how to relax. The sun is very bright and I feel better than I have ever felt because I'm doing something I like to do.") Written to my parents in Springfield, Ohio.
(Author's Collection)



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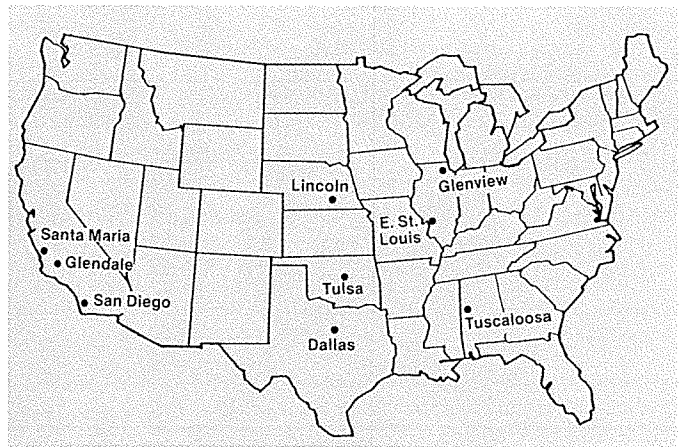
which called for 21 hours (exclusive of cross-country) of refresher training in every phase of flying which was to be taught to the military students in the civil schools. Eventually, three classes were held at Randolph Field with the following results:

Ratings	Class I 1-15 Jun	Class II 16-29 Jun	Class III 6-20 Jul
Superior	0	1	2
Excellent	9	12	2
Very satisfactory	33	34	5
Satisfactory	15	20	5
Unsatisfactory (75)	20	30	25
Totals: (213)	77	97	39

These classes at Randolph were abandoned after the graduation of the Third Group on 20 July 1939. It had been planned to train approximately only 125 instructors, and 138 had already completed the course and received their Certificates of Proficiency. Moreover, the quality of the last class was extremely poor. Therefore, the CG, AC Training Center advised Office Chief of the Air Corps that further schools would be a waste of time and money.

Poor Selection of Personnel—Because of lack of experience in selecting personnel, the first two men picked to operate the flying department of the school were considered unsatisfactory by the Air Corps supervisor (Lt. Wright). Upon request by the civilian contractor, these men were permitted to make an attempt to supervise the flying schedules. After many failures, these two pilots were relieved and Mr. M.D. Holman was recommended for the position. His duties began as Director of Flying on 5 November 1940. As a result of his fine

Flight Instructors, Lincoln Airplane and Flying School, Class 40-A, USAAC Training Detachment, Jul-Sep 1939. L-R: Clem W. Whittenbeck, Flight Director; William J. Chapman, Capt. ACR; Myron N. Larkin, Richard G. Beeler, Roy Lanning, James L. Hurst, William Kimsey, W.L. Amos and M.D. Holman. (Schirmer Collection)

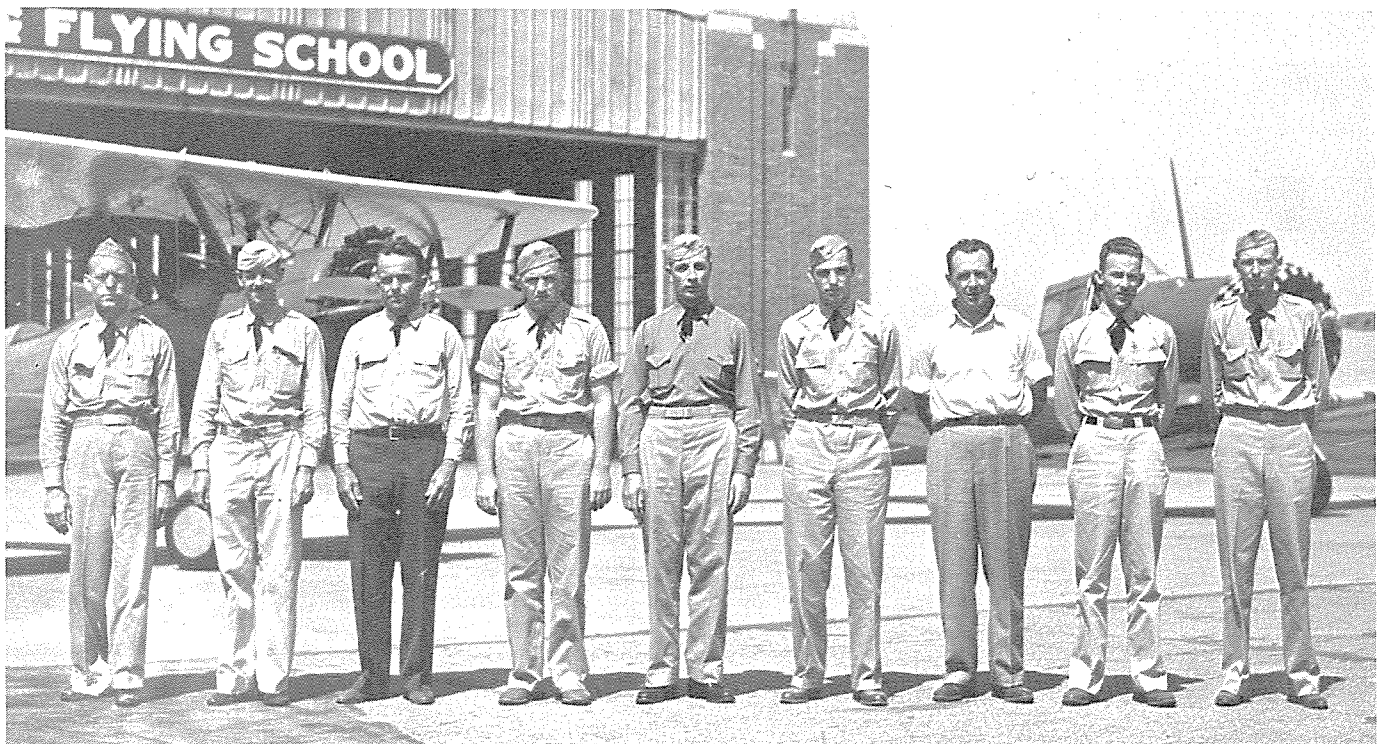


Original nine Civil Primary Schools of 1939. Western District included Santa Maria, Glendale and San Diego. Central District included East St. Louis, Glenview (Illinois), and Lincoln, Nebraska. The other three schools at Tuscaloosa, Tulsa and Dallas were controlled by Hq. AC Training Center, Randolph Field, Texas.

record, he was given the position of Director of Flying when the school was moved to Lakeland, Florida.

Instructors—Ground school instructors were Dickson Hazelrigg, Eugene Freeman, Charles Pierce. Flight instructors were Clem Whittenbeck (Director of Flying), Capt. Wm. Chapman, Myron Larkin, Richard Beeler, Ran Lanning, James Hurst, William Kimsey, W.D. Amos, and M.D. Holman. Holman became Director of Flying as Class 40-A left for Randolph Field. He had been a barnstormer, airline pilot, flying instructor and member of the Army Air Corps.

Housing—At the opening of the school on 1 July 1939 at Lincoln, the contractor first housed the students in the local YMCA dormitory. A week later, the cadets of 40-A were transferred to a converted fraternity house near Nebraska Wesleyan College at 5007 Huntington Avenue. These housing facilities were not adequate, since the cadets were crowded into a very small place. Travel between University Place



and the flying school near the present-day city airport was by 40-seat bus with LINCOLN AIRPLANE & FLYING SCHOOL lettered on its sides.

Cadet housing was rapidly improved, however, for in September 1939 Air Corps inspectors found the cadets now comfortably housed in town, with no complaint. Mr. Sias even put in a request for cockpit covers for PT-13As as a protection for the pilots against the cold weather usual in Nebraska winters.

Historical Background of Lincoln School—Mr. E.J. Sias started and financed the original flying school in Lincoln, Nebraska, about 1925, picking up the old Lincoln Standard Aircraft Corp. (which had originally been the Nebraska Aircraft Corp.), which had a building for its factory at 2409 "O" Street, Lincoln, Nebraska. Ray Page was the former president of this firm, with O.W. Timm as the chief engineer. The old Lincoln Standard Aircraft Corp. had been started in 1920. Here was where Lindbergh started flying training in 1922.

The Lincoln School, together with the airplane factory which was originally located in the same building with the school, was headquarters for those men whose names are written indelibly into the pages of aviation history.

Such names as Charles A. Lindbergh, Ray Page, Ira Biffle, Tuck Gardner, Vincent Burnelli, Otto Timm, Cliff Currier, Errol G. Bahl, Ira Slonniger, Bob Cochran, Hodge Smith, Myron Larkin, Shorty Lynch, E.V. Thomas, Bill Brooks, Dick Hazelrigg, August Pedler, Hart Bowman, and Captain Harding, to mention a few, were men who had made important contributions to aviation progress.

To old-timers in aviation, this roster of veteran pilots who at one time or another made Lincoln their headquarters, will call to mind some of the earliest episodes in aviation's development.

Charles A. Lindbergh, who started his flight training at the Lincoln School, will be remembered, of course, for his epochal solo flight over the Atlantic. Ray Page, widely known aviation executive, will be remembered not only as a successful builder of airplanes, but also as the promoter of Page's Aerial Pageant which presented what was probably the greatest array of talented barnstormers, parachute jumpers, wingwalkers and air circus performers known to those early times. It is estimated their exhibitions were witnessed by some 20 million persons throughout the United States.

Major Bill Brooks with the Military Air Service of Honduras gained national prominence by being the first to land an airplane in Yellowstone National Park. August Pedler first startled citizens of Lincoln when he flew a Lincoln Sport Plane out of Farnam Street in downtown Omaha. He is probably best remembered as one of the participants in the Dole Race to Hawaii in which he lost his life in the Pacific.

E.V. Thomas, onetime factory representative for Nebraska Aircraft Corporation, established a record by being the first pilot in America to land an airplane in the Grand Canyon of Arizona. Ira Biffle and Turk Gardner brought further notoriety to Lincoln when they were engaged to fly the airmail on its original scheduled flight from New York to Chicago.

From 1920 to 1937, the Lincoln School and its two predecessors, Nebraska Aircraft Corporation and Lincoln Standard Aircraft Corporation, turned out over 5,000 pilots and mechanics. And Lincoln School also trained a large variety of



Classes 40-A (18) and 40-B (28) in front of the Cadet Barracks (converted frat house) across the street from Nebraska Wesleyan College, 5007 Huntington Avenue, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1939. (Schirmer Collection)

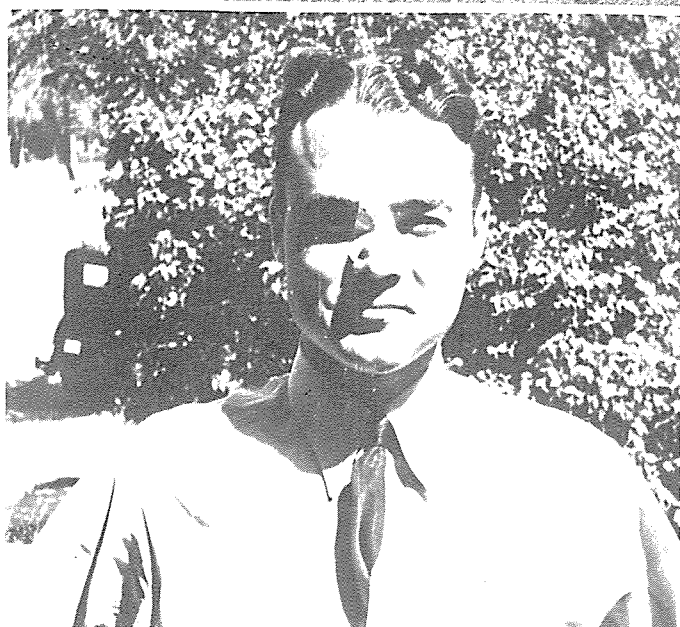
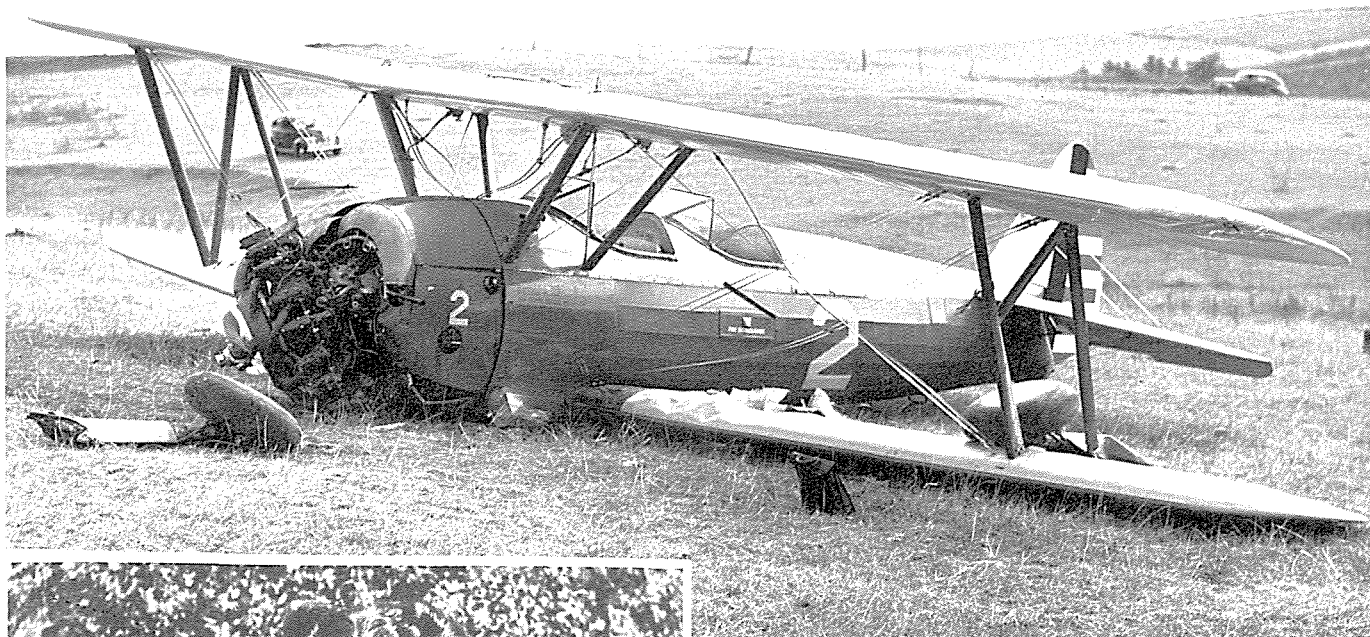
foreign pilots from Cuba, West Indies, Central and South America, Philippines and Canada.

In 1929, Lincoln Standard Aircraft Corporation School was one of the first schools in the U.S. to receive Approved Transport Flying and Ground School Certificates. CAA also granted Lincoln School the rating of Approved Airplane and Engine Mechanic School.

No fatal accidents occurred in training at Lincoln Primary though Cadet Schirmer made a forced landing in September northwest of Lincoln, wrecking the plane but suffering only minor injuries, as he relates below.

Some of my own experiences remembered at Lincoln Primary are:

- Attending the auto races there, and enjoying the excitement.
- State Capitol Tower, Lincoln: This served as a landmark for us cadets while flying around Lincoln in our training planes (PT-13As). We didn't do more than barely notice it when we were still flying dual with our instructors. But after soloing and when we started practicing aerial maneuvers by ourselves, we really appreciated seeing that tower in the distance to orient ourselves and find our base field again.
- Captain Chapman, AC Res., who was my instructor while at Lincoln, worked hard to teach me the rudiments of maneuvering our PT-13 and how to anticipate stalls so as to avoid spins. But to keep everything under control and in a predetermined sequence in the event we encountered a stalling condition while doing other maneuvers. This was very fortunate for me, because when my plane's engine quit on the third consecutive slow roll I was practicing by myself, his quiet, firm training penetrated my momentary panic (it was so quiet up there without the engine and prop going and so lonely, too), and I immediately dropped the nose, after completing the slow roll to an upright position, to prevent a stall. Then I started looking for a suitable place to land. By that time I had lost so much altitude (from what I estimate I had started from



Frank Schirmer's forced landing near Lincoln, Nebraska, 16 September 1939. The engine quit at low altitude. Frank pancaked the plane in on the side of a rugged hill. Results: Plane was totaled, Frank had a cut over one eye, three cracked ribs, a sore back to say nothing of hurt pride.

(Schirmer Collection)

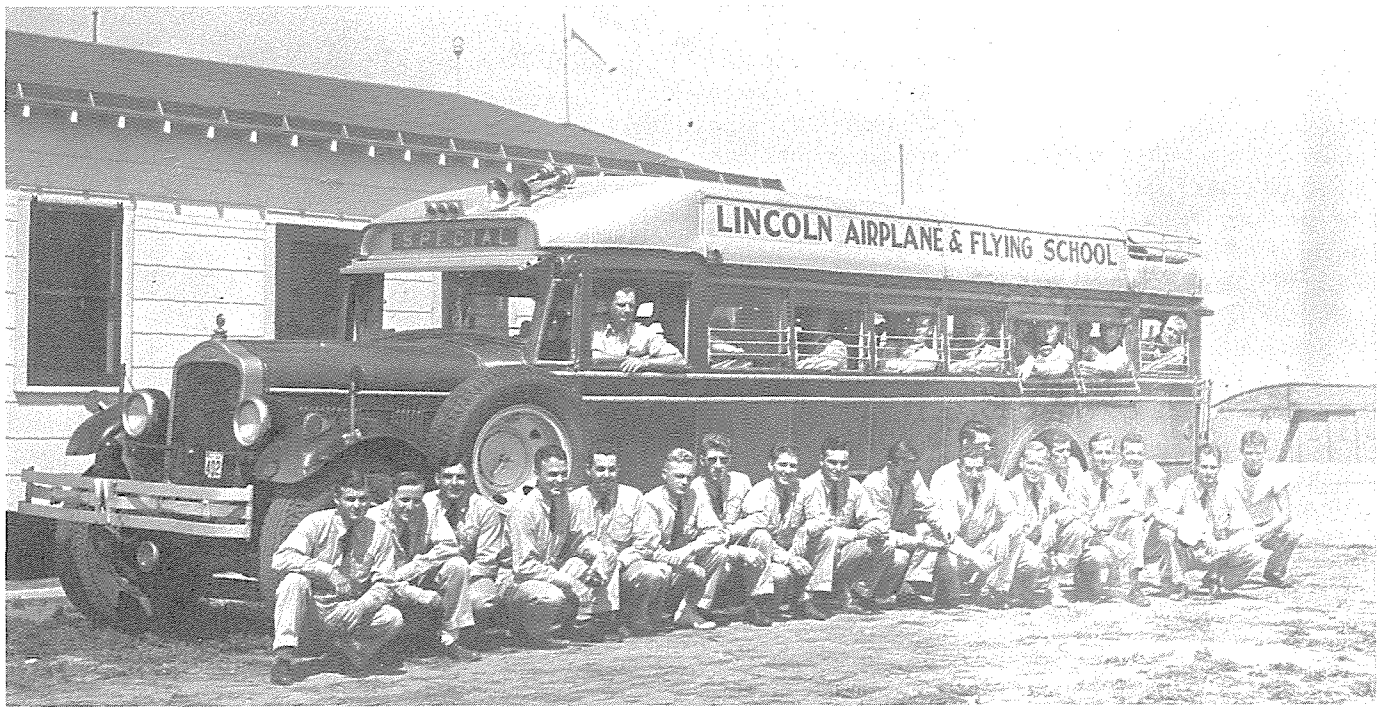
3,000, but the three slow rolls had brought me down to about 1,500 feet above those hills) that I was hard-pressed to decide on a landing spot. When I did, I pancaked the plane on top of a small rise of land, with ditches and gullies on all sides, it seemed. I was afraid of going over on my back if my landing gear hit a downslope gully. I did remember to turn off the main switch to prevent a fire, just before I hit the ground. The last thing I remember seeing were the landing gear wheels coming up through the lower wing.

- Regarding Mr. E.J. Sias, president/owner of Lincoln School, I understood from my classmates that he was very irked with me after my forced landing because I had "washed out" the PT-13, even though I had walked away from the wreck. Some classmate there told me later that Mr. Sias couldn't understand why I had to wreck one of "his" Army trainers like that!

Of course, with a gash over my right eye from not removing my goggles in my excitement to make a good landing, and with three ribs cracked and big bruises on my legs from the "stick" wobbling back and forth and side to side on impact, I was not as worried about the condition of "his" plane as he apparently was!

- Lieutenant Ford gave me three separate check rides on three separate days after my forced landing. I breezed through them all for I had made up my mind not to let that forced landing bother me. Captain Chapman, my instructor, worked with me constantly on each of our rides together after that crash landing of mine. He would patiently explain how to find a suitable landing spot, note the direction of the wind so as to land into the wind, slow the landing roll and reduce the risk. We flew over the site of my forced landing and Chapman would point out several places I might have landed without pancaking the plane as I did. It was all good training and I appreciated his dedication to my welfare as a pilot. I've never forgotten his advice and later, when flying, I found myself subconsciously picking out good places to land. He was the most patient instructor I had during my entire flight training in the Air Corps. And I'm sure it was his dedication to my learning some basic good habits of flying that put me through the rest of the course as a flying cadet. He told me (and so did Lt. Ford) that my forced landing experience put me way ahead of all the others in the class, since it would make me more aware of the nature of the emergency and force me to think ahead and be prepared for the next one.

- In our class of 23 flying cadets at Lincoln Primary in 1939 was one, Ted Pfleuger, a native of Lincoln, who later washed out at Randolph. Ted and I roomed together at Randolph Field during our Basic Flight Training. Ted was having problems with his stall maneuvers, as I recall. I know those 32 different kinds of stalls in our BT-9s were difficult to comprehend, much less remember. I almost washed out myself, because I wasn't kicking the rudder hard enough to start recovery procedures after the stall had occurred. But I finally made it on one check ride with Lt. George F. Schlatter, check pilot. It was his encouragement and constant urging (almost rawhiding) that got my attention and I responded with the correct force and made all my stall recoveries like he wanted



A double class poses at Union Airport, Lincoln, Nebraska, with our school bus. Class 40-A outside and Class 40-B inside the bus, August 1939.
(Schirmer Collection)

them.

But Ted didn't make it and he was very disappointed to be washed out. And I was sorry to see him go. I thought he had it made at Randolph. But if he couldn't learn stall recoveries, it was best that he wasn't kept in the course. I read somewhere that stalls killed more cadets than any other maneuver in training in World War I, and that's why our Army flight training emphasized them so much.

The local newspapers in Lincoln picked up my forced landing and published two short articles with photos on the event. Recollections by Other 40-A Members at Lincoln Primary—Several of the living members of Class 40-A recall their primary flying experiences and cadet life as follows: (1) Pat Trees' logbook shows that he had his first flight on 7-3-39 with M.D. Holman as his instructor. Pat also remembers one dance with many ladies from the Wesleyan College. (2) Bud Sands says: "On my second check ride with Clem Whittenbeck [School Director of Flying], he decided to do some aerobatics, which were taboo. It didn't take long before I was blacked out, with my head lying on the side of the cockpit. Nobody ever said a word. . . . Then, on my first solo flight, Holman told me to land as near as possible. Well, I did too well and almost landed on him. I was so preoccupied with seeing him running with his parachute . . . that I must have bounced 50 feet into the air." (3) Ross Herrman remembers mostly people: his instructors and classmates. They were, he says, a group with special high qualities, high academic achievement, ambitious . . . Lincoln was a friendly town; we were made to feel welcome in the churches and homes. . . . He remembers riding down "O" Street in an open Model T touring car with Harte, Thomas and Trees . . . with Springer at the wheel. (4) Dave Reay: "My instructor was 'Doc' Holman . . . couldn't have had a better one. . . . As for Hazelrigg [veteran Lincoln flyer], I remember his teaching us

about packing parachutes and telling us: 'If it doesn't open . . . just reach around and stir it up!' I'm not sure that instilled confidence. . . . As to the ladies at the college [Nebraska Wesleyan], Bud Sands had the inside track with some brunette, and Mac Stephenson dated some girl taller than he was." (5) Bill Thomas recalls: "Coen and I both turned out solo to practice. . . . Bob and I headed north five or 10 miles. . . . Feeling pretty high . . . we flew several two-abreast loops and Immelmans, and then flew chandelles, lazy eights, slow rolls and snap rolls with maybe 200 feet spacing. . . . It was a circus. . . . Later I told Jimmie Hurst what transpired, and he and Dick Holman got Whittenbeck cooled down. . . ."

It would seem that Class 40-A was on the interface between the old most-anything-goes way of learning to fly and the intensive schooling and practice as taught by the Army Air Corps to its flying cadets. It was a class that was the transition marker between the old barnstormers and cropduster pilots and the precision flying required by the military in modern warfare.

Graduates—Of the 23 flying cadets in Class 40-A, the first class in the contract primary program at Lincoln, eight were eliminated, leaving 15 to be transferred to Randolph Field, Texas, for Basic Flying phase. At Randolph, one cadet washed out in Basic; but none at Kelly in Advanced. Thus, 14 were successful in graduating and receiving their wings at Kelly. The overall elimination rate from Primary, through Basic and Advanced training was 39.2 percent. The overall graduating rate was, therefore, 60.8 percent.

Sidelight of History—Since this school was the place where Charles A. Lindbergh took his first flying lessons, it is considered appropriate to include the following excerpt from a letter to Col. Schirmer from Bud Gurney who retired as an airline captain years later. (Bud first knew "Slim" Lindbergh here at this school in 1922. He was the one who gave Lindbergh the nickname of "Slim.")

"Lindbergh arrived at Nebraska Aircraft Company's

hangars on 1 April 1922. He paid . . . the \$500 for his lessons. Ira Biffle was his instructor. Lindbergh got eight hours in the air but they wouldn't let him solo. They had already sold the airplane (a Fokker biplane) in which he had learned to fly. Eroll Bahl, the barnstormer, showed up and took delivery on his plane. Lindbergh talked Bahl into letting him join the barnstorming tour as an unpaid helper. It wasn't until the spring of 1923 when Lindbergh borrowed \$900 from his Little Falls, Minnesota bank and bought himself a plane, a Curtiss *Jenny* (JN-4) with a 90-hp engine, top speed of 70 mph, and then soloed himself in the strange plane. It took him all day and many "almost" crashes and hefty bounces, but he had finally soloed. This after a year of wingwalking, parachute leaps, etc., to gain experience in the air. Plus picking up enough mechanical knowledge in the Lincoln factory to be able to take care of the average aircraft engine of the time."

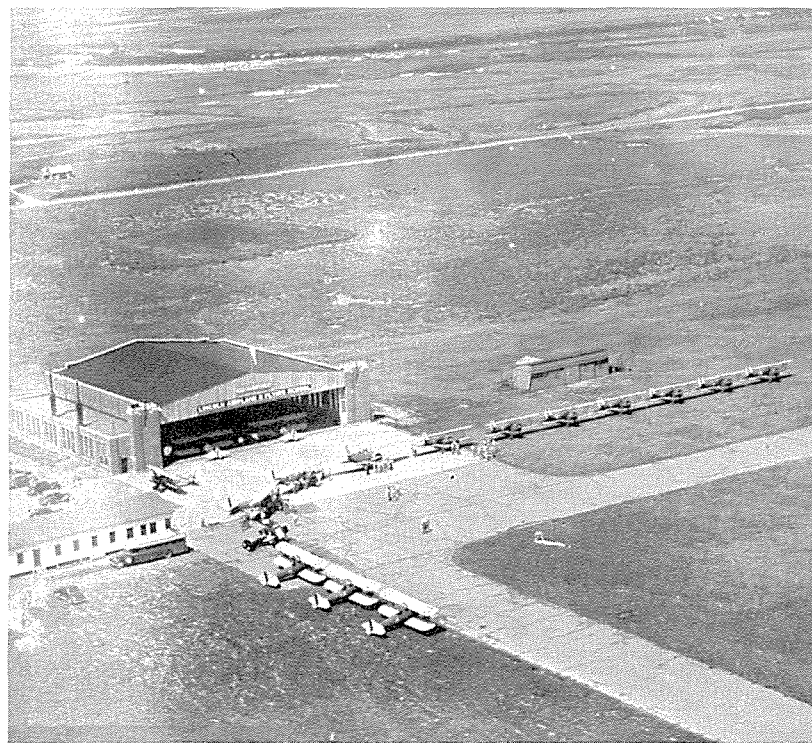
Lincoln School of Aeronautics: 1939-1940—This school, when located in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1939, was one of the first nine civil schools in the flight training program by civilian contractors for the Army Air Corps. The name was changed to Lincoln School of Aeronautics sometime after the first class (Class 40-A) was graduated from Primary on 26 September 1939 to Basic, and the school had problems!

On 2 January 1940, Capt. Rodieck* wrote a letter to Col. Robins re the situation at Lincoln Primary: "Inasmuch as I consider this to be a personal letter to you, I do not hesitate to state that the heads of the school appear only interested in getting their checks on time. At my other schools, the civil heads run the schools, supervised by the Air Corps personnel. At this school, Lt. Wright and Lt. Ford and the enlisted men run practically everything.

"The only time the heads of this school appear interested is when you or some of the inspecting party comes through. I fear a gradual letdown, particularly among the civil instructor personnel, due to the fact that, in addition to working in very severe weather, they have no time to call their own, but have to stand around too much, as well as work on weekends. I am afraid that results will eventually show up in the product they send to Randolph.

"However, it is only fair to state that Lt. Wright does not thoroughly agree with me on this. If the school continues to operate satisfactorily as far as their students are concerned, Lt. Wright and Lt. Ford and all the enlisted men deserve exceptional credit for being able to make a go of it with the handicap they have. Temperature here today is 8° F. below zero, with deep snow.

Weather/Training Difficulties at Lincoln—Three of the original nine primary schools were *not* recommended mostly because of weather conditions; and also, in the case of Lincoln, the unsatisfactory ground school facilities. Subsequent developments were to prove that the fears of the Air Corps Training Center were fully justified, and it became necessary to move both the Glenview and Lincoln schools. A graphic account of the difficulties at Lincoln has been given in a letter from the Commanding Officer of the Lincoln Detachment: "I cannot see how we can finish Class 40-B early. In my letter of a few days ago, I explained about our wind troubles of September. Well, October is starting out worse. We have only



Aerial view of Lincoln Airplane and Flying School hangar and parking ramp near Lincoln, Nebraska, at Union Airport. Note the lineup of 13 PT-13s along with the BC-1 and Great Lakes trainer (Whittenbeck's circus plane). (Schirmer Collection)

flown two half days. Yesterday we called flying off at noon when the wind hit 29 mph. A few hours later, it was 37 on the surface. It is now 8 A.M. and Class 40-C is flying. The wind is all right now, but up at 5,000 feet it is over 50 mph. So by noon, it will probably be down on the ground. Class 40-B is only a few hours behind due to continued weekend flying; but their progress and performance is poor due to the many interruptions, rough air and lack of weekends for relaxing. Seven out of the last 11 check rides have been failing. From this I feel that I will have to give all of them at least an extra five hours' flying time at the end of the course." 5 Oct. 1939, 1st Lt. Wright.

Many difficulties were encountered the first winter of operations at Lincoln. Canopies could not be obtained for the training planes, and 12° F. was almost the minimum temperature in which they were able to operate. During the winter of 1939, the temperature reached -20° F. on three different occasions. Runways were cut in the snow, and the students soloed under these conditions without accidents. However, there was one stretch of weather which lasted 30 days, during which no flying was performed due to cold and snow. This necessitated the holding-over of one entire class and led to the moving of the school.

With its training program hampered by such unfortunate weather conditions, the government found it necessary to recommend a transfer of the school. Mr. Sias was informed of this decision and plans were made immediately to move the school at a future date.

Air Corps officials finally told Sias he would have to operate from a different location; he was agreeable and the Army approved a site in Florida.

Mr. Sias outlined the possibilities to the Lakeland, Florida

*Capt. Rodieck, A.C., was the District Supervisor of Lincoln, E. St. Louis, and Chicago Primaries. He had his office at Parks Primary.



Chamber of Commerce. They, in turn, made arrangements for him to meet the City Commission.

Then Mr. Sias, President of the Lincoln School of Aeronautics, discussed the possible location of an Army Flying School in Lakeland. He told them what would be required of the city to secure the school. President Sias explained that he was on a scouting trip for a location in the south and was interested in knowing if Lakeland wanted the school and how badly they wanted it.

The Commission withheld action and decision pending further conferences between the City Manager and Mr. Sias. Further negotiations between these two were continued on 20 and 29 May 1940.

A tentative proposal was embodied in a letter addressed to Mr. Sias and mailed to him on 29 May 1940. All original contacts with the city of Lakeland were made by Mr. Sias himself. However, he was not quite definite in any of his arrangements in transferring the school. It appeared that he presumed that the Lakeland School would only be temporary; therefore, all negotiations were on that basis.

Meanwhile, Mr. H.S. Darr (operator of the Chicago School of Aeronautics at Glenview, Illinois) and Mr. Albert I. Lodwick, a veteran of the aviation world and President, Stinson Aircraft Company, negotiated with Mr. Sias for the purchase of his contract with the Air Corps.

Through many interviews, they discovered that Mr. Sias was trying to sell all his holdings in the flying school at Lincoln. Therefore, he was quite interested in receiving their offer. With a contract price of \$36,000 agreed to by all parties, Mr. Sias transferred his contract to the Darr-Lodwick partnership as of 20 July 1940.

Negotiations at Lakeland were then captured by Mr. Darr, who was the operating partner. Mr. Lodwick, for the most part, was the silent partner throughout these negotiations.

The new school was opened August 1940 at Lakeland, Florida, 32 miles east of Tampa. It represented an investment of

Class 40-A Air Corps Training Detachment, Lincoln Airplane and Flying School, Lincoln, Nebraska, September 1939. Cadets graduated from Primary training who went to Randolph Field for Basic. Top row, L-R: Harte, Herrman, Springer, Trees, Sands, Reay, Thomas, Coen. Bottom row, L-R: Mizicko, Schirmer, Prentice, Stephenson, Strauss, Pflueger, Crossen. (Schirmer Collection)

\$500,000. This school as relocated carried on for one of the first nine civilian-operated Army primary flight schools.

Mr. Sias was so attached to his Lincoln School that when the weather conditions forced the Air Corps to the decision that the school would have to be moved south, he preferred to sell rather than move.

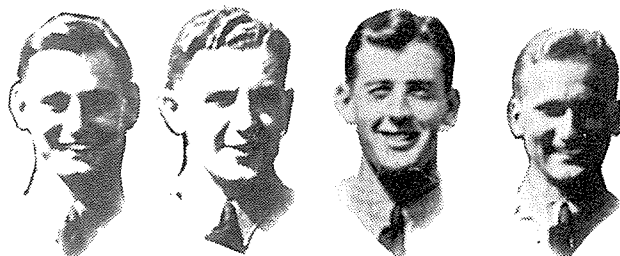
The transfer of operations from Lincoln, Nebraska, to Lakeland, Florida, occurred in the latter part of August 1940. Captain Wright, Lt. Lemon and several NCOs left the Lincoln School and organized the new detachment at Lakeland, Florida.

With the movement of operations to Florida, half of the civilian personnel transferred to Lakeland, and the remaining portion stayed in Lincoln to finish the class that was then in training there (Class 41-B). The transfer of training began at Lakeland with Class 41-C (18 September 1940).

Pilot Production Summary: Lincoln Primary—From 1 July 1939 to 14 October 1940, approximately 305 cadets were entered in Lincoln Primary and 209 were graduated. This gave an elimination rate of 31.2 percent and a graduation rate of 68.8 percent.

This period covered Classes 40-A through 41-B. For Classes 40-A through 40-H, there were 174 cadets entered and 111 graduated, with a graduation rate of 63.7 percent, in spite of poor flying weather during the winter of 1939.

The final period of training covered Classes 41-A and 41-B, which trained during summer months of 1940. In these two classes, 131 cadets entered and 98 graduated. The cadets in Class 41-C who had been sent to Lincoln for training were diverted to Lakeland, Florida, for training. (See Lakeland, Florida Primary.)



Robert B. Coen John P. Mizicko Harry J. Sands, Jr. Earl C. Trees

CLASS 40-A PROFILES

Replies to the question, "What circumstances led to your applying for Flying Cadet training in the Army Air Corps?"

Colonel Robert B. Coen—"My desire to fly started a long time ago, almost it seems from the time I was in the seventh grade. Given an assignment to write an essay about my plans for a career, I wrote about Aeronautical Engineering and Flying. By the time I went to high school the flying bug had infected me hard. Next door to our house lived a young man who already was a pilot. His name was Glen Doolittle. He had a Waco airplane, using it primarily for barnstorming and advertising purposes. He was also the lead pilot among a small group of people engaged in developing an experimental flying wing type of plane. This was being done in the garage back of the house across the street from where I lived. This airplane was called ARUP and it actually flew many times. Even today a friend, Roland Goheen, has the original drawings and the 16mm film of the flights that the ARUP made then.

"Well, in such a neighborhood as a young impressionable teenager, I just went along with the tide. I washed cowlings and sold tickets for rides in the Waco, always with the hope that I would be selected to go along when it came time to throw out the advertising flyers. This was an interesting period of my life (in South Bend, Indiana).

"My family was not able to enter me into a college program that summer after I finished high school. I stayed out a full year and worked as an apprentice engineer in the Bantam Ball Bearing Company. We went to classes in engineering conducted by the owner of the company, after working a full shift at 40 cents an hour. This was my first real opportunity to enter the capitalist society and I bought stock in the company on a onesy and twosy basis. By the time the company sold out to the Torrington Corporation the following spring, I had acquired a substantial number of shares. Then I had enough money to attend Purdue University. The first year I supplemented my income by working for my room and board.

"The Purdue Glider Club was an outlet for whatever spare time I had for the next three years. The club was flying a four-place Gross F-5, a primary glider and a soaring glider. Looking back I find it hard to believe that 21 mph on the airspeed indicator was an acceptable cruising speed.

"Then, at the end of my junior year, I decided to go to Aviation Cadet training after the ROTC summer camp. Finally my time came to go to Chanute Field to enlist and take the physical exam. But once there they talked me into finishing my senior year at Purdue and to return to Chanute after I had graduated. That was good advice. So I did. During my senior year a powered flight program was launched and Purdue was one of the schools selected to participate in this pilot training program. We flew Piper Cubs.

"Following graduation in June of 1939, I entered the

Flying Cadet program of the U.S. Army Air Corps and was assigned to begin my training at the Lincoln Airplane and Flying School at Lincoln, Nebraska. My flying career had begun." (End of statement, 3 Jan. 1987.)

2nd Lt. John P. Mizicko—"My applying was probably no different than many others. Graduating in June 1939, things were tough in Ohio. Jobs were scarce. I majored in Education and minored in Business Administration.

"In February of 1939, I started inquiring about jobs. Had a few offers in coaching positions, but for peanuts.

"In May my roommate told me the Air Corps was taking applications for flight training. I had no particular desire for the military. After several days of discussing and visiting the group taking the applications, I applied. Twenty-four students made application. We took the physical, etc., and two weeks later, when the results were posted, my name was the only one on the list. I said to myself, 'B.S., I flunked,' and went home and told my roommate: 'The hell with it!' The next day I got a call from a first lieutenant to come to his office.

"The results: I was the only one that was accepted. I accepted the challenge and a couple of weeks later I was in Lincoln, Nebraska." (End of statement, 12 Oct. 1986.)

Maj. Gen. Harry J. Sands, Jr.—"The idea of becoming an Air Corps pilot started with me along about high school age when I used to go to Norton Field, Columbus, Ohio, with my dad to see the fighter planes come down on a barnstorming tour from Selfridge Field. They were from the First Pursuit Group and flew P-6Es and P-12s amid a hell of a lot of noise, dust, etc. I remember they wore leather jackets, leather helmets, white scarfs, high boots, etc. . . . the works! Even Sam Brown belts, I believe. Anyway, I thought they were right next to God in their flying machines and decided I should be the same.

"Along about that time a Barling bomber went down in a field close to where I lived east of Columbus and no one was injured but there was a lot of commotion and I crawled all over the infernal machine. Even had machine guns on it or I thought so anyway. Place for bombs, too!

"Well, I went to Ohio State U. and took ROTC and applied for an appointment to West Point. Thought that would be the best way to go. War clouds were already all over Europe and I was sure we would be involved very soon. At the end of my junior year I received notification of the possible appointment to West Point. With only one more year of ROTC to be a second lieutenant, I couldn't see the sense to going back to square one on the Hudson! So, I passed it up and applied for Army Air Corps pilot training.

"Took my physical at W-PAFB and didn't pass! Had a deviated septum (nose broken a few times). Major Schwicktenburg was the flight surgeon (later to be the flight surgeon for the astronauts), and he promised that if I would have the nose operated on, he would pass me.

"It was OSU graduation time by now (Dec. 1938), so I skipped graduation and had my diploma mailed to me and took off for Tampa, Florida, for a date with the surgeon at Tampa General Hospital. After the submucous resection operation I highballed to Akron, Ohio, by way of the flight surgeon at Wright Field, who approved my physical, and went on to the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, where I

had a job with the Goodyear Flying Squadron (had nothing to do with flying but was a training squadron for engineering and other graduate trainees).

"There I worked until the following June 1939, when I got the appointment to the Lincoln Airplane & Flying School where I joined the finest bunch of guys I have ever been associated with. You know the rest." (End of statement, 23 Nov. 1986.)

Colonel Robert F. (Frank) Schirmer—"I can remember what I was doing in 1927 when Lindbergh made his famous solo flight across the Atlantic on 20-21 May: I was sitting on the steps of our front porch at 859 Marion Road, Bucyrus, Ohio, listening to the radio. From boyhood on I built model planes, first those with rubber band motors and scale models of all the Cleveland Air Races planes, etc. In 1930, I visited Wright Field and saw the original Air Corps Museum's collection of scale models of all the planes of the old Engineering Division. Later, in 1932, I had my first airplane ride from the old Dayton Airport in a Keystone transport plane; the pilot looked like he was only 16 or 17 years old.

"I attended Wittenberg College for two years (1932-34) on a scholarship; then transferred to the Ohio State University at Columbus, Ohio, for my Mechanical Engineering degree, graduating in September 1936. I used to watch Jesse Owens, the great Olympic sprinter, practicing in the Ohio State Stadium track. After graduation, I got a job with the Production Engineering Department of the International Harvester Truck Plant in Springfield, Ohio. I made 'shearing charts' for the punch press operators whose machines stamped out parts for the trucks.

"One day in 1938 I was sitting at my desk working on the charts when an acquaintance came by and dropped a copy of the pamphlet: *Flying Cadets of the Army Air Corps* on my desk. I picked it up, read it through and almost immediately applied to Wright Field for the Flying Cadet physical exam. I had just soloed in an Aeronca light plane at the local Springfield Airport after eight hours of dual instruction there. I passed the physical at Wright Field; I was one of 11 applicants who were then applying. I was the only one who passed the physical. Several months later I was ordered to Ft. Hayes, Columbus, Ohio, to be sworn in and to receive my orders assigning me to Lincoln Airplane and Flying School, Lincoln, Nebraska. George Prentice and I were sworn in together at Ft. Hayes during this processing. We met again when we started our flight training at Lincoln in July 1939." (End of statement, 16 September 1986.)

Lt. Col. Earl C. (Pat) Trees—"My oldest brother was a member of the Army Air Corps at Brooks Field, Texas, in 1921-1922. After he crashed two airplanes with DH-12 engines, the Air Corps people suggested he would live much longer if he dropped out of the Air Corps. He did!

"Because of him, I always wanted to try my hand at the same game. I took my physical at Lowry Field, Colorado (Denver). I was in school at Fort Collins, Colorado.

"There were 11 people at the examinations. Two of us passed. The other fellow only lasted two weeks at Randolph in Basic.

"As you know, I went through Lincoln School of Aero. And, oh yes, I was inducted at Ft. Hayes, Columbus, Ohio, on 9 June 1939." (End of statement, 25 November 1986.)



Fortieth Anniversary Reunion, 21-23 March 1980, Lincoln Airplane and Flying School. L-R standing: Sands, Herrman, Coen, Mizicko. Kneeling: Schirmer. Alive but not at reunion: Reay, H.W. Thomas, Trees. (Author's Collection)

LINCOLN PRIMARY DATA

Maj. Gen. Harry J. Sands, Jr.—Two star General as of 1960.

Decorations won by graduates of Lincoln Primary:

Silver Star Medal—Three: Prentice (2); Strauss (posthumous).
Legion of Merit—Four: Sands (2); Schirmer (2).

Distinguished Flying Cross—Five: Crossen; Harte; Prentice (2); Strauss.

Air Medal—18: Harte; Prentice (2); Strauss (4); Crossen (11).

Bronze Star Medal—One: Herrman.

Army Commendation Medal—Two: Schirmer (2).

AF Commendation Medal—One: Sands.

Purple Heart—Three: Crossman; Harte; Strauss.

Distinguished Unit Citation—One: Sands.

Aerial Victories—Six: Crossen (2); Prentice (3); Strauss.

Graduates Killed in Action (KIA)—Three: Crossen, '44; Harte, '45; Strauss, '42.

Other Distinctions—*Capt. Allison W. Strauss* had a fighter strip south of Darwin, Australia, named after him after he was killed in combat. He was CO of the 8th Fighter Squadron, 49th Fighter Group. Strauss was credited with one enemy plane shot down in combat. *Lt. Col. Morris C. Crossen* was Deputy Group Commander, 367th Fighter Group in France when he was killed during combat flying his P-38, Oct. 1944. He had two aerial victories.

Major Ronald Harte was CO of the 44th Bomb. Group when his B-29 was shot down over Tokyo Bay, 25 May 1945.

Prisoners of War—None.

One Exceptional Career—*George W. Prentice* went to the South Pacific and Australia early in 1942. He started out in the 49th Pursuit (later Fighter) Group with Hqs. at Darwin. Was tapped to be the first Commanding Officer of the new 475th Fighter Group which was equipped with P-38s and spawned such aces as Bong and McGuire, etc. George was decorated with: Silver Star, w/olc; DFC, w/olc; Air Medal, w/olc; had three enemy victories to his credit before dying in crash of his F-82, in Red Bluff, California, in 1950.

One Exceptional Assignment—*Maj. Gen. Sands*, Chief of Military Armistice Commission in Korea—1965-66. □