

= James P. Hagerstrom =

Colonel James Philo Hagerstrom (January 14 , 1921 ? June 25 , 1994) was a fighter pilot and flying ace of the United States Army Air Forces in World War II and the United States Air Force in the Korean War . With a career total of 14 @. @ 5 victories , he is one of seven pilots to achieve ace status in two different wars .

Born in Cedar Falls , Iowa , Hagerstrom gained an interest in flying at a young age . He left college in 1941 and joined the U.S. Army Air Forces , being posted to New Guinea to fight in the South West Pacific theatre of World War II . There , Hagerstrom mainly escorted bombers with his Curtiss P @- @ 40 Warhawk , shooting down six Japanese aircraft over the course of the war , including four in one morning . After the war , he flew with the Texas Air National Guard . By 1950 he was in command of a fighter squadron that was mobilized to Korea following the outbreak of the Korean War . He later transferred to the United States Air Force and flew in MiG Alley in a North American F @- @ 86 Sabre , scoring 8 @. @ 5 victories over Mikoyan @- @ Gurevich MiG @- @ 15s .

Returning to the U.S. in 1953 , Hagerstrom remained in the Air Force until his retirement in 1968 , during which he earned a master 's degree in Economics and a law degree . In 1965 he was assigned to Vietnam but did not fly combat missions . After retiring , Hagerstrom traveled the Pacific in a homemade boat with his family , living in various Pacific islands before settling in Mansfield , Louisiana . Hagerstrom died in nearby Shreveport of stomach cancer in 1994 .

= = Early life and education = =

Hagerstrom was born on January 14 , 1921 , in Cedar Falls , Iowa . He was the third son of Edward , an electrician , and Hazel Hagerstrom . He grew up in a small house in Waterloo , Iowa . His interest in aviation began when he sat in the cockpit of a Curtiss JN @- @ 4 biplane at the age of 5 . He " had the thrill of his life " when at thirteen he had a short flight in a Ford Trimotor aircraft .

Hagerstrom built model airplanes as a hobby . For " adrenaline release " , he joined the swimming and wrestling teams at Waterloo West High School . After graduating in January 1939 , he began studying at the University of Iowa in 1941 , where he participated in the Army Reserve Officers ' Training Corps . After a year there , he transferred to the University of Northern Iowa (then known as Iowa State Teachers College) , where he helped start an aero club .

= = Military career = =

= = = World War II = = =

In December 1941 , just before the attack on Pearl Harbor , he went to Iowa City , where he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force (USAAF) Flying Cadet program with a recruiter . On January 17 of the following year , he was sent to Fort Des Moines and soon inducted into the USAAF . Not long after , he and other new inductees went to Minter Field in Bakersfield , California for more physical examinations , and then they went north to Visalia for primary training in January 23 . The class (which had to wear coveralls due to the lack of standard uniforms) first trained in Ryan PT @- @ 22 Recruits before moving back to Minter Field for basic flight training in BT @- @ 13 Valiants . Along with his brother Robert , who had also enlisted , Hagerstrom spent about six weeks in basic training . Hagerstrom and his classmates then went to Luke Field near Phoenix , Arizona for advanced flight training in the North American AT @- @ 6 . On July 26 , 1942 , he was commissioned a second lieutenant and received his wings from Brigadier General Ennis Whitehead .

Hagerstrom was then sent to Myrtle Beach Air Force Base in Myrtle Beach , South Carolina and Pinnellas City Air Base in Florida , flying the Bell P @- @ 39 Airacobra and Curtiss P @- @ 40 Warhawk with the 20th Pursuit Group . In late September he was posted to the 8th Fighter Squadron (8th FS) of the 49th Operations Group and sent to San Francisco , California . After staying at the Mark Hopkins Hotel , he and forty other personnel moved on to Fort Mason , where

they boarded the Norwegian ship M / V Torrens along with 1 @, @ 500 other officers and enlisted men comprising Headquarters , 5th Air Force to Hawaii . They did not stay long , however , and set sail again , this time flanked by a naval task force . After an overnight stop at Suva , Fiji , they landed at their destination of Townsville , Queensland , Australia . Initially there was no one there and nothing to do until Brigadier General Paul Wurtsmith , the commander of Fifth Fighter Command , organized a refresher session for the new pilots at Charters Towers Airport . In April 1943 , he and the P @-@ 40 @-@ equipped 8th FS relocated to Dobodura Airfield Complex in New Guinea . Shortly thereafter , he was promoted to first lieutenant .

Hagerstrom first saw combat on April 11 , when he engaged in aerial combat over Oro Bay with several Japanese Zeros , destroying one of them . The 8th FS mainly escorted Douglas C @-@ 47 Skytrains dropping supplies to ground troops in the jungle . In late 1943 , the 49th Operations Group was moved to Tsili Tsili Airfield , recently captured from the Japanese and frequently bombed by them . The 8th FS then switched to escorting North American B @-@ 25 Mitchell and Douglas A @-@ 20 Havoc attacks but saw little action . They saw more combat protecting the Boeing B @-@ 17 Flying Fortress and Consolidated B @-@ 24 Liberator bombers . On October 11 , Hagerstrom led one of two groups of four aircraft to intercept an approaching Mitsubishi Ki @-@ 46 reconnaissance aircraft over Finschhafen . He chased the plane for twelve minutes , flying at 270 miles per hour (430 km / h) before getting within firing range . He shot down the aircraft by causing its left engine to explode , and the plane crashed . After his navigational instruments malfunctioned , he was forced to fly over the Japanese @-@ occupied town of Lae ; fortunately he caught them by surprise and was not shot at . With no fuel to spare , he safely landed at Tsili Tsili Airfield , which was in blackout due to an overhead enemy reconnaissance aircraft . Later that month , heavy rainfall made the airstrip too muddy to allow the Lockheed P @-@ 38 Lightnings to take off , and the P @-@ 40 squadrons , including the 8th FS , were relocated 50 miles (80 km) north to Gusap Airfield . Soon after , Hagerstrom contracted malaria and went to Australia to recover for three weeks , after which he returned to his normal duties .

On January 23 , 1944 , Hagerstrom was leading one of four flights of four aircraft in an attempt to assist two P @-@ 38 Lightnings escorting bombers near Wewak . They encountered 10 ? 15 enemy aircraft , and he shot down three Zeros (more likely Nakajima Ki @-@ 43s) and one Kawasaki Ki @-@ 61 " Tony " , making him an ace . He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his " extraordinary heroism " during the engagement . By the end of the war , he flew 170 combat missions and destroyed six enemy aircraft .

= = = Post @-@ war = = =

Hagerstrom returned to the U.S. and in June 1945 was discharged from the USAAF . He wanted to complete his studies and soon after he was personally and immediately enrolled at the Iowa State Teachers College by the school 's president at Hagerstrom 's request to return to school . Hagerstrom graduated in 1948 with a degree in economics and subsequently went to Houston , Texas and entered the municipal bonds business . He also joined the 111th Fighter @-@ Bomber Squadron of the Texas Air National Guard , which he and his fellow pilots viewed as the " bottom of the heap " . However , he enjoyed his tenure there and flew the P @-@ 38 and P @-@ 51 Mustang in the 1948 Cleveland Air Races . Hagerstrom was promoted to major and appointed commander of the 111th . In October 1950 , the 111th squadron was federalized and ordered into active duty to serve in the Korean War . He was assigned to the headquarters of the Tactical Air Command , where he persuaded the commander to allow him and some other officers to fly a combat tour in Korea , where the war had been fought since June 1950 . They were allowed to transfer from the Air National Guard into the active @-@ duty Air Force . He was sent to Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada , where he was instructed by William T. Whisner , Jr. in gunnery . He then was named operations officer of the 4th Fighter Group .

= = = Korean War = = =

Hagerstrom , determined to be an ace in two wars , studied MiG @-@ 15 reports , got a silk coat and special glasses that allowed him to see twice as far as normal , and made his own survival kit . He later transferred to the 334th Fighter Squadron of the Fifth U.S. Air Force 's 18th Wing , some members of which (including Hagerstrom) were equipped with North American F @-@ 86 Sabres . Hagerstrom got the wing 's first kill of the war on November 21 , 1952 near the Yalu River . The MiG pilot Hagerstrom was shooting at ejected just before his plane exploded , and a piece of that plane was embedded in Hagerstrom 's F @-@ 86 , proving the kill to Kimpo Air Base group commander Royal N. Baker . On December 25 , he got his second kill when the MiG he was chasing at an altitude of 50 @,@ 000 feet (15 @,@ 000 m) spun out of control , and the pilot ejected , most likely dying of exposure to the ? 20 ° F (? 29 ° C) temperatures . In January 1953 Hagerstrom was transferred to Osan Air Base to help with the transition from propeller P @-@ 38s to jet F @-@ 86s , and by mid @-@ February the wing 's 125 pilots were trained in the F @-@ 86 . On February 25 he was chasing two MiGs when he noticed a third attacking another F @-@ 86 ; he engaged and shot it down flying very low over Mukden , China . Low on fuel , he had just enough fuel to land and park the aircraft .

On March 13 , Hagerstrom and his wingman Elmer N. Dunlap came across two MiGs , the first of which Hagerstrom " shot the daylights out of " . He shot at the second until he ran out of ammunition , and the remaining MiG was leaking fuel and its engine had stopped . Hagerstrom told Dunlap to " finish off " the crippled plane , and the MiG 's pilot bailed over the enemy 's Antung Airfield . That mission gave him a total of 4 @.@ 5 victories , just short of the five kills needed for ace status . On March 27 he sneaked up behind six MiGs and fired on one , but by " sheer ass luck ... it knocked his wing tip off . " He kept up the chase , shooting short bursts , until the pilot ejected right above his own base . On the way home , Hagerstrom destroyed another MiG , bringing the total to 6 @.@ 5 . He became the war 's 28th ace and would be the only from the 18th wing . Before the Air Force sent him back to the U.S. , he got one more MiG on April 13 . The day he left , he unexpectedly went on an impromptu mission , netting his last kill , a sum of 8 @.@ 5 throughout the whole war over 101 missions .

= = = Later work = = =

Hagerstrom remained in the USAF after he returned to the U.S. and was promoted to lieutenant colonel in June 1954 . He commanded a F @-@ 86 squadron at Foster Air Force Base in Victoria , Texas and later headed the 450th Fighter @-@ Day Wing , equipped with the F @-@ 100 Super Sabre . In 1956 , he was transferred to Headquarters , Far East Air Forces in Japan as chief of the fighter branch . During that tour of duty , he briefly returned to Texas as an advisor for the Air National Guard and on April 13 ? 14 , 1957 he was honored by the dedication of its new hangar at Ellington Field in Houston as " The James P. Hagerstrom Air National Guard Facility " . Later that spring , he moved to Hickam AFB , Hawaii , when Headquarters , Far East Air Forces (renamed Pacific Air Forces) relocated from Japan . In Hawaii he earned a master 's degree in economics and was promoted to the rank of colonel in March 1959 . In 1960 , he left Hawaii for a job with the Air Force Office of Inspector General , Flight Safety Division at Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino , California .

While at Norton , he studied at Loyola Law School before attending the Industrial College of the Armed Forces , which required him to relocate to Washington , D.C. Shortly thereafter he enrolled at Georgetown University Law Center and completed his studies and earned a Bachelor of Laws degree . His next assignment was as vice commander of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing at George Air Force Base in Victorville , California . In 1965 , during the Vietnam War , he was posted to Vietnam to work for the Seventh Air Force . There , as director of the combat operations control center at Tan Son Nhut Air Base , he argued with General William Westmoreland over the Air Force 's role in the Military Assistance Command , Vietnam . Hagerstrom proposed that air assets be used against strategic targets in North Vietnam while the Westmoreland insisted that they be used solely in @-@ country to support Army ground operations . Eventually Westmoreland asked the Air Force to remove him from Vietnam . In early 1966 , the Air Force reassigned Hagerstrom to Udorn Royal

Thai Air Force Base , Thailand where he quickly set up a similar combat operations control center to conduct air interdiction operations against the Ho Chi Minh trail .

= = Retirement and death = =

After he retired from the Air Force in February 1968 , he lectured at the University of Southern California and worked for a law firm in Los Angeles . After that , he and his wife Virginia Lee Jowell and their eight children traveled the Pacific in a homemade boat , living in Hawaii , the Marshall Islands , the Federated States of Micronesia , and Guam . He met his wife in 1944 in Orlando , Florida , where she was a P @-@ 47 Thunderbolt ferry pilot and member of the Women Airforce Service Pilots . In Pohnpei , Hagerstrom practiced law , while his wife taught at a college . They eventually returned to the United States and settled in Mansfield , Louisiana , and after living there for a few years , James Hagerstrom died of stomach cancer on June 25 , 1994 , in nearby Shreveport . On July 26 , he was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery .

= = Aerial victory credits = =

Throughout his career , Hagerstrom was credited with 14 @.@ 5 victories , 6 in World War II and 8 @.@ 5 in the Korean war . He is one of seven pilots to achieve ace status flying propellor planes in World War II and jets in the Korean War . The others , George Andrew Davis , Jr . , Gabby Gabreski , Vermont Garrison , Harrison Thyng , and William T. Whisner , Jr . , are all Air Force pilots , as well as John F. Bolt of the U.S. Marine Corps .

= = Awards and decorations = =

Hagerstrom received numerous awards and decorations for his services :

= = = Distinguished Service Cross citation = = =

First Lieutenant (Air Corps) James P. Hagerstrom (ASN : 0 @-@ 727447) , United States Army Air Forces , was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy while serving as Pilot of a P @-@ 40 Fighter Airplane in the 8th Fighter Squadron , 49th Fighter Group , FIFTH Air Force , in aerial combat against enemy forces on 23 January 1944 , in the Southwest Pacific . On this date First Lieutenant Hagerstrom shot down four enemy aircraft in a single engagement . First Lieutenant Hagerstrom 's unquestionable valor in aerial combat is in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself , the 5th Air Force , and the United States Army Air Forces .