



**WORLD WAR I Pilot George C. Stauffer as he looked in 1917.**

## World War I pilot recalls experiences during war years

CLEARFIELD — When George C. Stauffer joined the Army in 1917 he didn't want to be just any soldier, he wanted to be a pilot. Through inquiries to the Army he found that he could, indeed, be a pilot. So he studied for a special test for several weeks and reported to Fort Douglas.

He had a buddy, Harold Glover of West Jordan, who also wanted to be a flier, and when they arrived at Fort Douglas, no one knew what to do about them. There were no flying fields in Utah for the Army, so the two were sent to Waco, Texas. There wasn't an air field there either, so the Army shipped them on to Wichita Falls, Texas. They didn't have an air field either, but they set the men up in tents, (there were 100 cadets and 200 ground crew) and the squadron went to work.

While the Army was busy building barracks for the men, the squadron was busy building hangars for the planes that were due in. In all, they built 8 hangars which housed about 60 aircraft. After the hangars were finished, the planes started to arrive — in crates!

The busy cadets and crews learned to assemble the planes which had been shipped as fuselages, wings, rudders, aerilons, tail skids, wheels, motors and propellers. When completely assembled, the planes had a total of 120 horsepower with a wingspan of about 35 feet. They were Curtiss and Standard aircraft, with a seat for the instructor and one for the student.

When they got the planes assembled they had to find someplace to fly them, so the squadron got busy and leveled the fields in front of the hangars and made their own landing fields.

Training in those days consisted of 100 hours of flying time. This took about 90 days to complete because they only flew one hour a day.

When their training was completed, the squadron was shipped to France, and eventually to Oucht (Oochez)

about 60 miles from Paris.

"From there we flew reconnaissance over the German lines, for the Allies," said Mr. Stauffer. "We could only fly about 22 miles into Germany because the longest we could stay in the air was one hour without refueling."

Mr. Stauffer said that he flew about 35 missions over the German lines and engaged in 10 'dog' fights, shooting down 7 German planes (confirmed,) which made him a flying Ace.

"On reconnaissance flights," continued Mr. Stauffer, "we could hold onto the 'joy' stick with our knees and hold the plane steady while we looked through our binoculars at the enemy below. We flew at about 5000 feet above the ground and could see the Germans real well. When we were engaged in fights with the enemy, our planes had machine guns mounted on the front and the propellers were timed so that we shot between rpm's of the prop."

"While flying back from Strasbour and Luxemburg, near Bordeaux, I was shot down by anti-aircraft fire (a small cannon.) It killed the engine, and I was lucky enough to be able to glide to the ground. My buddy, Harold Glover, saw that I was in trouble and he landed and picked me up (there was just barely enough room for the two of us in the single seater plane), he got to me just before a patrol of Germans got there. I had broken both my ankles and my nose as well as the landing gear on the plane.

Mr. Stauffer was hospitalized in France, and Denver, and then returned home as the war was over. He was a member of the 73rd Squadron, 5th Pursuit, and received the Flying Cross, AEF medal and the Purple Heart.

Mr. Stauffer and his wife, Maureen, live quietly at 133 Parkway drive, Clearfield. Mr. Stauffer says that since he came home he has never been up in a plane. He will be 79 years old on June 12.