DIGITAL MUSEUM DOSSIER

FIGHTER PILOTS · USAF

GREEKS IN FOREIGN COCKPITS

USAAF · USAF · 1942–1950

KOREA 1950

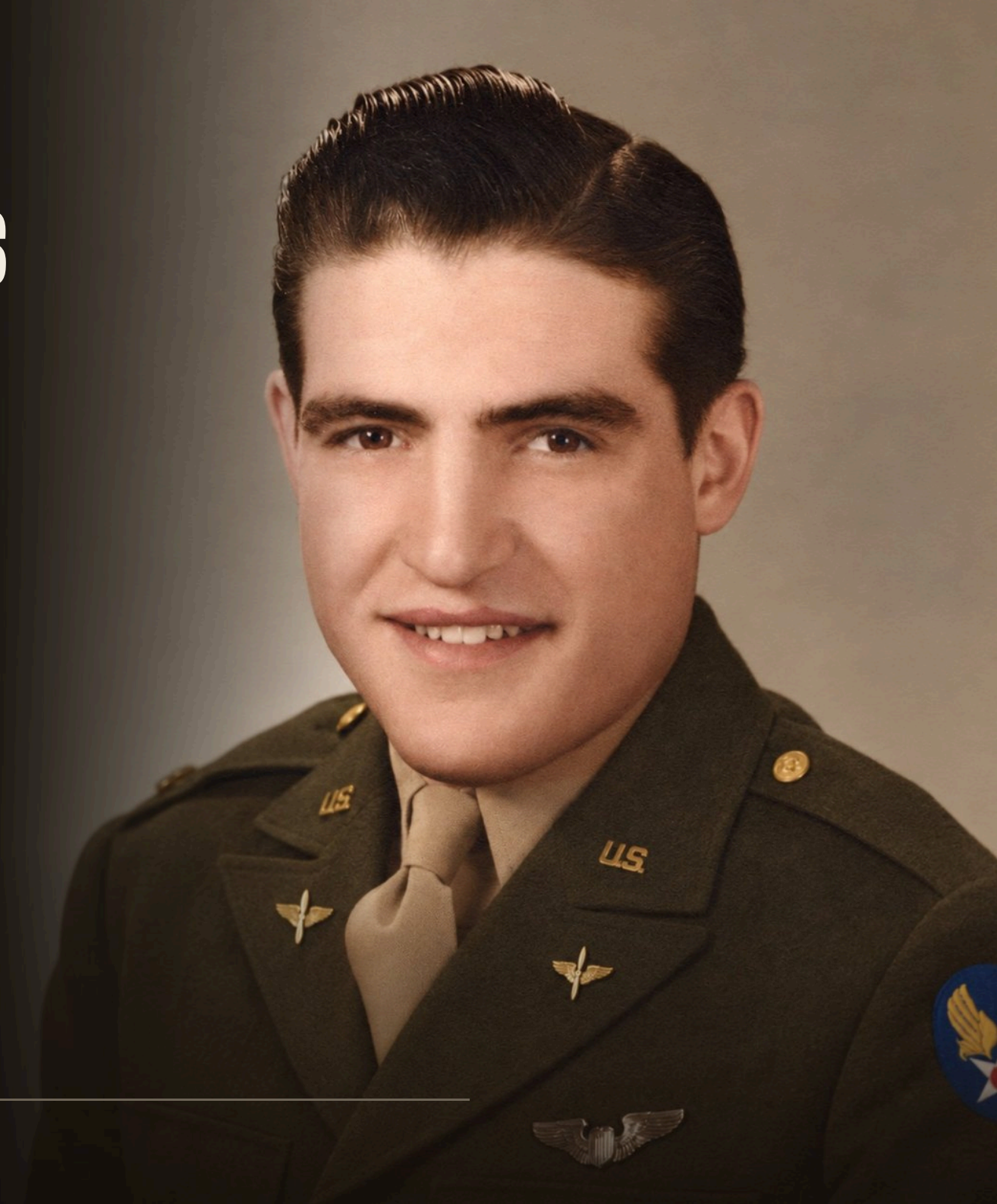
AT LEAST 65 COMBAT MISSIONS

MUSTANG FF-728

39TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON

FROM CRETE TO CHICOPEE

A GREEK-AMERICAN FAMILY AT WAR



FIRST LIEUTENANT GEORGE M.

LUKAKIS

39TH FIS · 35TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR WING · FIFTH AIR FORCE · 1924-1950

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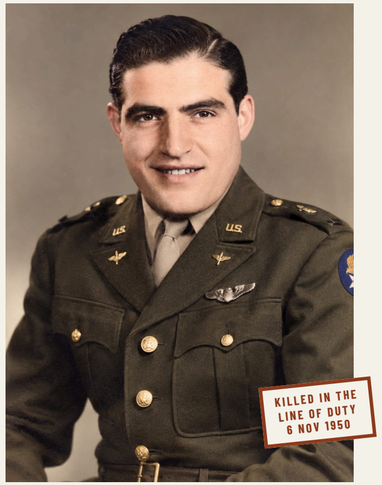
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"His eagerness to do a job and his flying ability marked him as one who would go a long way in his chosen field."

LT. COL. GERALD BROWN, TO GEORGE'S MOTHER · 7 NOVEMBER 1950

THE PILOT

George M. LUKAKIS



The son of a Cretan barber in Chicopee, Massachusetts, George Michael Lukakis earned his wings in 1944, was taken off fighters, and served out the Second World War as a flight engineer on heavy bombers. Recalled in 1948, he went back to the cockpit in Japan, this time in jets. When war broke out in Korea he flew F-80C Shooting Stars and then F-51D Mustangs in close support of the UN troops, flying at least 65 combat missions. He was killed on 6 November 1950, when his Mustang crashed on approach to Pohang.

UNIT	39th Fighter Interceptor Squadron 35th Fighter Interceptor Wing · Fifth Air Force
SERVICE NOS.	T-63921 · Flight Officer, 1944 O-944241 · Second Lieutenant, 1947

Quick facts

BORN	10 January 1924 Third of four children
PARENTS	Michael & Irene From Heraklion and Chania, Crete
HOMETOWN	Chicopee, MA Born in Springfield
SERVICE	USAAF 1942–46 USAF Reserve, recalled 1948
RANK	First Lieutenant Pilot, 39th FIS
AIRCRAFT	F-80C · F-51D Earlier B-29 flight engineer
COMBAT	At least 65 missions Korea, 9 Jul – 11 Oct 1950
DIED	6 November 1950 Pohang, Korea · aged 26

1924 — BORN — 10 January

1942 — ENLISTS — Army Enlisted Reserve

1944 — WINGS — Flight Officer, Spence Field

1945 — FLIGHT ENGINEER — B-29, Roswell

1948 — RECALLED — 39th FIS, Japan

1950 — KOREA — F-80C and F-51D

6 Nov 1950 — KILLED — Pohang, Korea

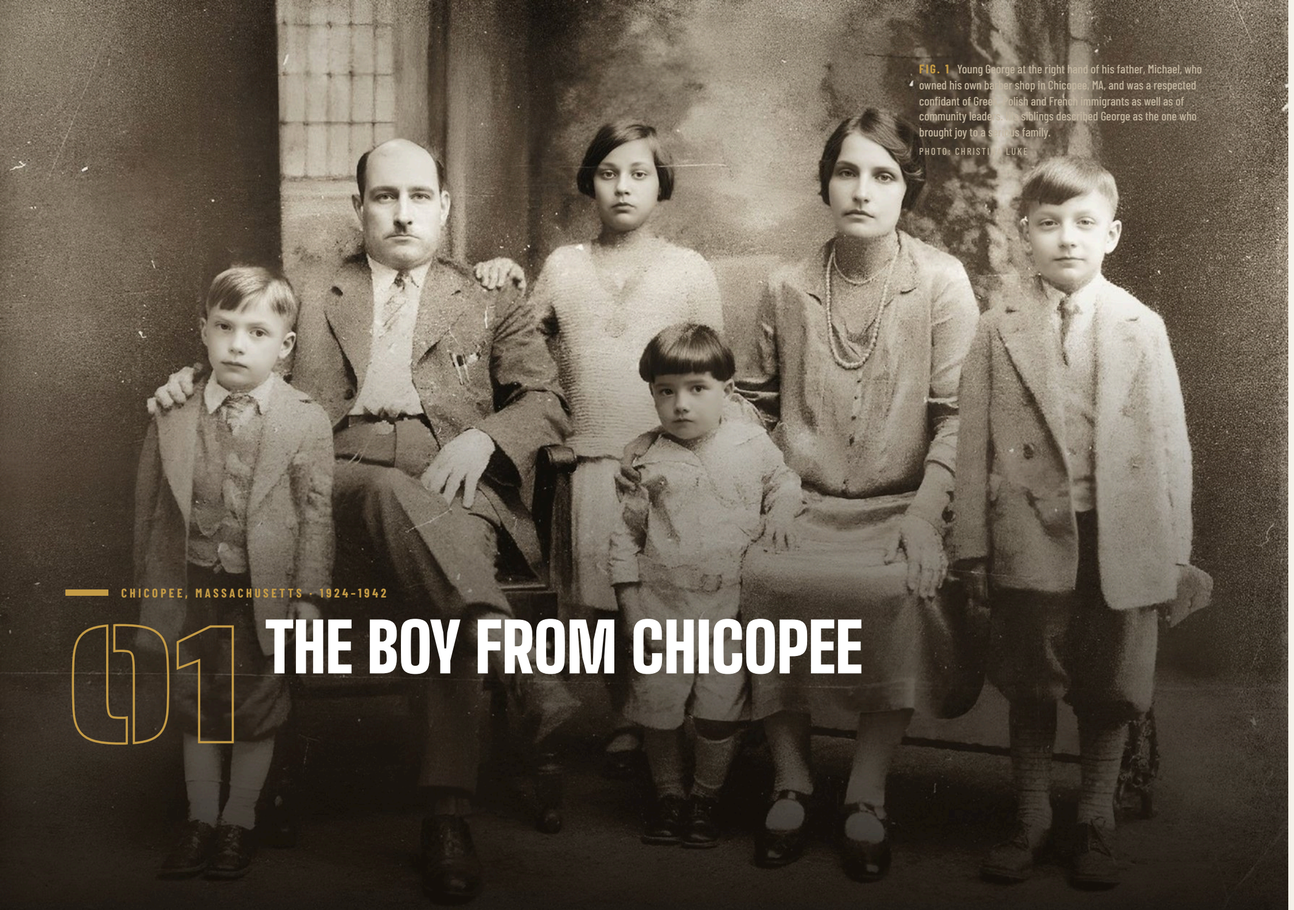


FIG. 1. Young George at the right hand of his father, Michael, who owned his own barber shop in Chicopee, MA, and was a respected confidant of Greek, Polish and French immigrants as well as of community leaders. Siblings described George as the one who brought joy to a serious family.
PHOTO: CHRISTIE LUKE

CHICOPEE, MASSACHUSETTS · 1924–1942

01 THE BOY FROM CHICOPEE

Before he was a fighter pilot, before the military orders and the medals, George Michael Lukakis was a boy in a Greek-American family trying to make its way in Massachusetts. He was born in Springfield on 10 January 1924, the third of four children of Michael and Irene Lukakis. His parents had crossed the Atlantic from Crete—Michael from Heraklion, Irene, née Kalouramakis, from Chania, travelling with her brother John. The family remembered their passage through Ellis Island. A surviving birth-register extract, recorded just four days after George's arrival, places the family at 27 Bond Street, Springfield, and gives his father's occupation as barber. The mother's name is rendered differently on that extract, a documentary variation that has not been conclusively resolved.[1,2]

The streets around Chicopee offered the family a second home without erasing the first. Michael kept a barbershop on Exchange Street; contemporary directories place his trade there in the 1920s and early 1930s. The children sometimes polished customers' shoes to earn a little money. Later the family lived in a two-family house on Springfield Street, only a short walk from the shop and from P. E. Bowe Elementary School, which George and his younger brother John attended. Their lives extended through the Greek Orthodox Church of Saints Constantine and Helen at Chicopee Falls: choir rehearsals, picnics, family gatherings and the close company of cousins. According to the family's account, Michael stood as godfather to many children. This was an immigrant household whose Greek traditions were neither ceremonial relics nor distant memories; they were part of ordinary life.[3,4] That childhood changed when Michael died while George was still an adolescent. The family record does not establish the date, but it remembers the practical consequences clearly. Irene found work in a garment factory; the children did what they could. George and John hauled vegetables with a wagon, weeded tobacco fields and later worked after school at Westinghouse. Responsibility arrived early, alongside the wish to help their mother. When war came, all three brothers would enter aviation service—Nick in naval aviation, George and John in the Army air arm. The family remembered two impulses behind that decision: the desire to serve their country and the hope of sending some of their pay home. George's own application for military flying was taking shape in 1942, when schoolteachers and workshop supervisors began to write on his behalf. One of the first letters was written by a teacher at Chicopee High School on 19 June 1942. Its simplicity says much about the qualities that those around George saw in him:

> "Gentlemen, I take pleasure in recommending George M. Lukakis who is an applicant for admission into the Air Cadet Corps. I have known the young man for the past five years. He possesses good intelligence and character."[5]

Another school endorsement, signed by C. M. Bartholomew on 15 September, remembered a dependable young man, able to shoulder responsibility and work alongside others. Yet George was also developing the hands-on skills that would follow him through his flying career. Since 11 May 1942 he had been attending the G. G. Mackintosh Apprentice School at Springfield Armory. On 6 November a supervisor described his work with lathes, milling machines, shapers and grinders and spoke of the conscientious apprentice behind the tools. The surviving letter is worth hearing in its own words:[6]

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY · APPRENTICE SCHOOL · 6 NOVEMBER 1942 — ARCHIVE

"George M. Lukakis has been a student in the Apprentice School at the Springfield Armory from May 11, 1942 to the present time. Mr. Lukakis has been operating lathes, millers, shapers, and surface grinders, and has tool crib experience. His instructors report him a willing worker with good mechanical aptitude in his shop work. His classroom subjects consisting of Engineering Drawing, Mathematics, Shop Theory and First Aid, average 'B'. His leave record is good. All his instructors have found him to be a conscientious worker, willing and cooperative. He is a fine type of student and a perfect gentleman at all times."[7]

A week later, on 13 November, George signed his formal application to become an Aviation

Cadet. He gave 524 Springfield Street in Chicopee as his mailing address and chose flying duty. The application reached the First Corps Area in Boston by 23 November; the examining board, meeting on 24 November, found him qualified and recommended him. There would still be a long road between that recommendation and the silver wings he wanted to wear. He had made his choice, however, and in a few weeks the Army would take him away from Chicopee.[8]



FIG. 2 George, home on leave, with his girlfriend Vanetta and his younger brother John at a Sunday afternoon gathering in Chicopee. Raised in a close-knit Greek-American family, the brothers helped their mother Irene after their father Michael's death, taking whatever work they could find. Both later served in the armed forces during the Second World War.
PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE



FIG. 3 Proud mother Irene with her sons George (11) and John (10) in front of their two-family home on Springfield Street. Their lives changed dramatically months later, when their father Michael died and Irene became the breadwinner, finding work in a textile factory.
PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE



FIG. 4 Three sons of Michael and Irene Lukakis, Greek immigrants from Crete, together in uniform. From left: John, the youngest, an aerial gunner on heavy bombers in the Mediterranean; Nick, a gunner in U.S. Naval Aviation; and George, whose flying career spanned both the Second World War and Korea. George entered the U.S. Army Air Forces in 1942, earned his pilot's wings in August 1944 and went on to serve as a flight engineer on B-17, B-24 and B-29 heavy bombers. Recalled to active duty in 1948, he joined the 39th Fighter Interceptor Squadron in Japan and returned to fighters, first the F-80 Shooting Star and then the F-51 Mustang in Korea. He was killed in action on 6 November 1950, aged 26.
PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE



FIG. 5 George is barely visible, resting his head on a girl dressed in black in the front row, centre. Judging by the Christmas tree, this is probably a Christmas or New Year celebration of the Greek-American community of Springfield.
PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE

THE GREEKS OF CHICOPEE

Greek immigrants began settling in Chicopee in the 1890s, drawn by its growing industries. Many came from Lagadia in Arcadia and found work in local factories, above all the J. Stevens Arms and Tool Company, while a Cretan community grew up in Chicopee Center. By 1915 the city's Greek population had reached 325. In 1918 the community founded the parish of Saints Constantine and Helen, where regular services began in 1921.[127] Its coffeehouses in Chicopee Center and Chicopee Falls served as gathering places, keeping friendships, language and traditions alive across generations.[128]



FIG. 6 Greek immigrants were among the many workers in Springfield's bustling textile mills in the early 20th century, where Hellenic families found steady work and began building new lives in Massachusetts. George's mother, Irene, was forced to work in such a mill to raise her family after Michael's death.
PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE

THE FAMILY

Michael Lukakis · from Heraklion, barber in Chicopee
Irene (Kalouramakis) · from Chania
Children · Mary and Nick, George, and the youngest, John

"A perfect gentleman at all times."
SPRINGFIELD ARMORY APPRENTICE SCHOOL · 1942



UNITED STATES ARMY AIR FORCES · 1942–1946

02 LEARNING TO FLY—AND LEARNING TO BEGIN AGAIN

FIG. 7 George Lukakis, probably during the advanced stage of his flight training: a young cadet on the brink of earning his wings.
PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE



FIG. 8 George smiles at the camera, probably during basic training in the US Army Reserve, one of the earliest stages of his military journey.
PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE

George enlisted in the Army's Enlisted Reserve Corps at Springfield on 3 December 1942, initially as a private. He entered active duty on 28 January 1943. Atlantic City supplied the first weeks of basic training; Goldsboro, North Carolina, was a brief stop before he joined an aircrew college-training detachment at Syracuse University in March. Syracuse meant classrooms as well as flying: mathematics and physics, history, geography, English, military instruction and aviation regulations. His final grade sheet, preserved with his personal records, even records ten hours of flight training. Like thousands of wartime aviation students, he was being tested for much more than his enthusiasm for aircraft.[9,10]

At Syracuse he was formally authorised for duties involving regular flying during July and early August 1943, though the order does not list individual flights. The next destination was Nashville Army Air Center, where the Army decided what place each student would occupy in the air. George's transfer was scheduled for 7 August. There he signed his acceptance of pilot training on 23 August. This was the moment when the hope expressed in his application became a definite training assignment.[11,12,13,14]

Even among the impersonal paperwork are glimpses of the son and brother at home. At Nashville, George, unmarried and without children, named Irene as his beneficiary and Mary as the alternate. He had put pilot training first on a preference form, followed by bombardier and navigator. The Army designated him an Aviation Cadet effective 1 October 1943 and sent him to Maxwell Field, Alabama, for pre-flight school. The machinery of wartime training had its own relentless rhythm: finish one course, pack a bag, report to the next.[15,16]

FROM CADET TO PILOT

Wartime pilot training in the US Army Air Forces was a production line built to turn civilians into combat pilots in little more than a year. Each stage lasted about nine weeks, and a cadet who failed at any point could be "washed out" and sent to another aircrew trade.

Classification. At centres such as Nashville, aptitude, coordination and medical tests decided whether a cadet would train as pilot, navigator or bombardier.
George: Nashville, summer 1943.

Pre-Flight. Ground school without aircraft: mathematics, physics, aerodynamics, engines, navigation, Morse code and aircraft recognition, with drill and hard physical training.
George: Maxwell Field, Alabama.

Primary. Often at civilian contract schools with Army supervision, on open-cockpit biplanes such as the PT-17 Stearman: take-offs, landings, stalls, spins and the first solo.
George: Camden, South Carolina.

Basic. A heavier, faster aircraft, usually the BT-13 Valiant, with Army instructors: instrument and night flying, cross-country navigation and formation.
George: Bush Field, Georgia.

Advanced. Single-engine AT-6s for future fighter pilots, with aerobatics and gunnery; twin-engine AT-10s or AT-17s for bomber and transport crews. Graduates received their silver wings as second lieutenants or flight officers.
George: Spence Field, Georgia; wings on 4 August 1944.

Transition. Only then did a new pilot meet a combat type, for George the P-40. His path was unusual: from fighters to bomber crews, back to propeller fighters and finally to jets, on which he flew his first combat missions in Korea.



FIG. 9 Curtiss P-40 Warhawks on the flight line at Spence Army Airfield, Georgia, during the Second World War. AT-6 Texan advanced trainers were also based there; both types were used for the advanced training of young aviators.
PHOTO: USAAF VIA WIKIPEDIA

Maxwell was the threshold to the flying schools. George belonged to Class 44-F, Group III, Squadron K; his ground-school average was 79.4. In November he qualified as a sharpshooter with the .45-calibre pistol, one of the many parts of military instruction that had little to do with the sensations of flight. Early in December the cadets were directed to Camden, South Carolina. The movement orders refer to departure by train and the prescribed last breakfast at Maxwell, small bureaucratic details that evoke how an entire generation moved from post to post. The records distinguish the scheduled journey from the dates on which he was actually entered on the schools' rolls.[17,18,19,20]

At Camden, the flying began in earnest. George practised on the Link instrument trainer and learned to handle an aeroplane alone. He made his first solo after 11 hours and 52 minutes of dual instruction. By the end of Primary flying in March 1944, his record showed 224 landings and ninety hours in the air, including 54 hours and fifteen minutes flown solo. Those figures represent real repetition: approach after approach, circuits and landings until the movements became familiar. They also represent something less easily entered on a form—the distance a young apprentice from Chicopee had travelled from the workshop floor to the controls of an aircraft.[21,22]

March brought another transfer, this time to Bush Field at Augusta, Georgia, for Basic flying. His new aircraft included the BT-13 Valiant; he soloed it after six hours and 52 minutes of dual instruction. The school credited him with 86 hours and fifty minutes of flying and recorded that he had satisfactorily completed the course. An administrative redesignation of the training unit in May did not mean George had changed station. He was moving forward on the same path, with Spence Field in Moultrie, Georgia, waiting at the end of May. By then his Primary and Basic flying together amounted to 176 hours and fifty minutes.[23,24,25,26]

His progress was not uniformly smooth. One instrument check at Georgia Aero Tech graded him average overall but recorded weaker marks for particular manoeuvres. The later record must be allowed to show both the difficulties and the improvements: at Spence he would pass his instrument test on 27 July. The personal questionnaire that he completed there in May 1944 also gives a portrait from his own hand. He described his Greek as good in reading, speaking and understanding, but fair in writing; he noted some engineering study at Northeastern and spoke of his machine-tool work at Springfield Armory. The technical side of flying was already part of his character, not a specialty suddenly discovered years later.[27,28,29,30]

Spence Field brought Advanced Single-Engine training and, with it, new scrutiny. The faculty board recommended George for pilot rating and appointment as a Flight Officer upon graduation. Other rating cards were less generous, especially in the category of judgment; the assessments differed from school to school and from instructor to instructor. A fitness card, by contrast, shows improvement across his three flying schools. The training records tell a recognisably human story: a capable young man learning a difficult craft, not a flawless hero moving untouched from one triumph to another. On 27 July he passed his instrument test.[31,32,33,34,35]

On 4 August 1944 George received his appointment as Flight Officer T-63921, rated as a pilot. His three schools had credited a total of 250 hours and 45 minutes of flying, with 153 hours and 25 minutes solo. Yet his next assignment, transition to the Curtiss P-40 Warhawk and advanced fighter-gunnery work, proved much harder. Landing technique and judgment became the central concerns. In one incident the aeroplane's left wing was dragged after a bounced landing; later attempts continued to

FLYING TRAINING		1943–44
CAMDEN, SC	Primary · first solo after 11:52 dual	90:00
	of which solo	54:15
BUSH FIELD, GA	Basic · BT-13, solo after 6:52 dual	86:50
SPENCE FIELD, GA	Advanced single-engine	73:55
TOTAL, 4 AUG 1944	153:25 solo	250:45



FIG. 10 George Lukakis (kneeling, far right) with the rest of his crew in front of their bomber, B-29-10-BA 42-63393 'Rush Order'. In wartime it belonged to the 768th BS, 462nd BG. It left the US on 27 September 1944, reached India on 11 October and flew many missions in the CBI theatre before returning to the States via Guam on 23 February 1945.
PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE AND NATIONAL ARCHIVES 66384 AC



FIG. 11 A North American AT-6 Texan, the advanced trainer on which George flew his gunnery practice at Spence Field in August 1944.
PHOTO: USAAF VIA WIKIPEDIA

trouble his instructors. The final instructor's assessment of 8 September 1944 was severe, and the document should not be softened into a success story:[36,37,38,39,40]

INSTRUCTOR'S FINAL STATEMENT · SPENCE FIELD · 8 SEPTEMBER 1944 — ARCHIVE

"On AT-6 backseat transition ride student in first hour showed inconsistency in judgement and planning, being unable to land the airplane straight, due to a tendency to look out one side when close to the ground. Coordination was sloppy in the airwork called for. Student was given extra ride on which he showed enough improvement to be released for P-40 flying.
On student's third mission in a P-40, he landed in a crab on wheels, bounced and hit in a crab again dragging left wing for minor damage. Student was given a check in an AT-6 and found to be proficient enough on this ride to continue training.
Student thereafter attempted a cross-tee landing, then tried to land with no flaps, and on his next landing, hit in a crab on wheels and went around, came around and did the same thing again, almost getting another wing-tip. On the basis of the above, it is definitely felt that this student is not qualified to fly P-40 on basis of poor judgement, technique, and ability in spite of ability to pass AT-6 checks. Student's appearance, attitude and actions are not good officer-material."[41]

George was told to appear before a faculty board on 13 September and was given the opportunity to seek counsel and produce evidence. The board recommended that his P-40 fighter-gunnery training be discontinued for flying deficiency. When asked what type of flying he would prefer instead, he answered, "Single Engine Miscellaneous, sir." The ruling was a painful setback, but it did not annul the pilot wings he had earned. On 14 September he was assigned as a utility pilot; at the end of the month he received orders for Amarillo, Texas. The Army had not finished with him, and he had not finished with aviation.[42,43,44]

At Amarillo he entered a preliminary flight-engineer course and then went to Lowry Field, Colorado. The new training demanded the same mechanical understanding he had developed in Chicopee and Springfield. In February 1945 he successfully completed the prescribed flight-engineer course and received the rating of Aircraft Observer (Flight Engineer). He was still expected to take part in aerial flying, and in February an operations order sent him to Pueblo for a B-29 crew-training flight. The change of specialty was not a denial of his pilot rating; it was another way to serve in the air.[45,46,47]

Next came the B-29 Superfortress, at Roswell Army Air Field in New Mexico. A contemporary school report records his transition course from 5 March through 29 April 1945, notes that he graduated, and rates his academic work "Excellent." Later administrative summaries used slightly different end dates, but the school report is explicit about its own course period. At Gulfport, Mississippi, Major George L. Simmons gave him a Very Satisfactory evaluation on 1 July, writing: "This officer has a good attitude and is very cooperative." There is a quiet symmetry here: the boy praised for his mechanical aptitude in 1942 had found a demanding technical role aboard one of the largest bombers of the war.[48,48]

By the summer he was on a movement roster for Kearney Army Air Field with ten other men designated Crew No. 19. The roster establishes their transfer; it does not prove they flew combat missions together. Subsequent records place him at Kearney, Pratt and Westover before release from active service. At Fort Devens in February 1946, the Army arranged his terminal leave and final separation. The formal summary of his wartime service recognised both sides of his work: pilot and B-29 flight engineer. He had never followed quite the straight line suggested by a training-school poster, but he had stayed with flying and emerged with skills, experience and the determination to return.[50,51,52,53]



FIG. 12 Members of the 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron in postwar Japan, August 1949: more than 40 officers and enlisted men in front of a P-51 propeller on the flight line, with the maintenance hangars behind them. Seated at the front, on the left of the three men in the centre, is Lt. Lukakis. A year later the squadron would be at war in Korea.
PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE

CHICOPEE AND JAPAN · 1946–JUNE 1950

03 A SECOND CHANCE IN THE AIR

When he returned to civilian life in Massachusetts, George worked again for a living rather than retiring into a wartime story. A signed qualification form records employment with Sewak Company of America and Savage Arms Corporation; the recorded periods partly overlap, so the exact transition cannot be reconstructed with certainty. He continued to belong to the Air Reserve. In April 1947 he accepted an appointment as Second Lieutenant, and before that month was over he was asking for copies of his qualification records. By October the Westover Field reserve detachment was arranging the documentation needed for him to return to flying status. The desire to sit in a cockpit had outlasted the discouragement of the P-40.[54,55,56,57]

On 19 May 1948 George volunteered for extended active duty with the new United States Air Force, including service overseas. He was called back effective 30 September. At Hamilton Air Force Base he filed a new life-insurance application naming his mother as principal beneficiary. His name appeared on the overseas passenger roster of 21 October; the surviving roster documents his selection for movement, not the precise day the ship or aircraft departed. By the end of November he had been reassigned within the 35th Fighter Group in Japan, and from December he was serving with the 39th Fighter Squadron. His commanders gave him additional work as historical officer, decorations officer, recruiter and assistant maintenance officer—duties that made use of his organisational and mechanical experience without replacing his primary role as a fighter pilot.[58,59,60,61,62] An Air Force order in January 1949 confirmed his status as a pilot authorised to fly regularly. He completed phases of the Officers' Interim Training Program in Japan, and by June his effectiveness report placed him at Johnson Air Force Base, both flying fighters and helping oversee aircraft maintenance. Captain Ervin C. Ethell looked beyond the tidy rank and assignment columns. He saw a warm personality, strength, alertness and a man willing to take responsibility. His signed assessment said:[63,64,65]

OFFICER EFFECTIVENESS REPORT · CAPTAIN ERVIN C. ETHELL · 30 JUNE 1949 — ARCHIVE

"This Officer has a warm personality and his devotion to duty is above average."

"Lt. Lukakis is mentally alert and physically strong. He is capable and willing to accept additional responsibility. He is interested in technical subjects and makes every effort to improve himself."

"Retention on active duty is recommended."[66]

Those lines mattered because they were written by men who worked beside George. Lieutenant Colonel Archie M. Burke reviewed the report. The interest in technical subjects was not a decorative observation: it connected the young machinist, the B-29 flight engineer and the fighter pilot now maintaining his place in a jet-age air force.[67]

The most immediate glimpse of George in Japan, however, comes not from a superior's report but from a letter home. On 22 July 1949 he wrote to Mary about the oppressive summer heat, a day at the beach, a car that was suffering on Japanese roads, and a pearl ring he had bought for her birthday. Between the jokes and apologies for not writing sooner, he inserted the simple assurance that his flying was going well. The surviving family text reads:

GEORGE TO HIS SISTER MARY · 22 JULY 1949

"Dear Mary, how are you? Sorry I haven't had time to answer all your letters. I'm always really glad to hear from you. As you probably already know, I'm not much good at writing letters, especially in this heat we have here. You can't sleep at night, it's unbearably hot. The temperature today is about 102°F in the shade. My flying is going fine. Last night I went down to the club and had a good meal; it was the first meal I'd had all day. Mary, I bought you a pearl ring for your birthday, but I won't send it yet because I'd have to pay customs duty. The law that will let us send duty-free goods to the States hasn't passed Congress yet. As soon as the restriction is lifted I'll send it to you. I didn't get the chance to wish you a happy birthday. I'm very sorry I didn't write sooner. Last Sunday I went to the beach and got burned like the devil. The sun was incredibly strong. The funny thing is I didn't realise I was burning until I'd left. I drove about 70 miles along the coast, to the other side of Yokohama. We went with a crowd of friends and girls (of course) (not Japanese). We had a wonderful time. My car really suffers on these roads. I'm thinking about whether to sell it and get a new one. I don't know yet, I haven't decided. By the way, how is Johnny doing at school? I hope he's learning something. I'm trying to put a little money aside."

The service records continue beside that cheerful letter. A temporary medical restriction kept George from flying for part of August 1949; it was revoked on the 22nd. His second evaluation by Ethell, in November, called him industrious, aggressive and highly cooperative, while noting that he needed more seasoning in military matters. It was a measured judgment rather than a ceremonial tribute. Major Gerald Brown, later commanding the 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, would see enough in George to recommend promotion the following spring.[68,69]

RECOMMENDATION FOR PROMOTION · MAJOR GERALD BROWN · 7 MARCH 1950 — ARCHIVE

"I highly recommend Lieutenant Lukakis for promotion to the grade of First Lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve. This officer applies himself in a highly efficient manner and is capable of any and all assignments given him. He has the necessary character, experience, and initiative to perform his duties in an excellent manner. In view of his high qualifications, I am strongly desirous of retaining Lieutenant Lukakis in my command if promoted. He has no disciplinary action pending against him. This officer has been on extended active duty for one year and four months."[70]

In a separate memorandum Brown described George's actual place within the squadron. The wording is direct and unusually strong:

"Lt Lukakis, while assigned to this organization, has performed primary duty as Fighter Pilot in an excellent manner. He is performing additional duty as Group Mess Officer. His manner of performance of duty has been far above average. Lt Lukakis has clearly shown that he is deserving of promotion to the grade of 1st Lt, USAFR."[71]

The recommendation moved through the command, and George's promotion to First Lieutenant took effect on 16 May 1950. A personnel action dated later that month changed his formal flying specialty from single-engine fighter pilot to "Pilot Jet." Those designations do not furnish a flight log, but they make one fact unmistakable: by the spring of 1950 George had reclaimed a fighter-pilot career on active service. He was also performing additional squadron duties, including those of Group Mess Officer, while preparing with his unit for whatever might come.[72,73,74,75]

Another short medical restriction in late May and early June concerned lumbar muscle inflammation; the records do not connect it to an aircraft crash, to combat or to his eventual death. On 3 June George was among the pilots named for an F-51 aerial-gunnery target-towing exercise. The war was not yet in the skies around him. On 25 June 1950 North Korea crossed into the South, and ordinary station life in Japan gave way to a conflict for which the 39th had little time to prepare.[76]



FIG. 13 A candid, warm photograph of Lt. George M. Lukakis relaxing in his quarters, probably in Japan, around 1949.
PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE



FIG. 14 The F-80 outclassed every North Korean aircraft early in the war, but its short range and need for long runways were a handicap, partly overcome with the improvised 'Misawa' tanks developed by the 49th Fighter-Bomber Wing, which added over 220 gallons of fuel. This aircraft, armed with two rockets and carrying Misawa tanks, belonged to Lt. Robert A. Coffin, a squadronmate of 'Luke', who shot down a Yak-9 on 15 July 1950.

PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE

KOREA · JULY–AUGUST 1950

04 THE SHOOTING STARS GO TO WAR

By the first week of July the pilots of the 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron knew their assignment had changed. Their unit had been in Japan, engaged in training, maintenance and reorganisation; now it was going to war. Major Gerald Brown told his men on 2 July that they would soon leave for an undisclosed destination. George Lukakis was among the fighter pilots facing the abrupt transition from peacetime flying to combat. The squadron was operating the Lockheed F-80C Shooting Star, a fast jet whose speed was impressive but whose range would soon become a problem over Korea.[77]

Ashiya, on the south-western Japanese coast, brought the fighters closer to the peninsula. It also made possible a punishing operating routine: long trips across the water, limited time to find and attack targets, and the constant calculation of fuel needed to come home. The F-80's short endurance and demand for adequate runways shaped what its pilots could do. Improvised external fuel tanks helped, but not enough

to remove the difficulty. George and his comrades were discovering how different a combat sortie felt from a training flight in Japan.[78]

The squadron began combat flying on 9 July 1950. Its own history says that almost every pilot flew his first combat mission that day, George among them. Airfields, transport routes and concentrations of troops on the ground became targets, and missions followed one another in rapid succession. George was no longer a young man working to prove that he belonged in an aircraft. He was a combat pilot, operating over a fast-moving battlefield in a country that few of the men had expected to see.

His decorations soon began to mark the tempo. A signed squadron certificate records ten F-80C operational flights between 16 and 28 July. The original Fifth Air Force order awarded him the Air Medal, and Major Brown supported the First Oak Leaf Cluster for another series of ten combat missions. Each award arose from particular documented flying, not from a later attempt to calculate a grand total from newspaper reports. For all their official language, the certifications reveal a striking reality: George and the other pilots were repeatedly climbing into their aircraft and returning to the same war, day after day.[79,80,81,82]

The next ten-sortie certificate covers the beginning of August and underlies the Second Oak Leaf Cluster. Its signed list runs through 5 August, while the subsequently issued General Order gives 4 August as the endpoint—a discrepancy preserved in the source record rather than wished away. The combat missions themselves are not in doubt. They took place while United Nations forces were holding a precarious position on the Korean peninsula, and the 39th was being called upon to support them from the air.[83,84,85]

On 7 August 1950 George flew an armed-reconnaissance mission that would later bring him the Distinguished Flying Cross. The full original text of the individual decoration order has not yet been recovered; surviving recommendation and award records identify that date, and contemporary newspaper reporting supplies a citation excerpt. It was a distinct action, not to be confused with a later sortie on 10 October. At the time, of course, the pilots still had work to do. A new aircraft, an old familiar propeller fighter, was about to change the shape of their war.[86]

1st	**9 JULY 1950** combat mission for George and most of the 39th
10	**16–28 JULY** F-80C operational flights · Air Medal
10	**EARLY AUGUST** more sorties · Second Oak Leaf Cluster
DFC	**7 AUGUST** armed reconnaissance, awarded posthumously



FIG. 15 Lukakis poses with two fellow pilots on top of a 39th FIS F-80C Shooting Star.

PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE





FIG. 17 By 1950 the F-51D served mostly with Guard and Reserve squadrons at home, yet it proved ideal for relieving the pressure on the UN forces. Its range and endurance let it roam over the battlefield far longer than the F-80C, it tolerated Korea's rough airstrips, and besides six .50-calibre guns it carried napalm, bombs and rockets. Here George stands in front of the F-51D 'Marys Lil' Lamb', most likely in Japan.

PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE; FURTHER INFORMATION NATIONALINTEREST.ORG

"Almost every pilot in the 39th flew his first combat mission on 9 July 1950, George among them."

39TH FIGHTER-INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON · KOREA, JULY 1950

FIG. 16 Snugged in tight in 'show formation', Lt. George Lukakis in F-51D 44-73728 formates with Lt. Robert Dunnavant in the autumn of 1949, just before the 35th Fighter Interceptor Wing converted to F-80Cs. '728' was then placed in storage, only to be recalled to the 39th FIS. The two antennas on the fuselage spine belong to the AN/ARA-8 airborne homing set; the single antenna under the fuselage served the SCR-522 VHF radio. Dunnavant was injured in a bailout on 18 September 1950; Lukakis was killed at Pohang on 6 November. The same aircraft, a P-51D-25-NA redesignated F-51D in 1948 and carrying the buzz number FF-728, appears in the profile on page 22.

PHOTO: ROBERT DUNNAVANT

KOREA · AUGUST–OCTOBER 1950

05 MUSTANGS OVER KOREA

The Mustang was hardly the future of jet aviation, yet in Korea it offered something the F-80 often could not: time over the battlefield. With greater endurance and an ability to operate from rougher, shorter fields, the North American F-51D could remain near ground troops and return to the fight. There were costs, including the exposure of its liquid-cooled engine to ground fire. The 39th made the change under pressure. On 9 August 1950 the squadron received orders to move to Pohang in South Korea, where a fighter pilot could feel much closer to the war he was fighting. Pohang was no comfortable new home. The battle for the perimeter was near, the front unstable and the danger to the airfield immediate. Friendly artillery helped suppress enemy fire on 11 August, but within days the squadron was ordered back across the water to Tsuiki in Japan. Missions continued, and aircraft and pilots were lost. For

George, the return to a piston-engined fighter also had an irony that no service record fully captures: in 1944 his P-40 transition had ended in failure, while in 1950 he was flying the Mustang in combat as a commissioned fighter pilot.[87]

The mission records are the surest way to follow the pace of those months. One signed certificate lists ten F-51 missions in the period 8–26 August and underpins the Third Oak Leaf Cluster. Another, dated 22 September and signed by Major Charles J. Bowers, lists ten further F-51 sorties between 26 August and 3 September for the Fourth Cluster. It gives individual dates and operating areas. These are George's personal missions, not squadron totals, and the ten August–September sorties must not be counted once again on top of the later cumulative total.[88,89,90] Even while he flew combat sorties, George continued to receive additional duties; a late-August squadron order assigned him work outside the cockpit. In September the unit's tactical-support attachment changed, and the operational rhythm continued. A signed certificate establishes that George had completed fifty-eight combat missions between 9 July and 15 September 1950. His service brought further temporary-duty orders in the second half of September. Whether measured in sorties, hours or successive moves from airfield to airfield, the record shows how intensely the 39th was being used.[91,92,93]

In October the squadron returned to Pohang, the field it had been forced to leave in August. The 40th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron and the Australians of No. 77 Squadron RAAF were operating in the same wider environment. Another order on 12 October continued to name George for additional duties with the group. Such entries can feel prosaic after accounts of low-level attacks, but they remind us that a squadron depended not only on men in the air but also on those who kept its daily life working between missions.[94]

KOREA · AWARDS AND COMBAT RECORD

06 WHAT THE CITATIONS REMEMBER

As the war continued, the Air Force's language of recognition tried to record what the crews had done. The Air Medal and five Oak Leaf Clusters were not six different decorations, but the original medal followed by five further awards. The surviving Fifth Cluster citation conveys the hazardous nature of the missions more vividly than any tally:

The Fifth Oak Leaf Cluster was based on another series of F-51D missions. It was approved in November, after George's death. The award continued an already established sequence of operational recognition, and its approval date must not be confused with the date on which the actions were flown. In the language of citations, a few lines had to stand for the hazards of many individual missions and the decisions made on each of them.[96,97]

AIR MEDAL · FIFTH OAK LEAF CLUSTER · CITATION

ARCHIVE

"In the course of these operations, strafing and dive bombing were made from dangerously low altitudes, destroying and damaging enemy installations and equipment. Through his ability, initiative and courage Lieutenant Lukakis has brought great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force."[95]

The records also demand care. A flight to "Wonson," as one original certificate spells it, took place on 10 October; it was not the 7 August action cited for the Distinguished Flying Cross. Likewise, the Fifth Cluster certificate and the issued order use different end dates for the covered period. The original orders establish the sequence: Air Medal in July; first and second Clusters in September; third and fourth in October; fifth in November. Those distinctions matter precisely because they allow the story to be told without embellishment.[98,99]

Major Thomas D. Robertson recommended George posthumously for the Distinguished Flying Cross in December 1950, praising his "outstanding skill, aggressiveness, and courage during aerial flight against the enemy." Senior officers endorsed the recommendation, and the decoration records identify the qualifying action as the armed-reconnaissance mission of 7 August. A newspaper excerpt printed in May 1951 credited attacks on vehicles, an oil-storage depot, a supply dump and radio stations in the Wonsan area. These were the claims of the

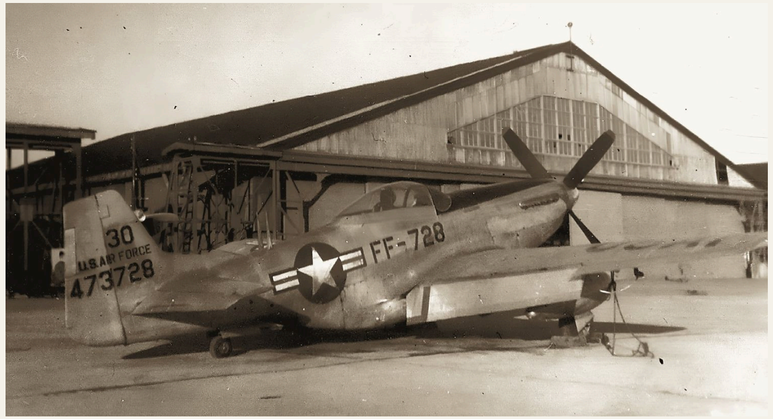


FIG. 18 George Lukakis' Mustang, F-51D 44-73728, in front of a hangar at Yokota Air Base, Japan, before the Korean War. In the first days of the war, F-51s from Taegu dropped 500 lb bombs filled with thermite and napalm on North Korean tanks and troops. According to one officer at Taegu, "as soon as we would start dropping thermite or napalm in their vicinity they would immediately scatter and break any forward movement."

PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE



FIG. 19 Korea, 1950: snatching a bite and a drink at Taegu airfield while awaiting rearming, four Australian and American fighter pilots. From left: Lt. Stanley Stone, USAF; Lt. Bill Horsman of Flemington, Sydney; F/O Ken McLeod of Clayton, Melbourne; and Lt. George M. Lukakis, USAF, 25 August 1950.

PHOTO: ALLAN LAMBERT

contemporary citation as published, not an independently checked count of enemy losses. The full individual order remains to be located; nothing in the evidence requires changing the mission date.[100,101] How many combat missions did George fly before he died? The firm contemporary total is fifty-eight through 15 September. A later signed certificate identifies seven more dated flights up to 11 October, giving a documented minimum of sixty-five. Newspapers printed other figures, among them sixty-one, eighty and eighty-three. Without a final cumulative flight log, none of those later figures should be promoted into an exact total. But the minimum alone conveys the scale of what he had done in barely three months of war.[102]

8–26 AUGUST
10
F-51 missions · Third Cluster

26 AUG – 3 SEP
10
F-51 sorties · Fourth Cluster

BY 15 SEPTEMBER
58
combat missions since 9 July

BY 11 OCTOBER
65
documented minimum

THE AIRCRAFT PROFILE

MUSTANG FF-728



FIG. P North American P-51D-25-NA Mustang 44-73728, later redesignated F-51D, carrying the buzz number 'FF-728' and aircraft number '30'. Recorded with the 80th Fighter Squadron, 8th Fighter Group, in 1947, it subsequently passed to the 35th Fighter Interceptor Group. In autumn 1949, Lt George M. Lukakis was photographed flying this Mustang in close formation with Lt Robert Dunnavant over Japan; another surviving photograph shows it at Yokota Air Base. Following the 39th Fighter Interceptor Squadron's conversion to F-80C Shooting Stars, the aircraft was placed in storage before returning to service during the Korean War. The canopy rail bears Lukakis's name above that of his crew chief. The profile illustrates a typical Korean War ground-attack load of napalm and HVAR rockets; this particular combination is not independently confirmed for 44-73728.

COLOUR PROFILE © GAËTAN MARIE

TYPE	P-51D-25-NA, F-51D from 1948
SERIAL	44-73728
CODE	FF-728 · tail 30
UNIT	39th FIS, 35th FIW

POHANG AIRFIELD · 6 NOVEMBER 1950

07 THE LAST APPROACH

On the morning of 6 November 1950, First Lieutenant George M. Lukakis prepared to leave Pohang in North American F-51D Mustang 44-73570. He was flying third in a four-aircraft formation assigned an armed-reconnaissance mission over North Korea. What happened after take-off would be told in several official documents, each preserving a different part of a very short final flight. The contemporary casualty report gives the take-off time as 06:45. Gerald Brown, writing the following day to George's mother, said 06:40. Both place the event at Pohang, and both describe an attempted return toward the runway, not an aerial fight with an enemy jet.[103,104]

A later compiled accident index entered the aircraft under 5 November, but the contemporary military records and the official American loss register establish 6 November as the date of death. That is the date retained here. The exact problem that first compelled George to attempt to return has not been established from a flight-safety investigation in the records presently available.[105]

The report describes a left turn at roughly 600 feet, a loss of control to the right at about 400 feet, and impact approximately 500 yards beyond the western end of the runway. The Mustang burned; the body was recovered around 08:00. Brown supplied the detail of a very strong crosswind and said the aircraft stalled as George attempted to line up for landing. The squadron's own history, written at the end of November and preserved on AFHRA Reel K0489, corroborates the strong crosswind, the attempted landing and the crash near the runway. It also records a memorial service in the group chapel on the evening of 7 November. None of those records explains with certainty what first went wrong aboard the aircraft.[107,108]

U.S. AIR FORCE CASUALTY REPORT · 13 NOVEMBER 1950 — ARCHIVE

"Officer was pilot of F-51 acft #44-73570, in #3 position of 4 ship flight, on day take-off, armed recon mission to North Korea. Deceased acft was airborne at 0645 hrs, taking off west to east. Acft made 360 turn to left at approx 600 ft and started final approach when acft fell off to right at approx 400 ft and crashed 500 yds directly off West end of runway, Pohang Airdrome, Pohang, Korea. Acft burned on impact. Body recovered approx 0800 hrs."[106]

A later online account attributed the loss of 44-73570 to a Soviet MiG-15 pilot, N. Kuznetsov. No original Soviet combat report supporting that particular attribution is among the examined sources, and the claim conflicts with the contemporaneous American description of a landing accident after an emergency return. It belongs in the history of how the loss was later reported, not as a competing explanation on equal terms with the original operational records.[109]

Word reached the family in Massachusetts. On 7 November Brown wrote to Irene Lukakis; a week later Brigadier General E. H. Underhill confirmed the death and warned that wartime

conditions meant George's remains would be buried in Korea for the time being. The Air Force classified his death as killed in action and in the line of duty, with no misconduct. That classification described a loss during wartime service; it did not declare that he had been shot down. Brown's letter, composed while events were still painfully recent, offers something the forms cannot: the voice of a commanding officer speaking to a mother.[110,111]

LIEUTENANT COLONEL GERALD BROWN TO IRENE M. LUKAKIS · 7 NOVEMBER 1950

Mrs Irene M. Lukakis
524 Springfield Street
Chicopee, Massachusetts

Dear Madam:

We wish to express to you our very deepest sympathy in the loss of your son, First Lieutenant George M. Lukakis, a member of this squadron. His loss will be very keenly felt by all the officers and airmen of the squadron.

Luke, we all called him Luke, was killed in an aircraft accident which occurred the morning of Monday, 6 November 1950. He had taken off on a mission at 0640 hours when something as yet undetermined happened to his aircraft and he immediately circled the field for a landing. There was a very strong cross-wind that morning and he had difficulty lining up with the runway. In attempting to line up with the runway to land, his aircraft stalled and dove into the ground.

I thought Luke was one of the finest young officers with which it has been my pleasure to associate. His eagerness to do a job and his flying ability marked him as one who would go a long way in his chosen field.

Memorial services for Lieutenant Lukakis were held this afternoon in the 35th Fighter-Interceptor Group Chapel and all members of the squadron were present to do honor to his memory. Our prayers shall be for you, that our Lord might give you comfort in this time of sorrow.

All the many close friends of your son in the squadron and on the Base mourn his death, and want to extend to you their deepest sympathy. We are sad to lose so fine a friend and know in some measure at least, the pain of the loss you must bear. The entire squadron will miss him and mourn him.

Yours in deep sympathy,

GERALD BROWN
Lt Colonel, USAF
Commanding

Brown's condolences have the weight of first-hand command testimony, but they are not a completed technical investigation. He called the event an aircraft accident and acknowledged that the initial difficulty was undetermined. The temptation to name a mechanical failure, hostile gunfire or any other unproven initiating cause would add certainty that George's surviving documents do not give us. His final minutes can be described in detail without pretending to know more than the men who wrote those reports.[112]

"I thought Luke was one of the finest young officers with which it has been my pleasure to associate."

LT. COL. GERALD BROWN · TO IRENE LUKAKIS · 7 NOVEMBER 1950

THE RECORD	6 NOV 1950
AIRCRAFT	F-51D Mustang 44-73570
MISSION	Armed reconnaissance, North Korea
POSITION	No. 3 of a four-ship flight
AIRBORNE	06:45 (casualty report) · 06:40 (Brown)
RETURN	360° turn left at about 600 ft
LOSS	Fell off to the right at about 400 ft
IMPACT	About 500 yds off the west end of the runway
CAUSE	Initial problem not established

TAEGU, KOREA · CHICOPEE, MASSACHUSETTS · 1950–1952

08 THE LONG JOURNEY HOME

The next day brought the first of two burials. At 4 p.m. on 7 November 1950 George was interred in United Nations Military Cemetery No. 2 at Taegu, Plot C, Row 1, Grave 219. The graves-registration record described his death as "KIA Burned in plane crash"—the terse phrase of an office charged with caring for the dead. In Chicopee, Irene and the family were left with news of his loss and no immediate prospect of bringing him home. In January 1951 Major General R. E. Nugent sent her the Purple Heart, together with a letter that acknowledged how little an award could do to ease the grief.[113]

The waiting continued through the winter and spring. In February Army officials explained that his grave in Korea was temporary but that the war prevented them from promising a date for repatriation. At the same time, the Air Force was arranging the presentation of his Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with five Oak Leaf Clusters. Armand E. Daviau, writing for Chicopee's Veterans' Benefits Department in April, pleaded on Irene's behalf: "Will you kindly do all in your power to have the remains returned this summer?" It was no longer merely a matter of



FIG. 20 The headstone of First Lieutenant George M. Lukakis, of Massachusetts, 35th Fighter Interceptor Group, honouring his service in two wars: born 10 January 1924, died 6 November 1950.

PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE

PURPLE HEART LETTER · MAJOR GENERAL R. E. NUGENT · 26 JANUARY 1951 — ARCHIVE

"Dear Mrs. Lukakis: Throughout the years the Armed Forces have tendered awards in honor of their fallen countrymen. The Secretary of the Air Force has requested me to transmit to you the Purple Heart, which has been awarded posthumously to your son, First Lieutenant George M. Lukakis, who sacrificed his life in defense of his country. This medal is of slight intrinsic value but is rich with the tradition for which Americans fight and gallantly give their lives. General Washington, whose profile adorns the medal, symbolizes our efforts in behalf of freedom-loving people throughout the world. In addition, I am forwarding to you separately the Accolade, awarded by the President, which is our nation's highest token of appreciation. Nothing the Air Force can do or say will in any sense repair the loss of your loved one. He has gone in honor and in the worthy company of his compatriots. Let me, in conveying to you the country's deep sympathy, also express our gratitude for his valor and devotion."[114]

administrative procedure. George's mother wanted her son to come home.[115,116,117]

Chaplain William McNeil of Westover Air Force Base also wrote, worried about Irene's health and asking whether the return might be expedited. One of his letters accidentally gave the month of George's death as December; the original death and burial records establish November. A note from 5 May describes McNeil standing with Irene and family friends as decorations were presented, although it does not identify every medal handled at the ceremony. On 31 May another letter—written on Irene's behalf by a daughter of the family—asked when George's belongings and his automobile could be returned. The writer explained that Irene had been ill. In those questions about personal possessions, the scale of a family's loss becomes especially clear.[118,119,120]

Behind the scenes, military graves-registration staff worked toward identification and return. An American board met on 9 August 1951 and considered identification tags, earlier certification, dental comparisons and the recorded circumstances of death. The earliest interment form and later identification sheets differ about the tags associated with the remains. The discrepancy remains in the archival record, but the board's approved identification stands. An exact account need not conceal that surviving documents can disagree over such details.[121]

At last, in September, the journey home could be arranged. A message of 15 September notified the family's chosen funeral establishment that George's remains, accompanied by a military escort, would leave New York aboard New Haven Train 68 at 9:30 a.m. on Monday the 17th, with arrival in Springfield scheduled for 12:48 p.m. The funeral home acknowledged receipt that day. The family requested a Greek Orthodox service and military honours at the cemetery; the surviving telephone memorandum records those wishes, though it does not prove the precise form of every ceremony. The final burial took place on 19 September 1951. After ten months, George had returned to Massachusetts.[122]

The effects records trace a second, quieter homecoming. Listed among George's possessions were his pilot's logbook, photographs and negatives, aircraft photographs, uniforms and a briefcase. They were more than inventory entries to those who had known him. The records also followed a 1946 Oldsmobile and a religious medal, with shipments and correspondence stretching into October 1951; they do not establish what subsequently survived in the family's hands. Irene's memorial arrangements named Fairview Cemetery in Chicopee. Graves records identify George as Greek Orthodox, while a standard government marker form bears the words “Latin Cross.” The two entries describe different kinds of paperwork, not proof that he had abandoned his faith.[123,124,125]

The family's care did not end with the funeral. In 1963 George's younger brother, Captain John M. Luke of the Air Force Reserve, wrote again about military decorations and the recognition due to him. Through the years, Irene, Mary, Nick, John and those who came after them preserved what the official record could not: the image of a son and brother, cheerful enough to joke about the heat in Japan and to buy a pearl ring for his sister, determined enough to earn pilot wings after setbacks, and willing to serve once again when war came. He had left Chicopee as a young man with tools in his hands and flight in his imagination. It was to Chicopee that his long journey finally brought him home.[126]

IN MEMORY

First Lieutenant George Michael Lukakis, United States Air Force. 10 January 1924 – 6 November 1950. Laid to rest in Chicopee, Massachusetts, on 19 September 1951.

THE JOURNEY HOME	1950–51
7 NOV 1950	Interred, UN Military Cemetery No. 2, Taegu
26 JAN 1951	Purple Heart sent with Maj. Gen. Nugent's letter
APRIL 1951	Chicopee asks for his return that summer
9 AUG 1951	Board reviews the identification
17 SEP 1951	Escorted by train, New York to Springfield
19 SEP 1951	Laid to rest in Chicopee



FIG. 21 With his mother, Irene, during a joyful moment, most likely while on leave. He is already wearing the silver wings of the USAAF, a sign that he had completed his flight training.
PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE

“Will you kindly do all in your power to have the remains returned this summer?”

ARMAND E. DAVIAU · CHICOPEE VETERANS' BENEFITS DEPARTMENT · APRIL 1951

MISSION LOG

CONFIRMED COMBAT MISSIONS

F-80C SHOOTING STAR · 39TH FIS · 20 DATED SORTIES		
DATE	STRIKE TARGETS	NO.
16.07.1950	Kongju	1
17.07.1950	Chonan	1
18.07.1950	Mukyoku-Ri	1
21.07.1950	Kanggyang	1
25.07.1950	Pongsong-dong · Yongju	2
26.07.1950	Taejon · Chechon	2
28.07.1950	Nokchon-po · Dangong	2
31.07.1950	Koryong · Waegwang	2
01.08.1950	Hadong · Chinju	2
02.08.1950	Chinju · Suwon	2
03.08.1950	Chingju · Suwon	2
04.08.1950	Hypo'chon	1
05.08.1950	Chinju	1

F-51D MUSTANG · 39TH FIS · 31 DATED SORTIES		
DATE	STRIKE TARGETS	NO.
08.08.1950	Yondok	1
18.08.1950	Yondok	1
19.08.1950	Andong	1
20.08.1950	Tanchon	1
22.08.1950	Chinju · Andong	2
23.08.1950	Masan	1
24.08.1950	Masan	1
26.08.1950	Masan · Mikpo · Chingpyong	3
28.08.1950	Piksong-dong · Kunsan	2
30.08.1950	Hyonjong · Seoul	2
02.09.1950	Kochang · Hyopchon · Waegwan	3
03.09.1950	Chingju · Waegwan · Osan	3
07.09.1950	Chungan-ni	1
15.09.1950	Changyong	1
30.09.1950	Yangyang · Pyongyang	2
05.10.1950	Pyongyang	1
06.10.1950	Pyongyang	1
09.10.1950	Pyongyang	1
10.10.1950	Wonsan	1
11.10.1950	Munchon	1
06.11.1950	Armed reconnaissance · crashed on an attempted return to Pohang	†

The ledgers list the 51 sorties that the surviving certificates date individually. A signed certificate credits him with 58 combat missions between 9 July and 15 September 1950; with seven later dated flights up to 11 October, the documented minimum is 65. The Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded for the armed reconnaissance of 7 August 1950.

DATED SORTIES BY MONTH, 1950



HONOURS

FOR GALLANTRY AND DEVOTION

COMBAT MISSIONS
65+
Documented minimum, 9 July – 11 October 1950

COMBAT AIRCRAFT
2
F-80C Shooting Star · F-51D Mustang

AIR MEDAL
+5
Oak Leaf Clusters

AGE
26
Born 1924 · killed 1950



POSTHUMOUS

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

For the armed-reconnaissance mission of 7 August 1950. Recommended by Maj. Thomas D. Robertson in December 1950.



KOREA, 1950

AIR MEDAL, FIVE OAK LEAF CLUSTERS

The medal and five further awards for series of combat missions in the F-80C and F-51D; the fifth was approved in November 1950, after his death.



26 JANUARY 1951

PURPLE HEART

Awarded posthumously and sent to his mother with a letter from Maj. Gen. R.E. Nugent.

RIBBONS SHOWN FOR ILLUSTRATION.

"Through his ability, initiative and courage Lieutenant Lukakis has brought great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force."

AIR MEDAL CITATION · FIFTH OAK LEAF CLUSTER



FIG. 22 George Lukakis awaits the presentation of his Air Medal at an award ceremony in Japan.
PHOTO: CHRISTINA LUKE

THE AIR MEDAL After the First World War the United States created several new decorations, among them the Distinguished Flying Cross (1926) for heroism or extraordinary achievement in aerial flight. It led to the Air Medal: on 9 March 1942 Secretary of War Henry Stimson submitted the draft executive order creating it, to recognise anyone in the Army who distinguished himself by "meritorious achievement while participating in an aerial flight". In Europe it was first awarded after five missions; in Korea the requirement rose to ten.

NOTES

NOTES & REFERENCES

01 · THE BOY FROM CHICOPEE

1 "Edited Community and Family Background," unpublished original English family-history text, undated, in the researcher's Dropbox collection, George Lukakis - USAF F-51D Pilot/Data/Edited Community and Family Background.docx. This is a family account, not an independent civil registration record.

2 Commonwealth of Massachusetts, City of Springfield, certified birth-record extract for George Lukakis, signed by City Clerk Clifford F. Smith, September 19, 1942, Lukakis-OMPF004.pdf, PDF p. 26 (birth recorded January 14, 1924). The name of the mother as transcribed in this particular copy requires reconciliation with the family source. The typed parental entry reads 'Michael - Ermi Romakis' in the available scan; the latter is not silently equated with Irene Kalouramakis.

3 Chicopee Directory, 1922, s.v. "Lukakis Michael"; Chicopee Directory, 1930, s.v. "Lukakis Michael"; Chicopee Directory, 1932, 121, s.v. "Lukakis Michael (Irene)." All digitized by Chicopee Public Library; 1932 scan: https://www.chicopeepubliclibrary.org/archives/files/original/1f13668f6d073206c07e592ed0991ec1.pdf

4 "Edited Community and Family Background," original English family-history text, section "Community and Family Background," Dropbox collection, George Lukakis - USAF F-51D Pilot/Data/Edited Community and Family Background.docx.

5 Chicopee High School, handwritten letter of recommendation to the Army Air Cadet Corps Recruiting Office, 19 June 1942, Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF p. 40. Wording transcribed directly from the photographed English original; this replaces a paraphrase in the inherited English master.

6 Chicopee High School stationery, handwritten endorsement of George Lukakis signed "(Miss) C. M. Bartholomew" (reading of the handwritten signature requires final confirmation), 15 September 1942, Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF p. 38.

7 J. L. Flarer, Officer in Charge, and G. G. Mackintosh, Supervisor, G. G. Mackintosh Apprentice School, Springfield Armory, letter "To Whom It May Concern," 6 November 1942, Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF p. 39. Direct transcription; marginally faint letters normalized only where legible. The original refers to tool-crib experience and a good leave record, which the previous English version omitted.

8 George Michael Lukakis, "Application for Appointment as Aviation Cadet," Chicopee, 13 November 1942, and attached sworn affidavit, Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF pp. 36–37; Aviation Cadet Examining Board, Springfield, 24 November 1942, ibid., PDF p. 35.

02 · LEARNING TO FLY—AND LEARNING TO BEGIN AGAIN

9 Headquarters, 65th College Training Detachment (Aircrew), Syracuse, New York, Special Orders No. 3, March 9, 1943, paragraph 4 and named continuation "George M. Lukakis, 11106969," Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF pp. 55–57 (pp. 55–56 are duplicate impressions of the same first sheet); Headquarters, 65th College Training Detachment, Special Orders No. 16, April 26, 1943, paragraph 5 and named entry "Lukakis, George M., 11106969," ibid., PDF p. 54. SO 3 specifies attachment for administration effective March 3; SO 16 confirms Aviation Student detail effective March 8.

10 65th College Training Detachment (Aircrew), Syracuse University, "Final Grade Sheet," George M. Lukakis, ASN 11106969, departure 7 August 1943, Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF p. 45; corresponding physical-training record dated 26 July 1943, ibid., PDF p. 46.

11 Headquarters, 65th College Training Detachment (Aircrew), Syracuse University, Special Orders No. 48, July 6, 1943, paragraph 1 and individual named entry under "SQUADRON K," Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF pp. 47–48. The quoted phrase is verbatim from the order. The record authorizes a period of flight-related duty, without an individual sortie tally.

12 65th College Training Detachment (Aircrew), Syracuse University, Special Orders No. 58, August 6, 1943, introductory transfer instructions and named entry under "Squadron K," Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF pp. 50–51; "Final Grade Sheet," ibid., PDF p. 45; Nashville Army Air Center, "Papers Included in 201 Files," handwritten intake entry, ibid., PDF p. 49. The checklist is cited for provenance, without resolving its indistinct handwritten day.

13 Headquarters, 65th College Training Detachment (Aircrew), Syracuse University, Special Orders No. 58, August 6, 1943, second retained copy with "SQUADRON K" named entry "Lukakis, George M.," Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF pp. 28–30; compare first copy ibid., PDF pp. 50–51. These are duplicate copies of the same order, not separate transfers.

14 Army Air Forces classification and acceptance record, signed by George M. Lukakis, 23 August 1943, Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF p. 32.

15 U.S. Army Air Forces, "Designation or Change in Address of Beneficiary," witnessed at Nashville, Tenn., August 17, 1943, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF pp. 28–29; Veterans Administration, "Application for National Service Life Insurance," signed December 2, 1943, ibid., PDF p. 80. The latter is an application, not confirmation of issuance or payment.

16 George M. Lukakis, signed "Preference Form," reproduced twice in the officer personnel file, Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF pp. 24–25. Both copies unambiguously number pilot 1, bombardier 2 and navigator 3; their handwritten date reads "8/9/43". The earlier English master had reversed the second and third preferences and supplied a different interpreted date.

17 Nashville Army Air Center, Special Orders No. 253, paragraph 3, September 28, 1943, and named entry under "Privates (G-2)," Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF pp. 26–27; Maxwell Field, Special Orders No. 273, paragraph 3, October 5, 1943, introductory text and named "Squadron K, Group III" entry, ibid., PDF pp. 13, 17.

18 Headquarters, Maxwell Field, Alabama, Special Orders No. 324, paragraph 14, November 26, 1943, named entry "LUKAKIS, GEORGE M.," classified "SHARPSHOOTERS," score 76, Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF p. 8.

19 Headquarters, Maxwell Field, Alabama, Special Orders No. 326, paragraph 16, November 28, 1943, Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF pp. 4–5 (Squadron K, Group III entry and departure certificate on p. 5); compare the December 6 entries discussed in the preceding paragraph.

20 U.S. Army Air Forces Pre-Flight School (Pilot), "Final Grade Record," Maxwell Field, December 6, 1943, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 81; Headquarters, Maxwell Field, Special Orders No. 326, paragraph 16, November 28, 1943, ibid., PDF pp. 82–84; 64th AAF Flying Training Detachment, "Final Grade" record, March 22, 1944, ibid., PDF p. 73.

21 Southern Aviation School, 64th AAF Flying Training Detachment, "Link Trainer Individual Progress Record," George M. Lukakis, Class 44-G, individual exercises Feb.–Mar. 1944, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 75. Some individual handwritten dates are indistinct.

22 U.S. Army Air Forces, "Individual Flight Record —Student," 64th AAF Flying Training Detachment, George M. Lukakis, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 59. The form records 224 landings and 90:00 total flying time; 54:15 is recorded as student first-pilot time.

23 Headquarters, 64th AAF Flying Training Detachment, Special Orders No. 59, 22 March 1944, including Lukakis and 24 March transportation certificate, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF pp. 76–78; Headquarters, 2150th AAF Base Unit, Contract Pilot School (Basic), Bush Field, "Final Grade Sheet," PDF p. 61; Special Orders No. 11, 20 May 1944, list and transportation certificate, ibid., PDF pp. 63–66.

24 Headquarters, 72nd AAF Flying Training Detachment, Bush Field, Special Orders No. 50, March 24, 1944, para. 1, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF pp. 70–71; compare the receiving-station entry in the same file, PDF p. 61.

25 Headquarters, 72nd AAF Flying Training Detachment, Bush Field, Georgia, Special Orders No. 70, 30 April 1944, par. 2, transfer of Class 44-G aviation cadets to the 2150th AAF Base Unit effective 1 May, name entry "Lukakis, George M."; Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF pp. 67–68.

26 Headquarters, 2150th AAF Base Unit, Contract Pilot School (Basic), Bush Field, "Final Grade Sheet," George M. Lukakis, dated report 25 March 1944, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 61; Student "Individual Flight Record," same collection, PDF p. 62 (the latter has a nonmatching printed serial number requiring a separate check); Army Air Forces Pilot School, final grade sheet, PDF p. 38.

27 Georgia Aero Tech, "Instrument Flight Check," George M. Lukakis, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF pp. 57–58. The printed grading scale identifies C as Average, D as Below Average, and B as Above Average. Several handwritten remarks are not fully legible.

28 Headquarters, Army Air Forces Pilot School (Advanced Single Engine), Spence Field, Georgia, Special Orders No. 143, 24 May 1944, par. 38, listing "George M. Lukakis, 11106969" as reporting and attached to Section H, 2133d AAF Base Unit; Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 56.

29 War Department, "Personnel Qualifications Questionnaire," signed by George Michael Lukakis, 27 May 1944, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF pp. 15, 18.

30 War Department, "Personnel Qualifications Questionnaire," 27 May 1944, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 16.

31 AAF Pilot School (Advanced—Single Engine), Spence Field, Moultrie, Georgia, "Proceedings of the Faculty Board in the Case of Class 44-G," 26 June 1944, recommendation for appointment and pilot rating upon graduation, entry no. 146, "Lukakis, George Michael," serial 11106969; Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF pp. 20, 22, 24. This was an institutional recommendation, not the final appointment order.

32 Headquarters, Army Air Forces Pilot School (Advanced Single Engine), Spence Field, Moultrie, Georgia, Class 44-G Faculty Board proceedings, 26 June 1944, concluding signatures of Col. W. V. Brown and Maj. Dwight W. Pratt, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 26.

33 "Rating Scale for Selection of Commissioned and Flight Officers," assessments of George M. Lukakis by Lt. C. R. Cross, 30 November 1943, Capt. Joseph R. Kiley [surname reading provisional], 21 March 1944, 2nd Lt. R. M. Sterling, 25 May 1944, and 1st Lt. Clyde B. Smith, 26 June 1944, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF pp. 37, 36, 35, 33, respectively; the printed key states 2 = Excellent, 4 = Average, 5 = Below Average.

34 Army Air Forces, "Physical Fitness Test and Record Card," George M. Lukakis, cumulative entries at Camden, Bush Field and Spence Field, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 41; the score scale and entries are given as written.

35 U.S. Army Air Forces, training record reverse, typed notation "Instrument test passed 27 July 1944," Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 40.

36 Headquarters, Army Air Forces Eastern Flying Training Command, Personnel Orders No. 29, 26 July 1944, pars. 25–26, including "Lukakis, George Michael, T 63 921," effective 4 August, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF pp. 30–31; Headquarters, Army Air Forces Pilot School (Advanced Single Engine), Spence Field, Special Orders No. 210, 30 July 1944, par. 1, PDF pp. 54–55; "Roster of Graduates—Class 44-G," Aviation Cadets, entry "Lukakis, George Michael," Flight Officer T-63921, appointment and acceptance 4 August 1944, PDF pp. 43, 46.

37 Headquarters, Army Air Forces Eastern Flying Training Command, Personnel Orders No. 29, 26 July 1944, paragraph 26 and named continuation, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF pp. 72–74; certified extract naming F/O George Michael Lukakis T-63921, ibid., PDF p. 119.

38 Headquarters, Army Air Forces Pilot School (Advanced Single Engine), Spence Field, Moultrie, Georgia, Special Orders No. 215, 4 August 1944, paragraph 2, entry "FO GEORGE MICHAEL LUKAKIS, T63921," Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 51.

39 64th AAF Flying Training Detachment, Southern Aviation School, "Final Grade" record, March 22, 1944, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF pp. 73–74; Headquarters, 2150th AAF Base Unit, Bush Field, "Final Grade Sheet," ibid., PDF p. 60; Army Air Forces Pilot School (Advanced Single Engine), Spence Field, "Final Grade Sheet," August 4, 1944, ibid., PDF p. 38.

40 Army Air Forces Pilot School (Advanced Single Engine), Spence Field, "Final Grade Sheet," August 4, 1944, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 38; U.S. Army Air Forces, "Individual Flight Record—Student," George Michael Lukakis, ibid., PDF p. 39. Both original records state 250 hours 45 minutes total, including 153 hours 25 minutes solo.

41 Army Air Forces Pilot School (Advanced Single Engine), "Final Statement," George M. Lukakis, 8 September 1944, Exhibit C, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 71. Wording transcribed directly from the photographed English original; paragraph boundaries regularized without paraphrase.

42 Headquarters, Army Air Forces Pilot School (Advanced Single Engine), Spence Field, "Report of Unsatisfactory Progress," 9 September 1944, signed acknowledgment by Flight Officer George M. Lukakis, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 70.

43 Army Air Forces Pilot School (Advanced Single Engine), Spence Field, "Proceedings of the Faculty Board," 13 September 1944, including board roster, findings and recommendations, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF pp. 65–68; final instructor statement, ibid., PDF p. 71.

44 Headquarters Army Air Forces Pilot School (Advanced Single Engine), Spence Field, Restricted Special Orders No. 255, September 14, 1944, para. 4, utility-pilot assignment, Lukakis-OMPF006.pdf, PDF p. 9; Spence Field Special Orders No. 270, September 29, 1944, para. 4, transfer to Amarillo with report-by date October 2 and movement effective October 3, ibid., PDF p. 8; Headquarters Amarillo Army Air Field Special Orders No. 277, October 3, 1944, para. 23 and named continuation, ibid., PDF pp. 6–7; private research copies. The later retrospective 30 October date does not supersede these contemporary orders.

45 Headquarters, Amarillo Army Air Field, Restricted Special Orders No. 310, 14 November 1944, paragraph 56, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF pp. 87–88; Lowry Field, "Proceedings of a Board of Officers," 12 February 1945, ibid., PDF pp. 77–79; Headquarters, Lowry Field, Restricted Special Orders No. 48, 17 February 1945, paragraph 19, ibid., PDF p. 93.

46 Headquarters Army Air Forces, Personnel Orders No. 280, 22 November 1944, para. 8, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 75; Headquarters Lowry Field, Operations Orders No. 40, 9 February 1945, para. 1, ibid., PDF p. 89.

47 Headquarters Lowry Field, Special Orders No. 44, 13 February 1945, para. 1, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 90; Headquarters Army Air Forces, Personnel Orders No. 38, 13 February 1945, para. 10, ibid., PDF p. 76; Headquarters Lowry Field, Special Orders No. 71, 12 March 1945, para. 2, ibid., PDF pp. 94–95.

48 U.S. Army Air Forces Pilot School (Specialized Very Heavy Bombardment), 3030th AAF Base Unit, Roswell Army Air Field, New Mexico, "Special School Efficiency Report," George M. Lukakis, B-29 Transition (Flight Engineer), course March 5–April 29, 1945, signed by Capt. Ezra Melrose, Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF p. 16, private research copy. Compare officer chronological records, ibid., PDF pp. 4 and 8, and the career summary in the existing master for the later completion-date variants.

49 Maj. George L. Simmons, "Efficiency Report," Headquarters 328th Army Air Forces Base Unit (CCTS VHB), Gulfport Army Air Field, Mississippi, July 1, 1945, reporting period January 1–June 30, 1945, Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF p. 17, private research copy; original wording and rating transcribed from the photographed form.

50 Headquarters 328th Army Air Forces Base Unit (CCTS VHB), Gulfport Army Air Field, Mississippi, Restricted Special Orders No. 212, July 31, 1945, transfer of aircraft crews to Kearney Army Air Field, Crew No. 19, Lukakis-OMPF006.pdf, PDF pp. 4–5, especially p. 5, private research copy. The roster identifies George M. Lukakis by Flight Officer serial T-63921 and crew code "OE"; no operational sortie is stated.

51 U.S. Army Air Forces, "Officer Qualification Record," chronological military service, George M. Lukakis, Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF p. 4, private research copy; Headquarters 328th AAF Base Unit, Special Orders No. 212, July 31, 1945, Lukakis-OMPF006.pdf, PDF pp. 4–5; compare U.S. Army separation summary cited in the next section.

52 Headquarters, Army Service Forces, First Service Command, War Department Separation Center, Fort Devens, Massachusetts, Special Orders No. 54, 23 February 1946, paragraph 4 and named continuation, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF pp. 125–126 (duplicate beginning at p. 111).

53 U.S. Army, "Military Record and Report of Separation," George M. Lukakis, March 21, 1946, Lukakis-OMPF004.pdf, PDF p. 11; U.S. Army, "Separation Qualification Record," ibid., PDF pp. 12–13. These are separation-era occupational summaries and not individual flight logs.

03 · A SECOND CHANCE IN THE AIR

54 U.S. Air Force, "WD AGO Form 66," Officer Qualification Record for George M. Lukakis, employment-and-awards continuation, signed November 29, 1948, Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF p. 2. Civilian experience lists Sewak Company of America (1946–48) and Savage Arms Corporation (Mar.–Sep. 1948); the reported ranges overlap.

55 War Department, commission of George Michael Lukakis as Second Lieutenant, Army of the United States, appointment effective 18 April 1947, issued at Washington 14 May 1947, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 127; George M. Lukakis,

signed Reserve commission application showing separate appointment and acceptance dates, ibid., PDF p. 116; Oath of Office sworn by Lukakis at Westover Field, 24 April 1947, ibid., PDF p. 118; Headquarters USAF, Statement of Military Service, 8 June 1950, ibid., PDF p. 48.

56 George M. Lukakis, handwritten letter beginning “Dear Sir,” 25 April 1947, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 121; War Department appointment correspondence, 18 April 1947, ibid., PDF p. 122. Original English capitalization and phrase reproduced from the manuscript, without a new translation.

57 Headquarters, 106th AAF Base Unit (Reserve), Westover Field Air Reserve Training Detachment, Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts, “Request for Orders,” 23 October 1947, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 114.

58 George Michael Lukakis, signed “Application for Extended Active Duty with the United States Air Force,” 19 May 1948, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 109; 2349th AF Overseas Replacement Depot, Hamilton AFB, “Report of Entry on Active Duty,” 18 March 1949, ibid., PDF p. 51.

59 Department of the Air Force, Headquarters USAF, Special Orders No. 178, 9 September 1948, named extract, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 54 (duplicate p. 105); Headquarters USAF, “Extended Active Duty Requirements,” 9 September 1948, ibid., PDF pp. 60, 106; Headquarters USAF, “Temporary Appointment in the Air Force of the United States,” 30 September 1948, ibid., PDF p. 107; “Physical Examination for Flying,” Hamilton Air Force Base, 5 October 1948, ibid., PDF pp. 58–59 (additional copy pp. 61–62).

60 George Michael Lukakis, Application for National Service Life Insurance, signed at Hamilton Air Force Base, 4 October 1948, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF pp. 100–102; compare Veterans Administration, earlier National Service Life Insurance application, signed 2 December 1943, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 80. Both are applications, not evidence of policy issuance, final beneficiaries or payout.

61 Headquarters 2349th Air Force Overseas Replacement Depot, Hamilton Air Force Base, California, Special Orders No. 39, October 21, 1948, paragraph 18 and overseas passenger roster, entry 20, Lukakis-OMPF005.pdf, PDF pp. 57–58; U.S. Air Force, Officer Qualification Record, “Chronological Record of Military Service,” Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF p. 4, private research copies.

62 Headquarters, 35th Air Base Group, Special Orders No. 66, November 12, 1948, paragraph 17, Lukakis-OMPF005.pdf, PDF p. 56; Headquarters, 39th Fighter Squadron, Orders No. 21, December 3, 1948, paragraph 2, ibid., p. 53; Orders No. 23, December 13, 1948, paragraph 3, ibid., p. 54.

63 Headquarters USAF, Personnel Orders No. 2, 4 January 1949, paragraphs 3–4, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 96.

64 Headquarters, 35th Fighter Wing, “Officers’ Interim Training,” June 7, 1949, Lukakis-OMPF005.pdf, PDF p. 46.

65 U.S. Air Force, “Report of Officer Effectiveness,” AF Form 77, George M. Lukakis, period 1 February–30 June 1949, reporting officer Capt. Ervin C. Ethell, indorsed by Lt. Col. Archie M. Burke, OCR transcript retained in Dropbox, George Lukakis - USAF F-51D Pilot/Data/l2.txt; original signed scan independently examined. Original signed report independently examined: Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF p. 10.

66 United States Air Force, “Report of Officer Effectiveness,” AF Form 77, Second Lieutenant George M. Lukakis, reporting period February 1–June 30, 1949, June 30, 1949, comments by Capt. Ervin C. Ethell, indorsed by Lt. Col. Archie M. Burke; OCR text transcription in the Lukakis research collection, Dropbox, “George Lukakis - USAF F-51D Pilot/Data/l2.txt,” https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/lhjyadi8td37i8wqn7a5f. The quoted wording has been checked against the extant English transcription, but also against the original signed scanned page. Original signed report visually checked: Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF p. 10.

67 Capt. Ervin C. Ethell, “Report of Officer Effectiveness,” for 1 February–30 June 1949, 30 June 1949, Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF p. 10.

68 Headquarters, 35th Air Base Group, Special Orders No. 184, August 8, 1949, paragraph 15, Lukakis-OMPF005.pdf, PDF p. 44; Special Orders No. 196, August 22, 1949, paragraph 18, ibid., p. 43; FAF Forms 32 and 33, ibid., pp. 14–15.

69 Capt. Ervin C. Ethell, “Report of Officer Effectiveness,” 18 November 1949, with endorsement by Lt. Col. Jack Delmar Dale Jr., Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF p. 12.

70 Maj. Gerald Brown, “Recommendation for Promotion of Officer,” DA AGO Form 78, 7 March 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 9. Verbatim English statement, with line-break hyphenation consolidated.

71 Maj. Gerald Brown to Commanding Officer, 35th Fighter-Interceptor Group, memorandum, “Promotion of Officer in USAF Reserve,” 7 March 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 11. Verbatim original English; previous translated/reconstructed wording (“Wing mess officer”) corrected to original “Group Mess Officer.”

72 Maj. Gerald Brown, “Promotion of Officer in USAF Reserve,” 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, Johnson Air Base, 7 March 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 11; endorsement and recommendation, ibid., PDF pp. 9–10.

73 Headquarters Fifth Air Force, correspondence on “Recommendation for Promotion of Officer,” 22 March 1950, with 35th Fighter-Interceptor Wing endorsement, 28 March 1950, Lukakis-OMPF002.pdf, PDF p. 58; Headquarters USAF, reserve-appointment memorandum, 9 August 1950, ibid., PDF pp. 65–66 (duplicate copy on p. 66).

74 Headquarters Far East Air Forces, Special Orders No. 81, 16 May 1950, paragraph 1, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 50.

75 USAF, WD AGO Form 66A “Report of Change for WD AGO Form 66,” January 12 and July 11, 1949, Lukakis-OMPF006.pdf, PDF p. 1; May 26 and 30, 1950, ibid., PDF p. 2. The latter reports May 24 as MOS change effective date and May 16 as First Lieutenant rank date.

76 FAF Form No. 32, May 26, 1950, Lukakis-OMPF005.pdf, PDF p. 12; FAF Form No. 33, June 5, 1950, ibid., p. 9; Headquarters, 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, Order No. 21, June 3, 1950, ibid., p. 27.

04 · THE SHOOTING STARS GO TO WAR

77 Headquarters, 35th Fighter-Interceptor Wing, Special Orders No. 123, June 6, 1950, paragraph 13, Lukakis-OMPF004.pdf, PDF p. 31; “Report of Change,” George M. Lukakis, August 23, 1950, ibid., PDF p. 30.

78 Organizational History Branch, Research Division, Air Force Historical Research Agency, The U.S. Air Force in Korea: Campaigns, Units, and Stations, 1950–1953, edited by Judy G. Endicott (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2001), 61–62, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-D301-PURL-gpo111119/pdf/GOVPUB-D301-PURL-gpo111119.pdf.

79 Maj. Charles J. Bowers, “Certificate,” 27 August 1950, listing ten F-80C combat sorties 16–28 July 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 32; “Citation,” Air Medal, First Oak Leaf Cluster, ibid., PDF p. 31.

80 Headquarters Fifth Air Force, Advance, General Orders No. 4, July 19, 1950, sec. III, “Air Medal,” continuation sheet, entry for First Lieutenant George M. Lukakis and period July 9–16, 1950, Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF pp. 24–25, private research copy; original order visually re-examined. An unexplained ink strike is present on the entry; no corresponding original order rescinding his award has been identified.

81 Major Gerald Brown, “Recommendation for the Award of the First Oak Leaf Cluster in Lieu of an Additional Air Medal,” 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, 27 August 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 29; Headquarters Fifth Air Force in Korea, third endorsement approving the First Oak Leaf Cluster, 19 September 1950, ibid., PDF p. 28.

82 Headquarters 35th Fighter-Interceptor Group, first endorsement, 5 September 1950, signed Lt. Col. Jack D. Dale Jr.; Headquarters 6150th Tactical Support Wing, second endorsement, 7 September 1950, signed Capt. Justin R. Hall Jr., Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 30; Headquarters Fifth Air Force, third endorsement, 19 September 1950, ibid., PDF p. 28.

83 Maj. Charles J. Bowers, “Certificate,” 6 September 1950, sorties 31 July–5 August 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 38; “Citation,” Air Medal, Second Oak Leaf Cluster, ibid., PDF p. 37; Maj. Gerald Brown, award recommendation, ibid., PDF p. 35.

84 Headquarters Fifth Air Force in Korea, third endorsement concerning the Second Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal, 25 September 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 34. Compare Headquarters Fifth Air Force in Korea, General Orders No. 46, September 21, 1950, second-cluster entry for First Lieutenant Lukakis with award interval July 31–August 4, 1950, Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF p. 22; the squadron’s operations certificate extends to August 5, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 38. No correcting order has been identified.

85 Headquarters 35th Fighter-Interceptor Group, first endorsement, 13 September 1950; Headquarters 6150th Tactical Support Wing, second endorsement, 13 September 1950, concerning 39th FIS letter of 6 September 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 36; Headquarters Fifth Air Force, third endorsement of 25 September 1950, ibid., PDF p. 34.

86 Major Thomas D. Robertson, “Recommendation for the Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross (Posthumously),” concerning First Lieutenant George M. Lukakis, December 28, 1950, 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, Lukakis-OMPF004.pdf, PDF p. 44; U.S. Air Force, “Decorations Certificate Data Sheet,” entry for DFC, “Korea, 7 August 1950,” ibid., PDF p. 41; “Mother to Receive DFC for Lukakis Killed in Korea,” Transcript-Telegram, May 4, 1951, 2 (surviving newspaper scan, Dropbox Data/IMG_6091.PNG). The printed newspaper target claims have not been independently verified as an operational damage assessment.

05 · MUSTANGS OVER KOREA

87 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, Third Oak Leaf Cluster operations certificate, signed by Major Charles J. Bowers, September 22, 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 17, ten F-51 sorties August 8–26, 1950; for the separately located Fourth Oak Leaf Cluster certificate, see Maj. Charles J. Bowers, “Certificate,” September 22, 1950, Lukakis-OMPF005.pdf, PDF p. 24, duplicate p. 63; private research copies.

88 Maj. Gerald Brown, recommendation for Third Oak Leaf Cluster, 22 September 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 14; Third Oak Leaf Cluster citation, ibid., PDF p. 16; Maj. Charles J. Bowers, certified combat-mission roster, 22 September 1950, ibid., PDF p. 17.

89 Headquarters Fifth Air Force in Korea, third endorsement approving the Third Oak Leaf Cluster, 11 October 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 13; preceding endorsement chain, ibid., PDF p. 15. Compare Headquarters Fifth Air Force in Korea, General Orders No. 65, October 4, 1950, third-cluster award entry for Lukakis, Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF pp. 20–21; the October 11 award-approval endorsement is a separately dated administrative record.

90 Maj. Charles J. Bowers, Operations Officer, 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, “Certificate,” September 22, 1950, listing ten F-51 combat missions of First Lieutenant George M. Lukakis for August 26–September 3, 1950, Lukakis-OMPF005.pdf, PDF p. 24 (second copy, p. 63); Maj. Gerald Brown, “Recommendation for the Award of the Fourth Oak Leaf Cluster in Lieu of an Additional Air Medal,” September 22, 1950, ibid., PDF p. 21; original “Citation,” ibid., PDF p. 23; Headquarters Fifth Air Force in Korea, General Orders No. 64, October 4, 1950, award entry for Lukakis, Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF p. 19; private research copies.

91 Maj. Gerald Brown, 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, Orders No. 27, 29 August 1950, paragraphs 1–2, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 24.

92 Capt. Ernest E. Biggs, Operations Officer, 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, signed “Certificate” of 58 combat missions, July 9–September 15, 1950, Lukakis-OMPF004.pdf, PDF p. 46; Maj. Thomas D. Robertson, DFC recommendation, December 28, 1950, ibid., PDF p. 44.

93 Headquarters, 6150th Tactical Support Wing, Special Orders No. 9, 16 September 1950, paragraph 8, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 23. Compare the 118th Station Hospital, admissions and dispositions sheet, September 19, 1950, naming First Lieutenant Lukakis and carrying “Inj,” Lukakis-OMPF004.pdf, PDF pp. 27–29, especially p. 29. The notation is not a diagnosis.

94 Headquarters 35th Fighter-Interceptor Group, Special Orders No. 3, 12 October 1950, para. 2, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 33.

06 · WHAT THE CITATIONS REMEMBER

95 USAF, Air Medal (Fifth Oak Leaf Cluster), citation for First Lieutenant George M. Lukakis, ten operational flights, 3 September–11 October 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 21. Verbatim excerpt of original English citation.

96 Fifth Oak Leaf Cluster citation, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 21; 1st Lt. Richard G. Newell, “Certificate,” 3 September–11 October 1950, ibid., PDF p. 22; Maj. Charles J. Bowers, award recommendation dated 24 October 1950, ibid., PDF p. 19; intermediate approvals, ibid., PDF p. 20.

97 Headquarters Fifth Air Force in Korea, third endorsement concerning the Fifth Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal, 15 November 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 18.

98 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, Fifth Oak Leaf Cluster mission certificate, 1950, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 22, listing “Wonson” for 10 October; Fifth Cluster award citation, ibid., PDF p. 21. Compare Department of the Air Force, Statement of Military Service, 6 March 1958, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 9, citing Distinguished Flying Cross, Headquarters Fifth Air Force General Orders No. 111 (12 February 1951), for flight of 7 August 1950. The primary DFC general order remains unexamined.

99 1st Lt. Richard G. Newell, “Certificate,” 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, ten combat missions, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 22 (original typescript spells the location “Wonson”); Air Medal, Fifth Oak Leaf Cluster citation, ibid., PDF p. 21; USAF, “Statement of Military Service,” 6 March 1958, Lukakis-OMPF001.pdf, PDF p. 9 (retrospective reference to DFC General Orders No. 111, Headquarters Fifth Air Force, 12 February 1951). Compare the complete printed award chain: Air Medal, GO No. 4, July 19, 1950 (Lukakis-OMPF007.pdf, PDF pp. 24–25); First Oak Leaf Cluster, GO No. 40, September 17 (p. 23); Second, GO No. 46, September 21 (p. 22); Third, GO No. 65, October 4 (pp. 20–21); Fourth, GO No. 64, October 4 (p. 19); and Fifth, GO No. 117, November 6 (p. 18).

100 Maj. Thomas D. Robertson, 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, “Recommendation for the Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross (Posthumously),” December 28, 1950, Lukakis-OMPF004.pdf, PDF p. 44; indorsements, ibid., PDF pp. 45 and 43; “Decorations Certificate Data Sheet,” March 9, 1951, ibid., PDF p. 41. The original full text of Headquarters Fifth Air Force GO No. 111 is not included in these scanned pages.

101 “Mother to Receive DFC for Lukakis Killed in Korea,” Transcript-Telegram, May 4, 1951, 2 (Dropbox, Data/IMG_6091.PNG); “Chicopee Mother Given Son’s DFC,” The Republican, May 5, 1951, 5–6 (Dropbox, Data/IMG_8139.PNG–IMG_8140.PNG); Lukakis OMPF award-recommendation and decorations entries, summarized in Excerption Register v23 and Master English v25, including GO No. 111, 12 February 1951. Contemporary citation excerpt, not full original GO.

102 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, ten-sortie operational certificate supporting Fifth Air Medal Oak Leaf Cluster, Lukakis-OMPF003.pdf, PDF p. 22 (seven entries dated September 30–October 11, 1950, after the September 15 end of the fifty-eight-mission certification); Capt. Ernest E. Biggs, signed certificate, Lukakis-OMPF004.pdf, PDF p. 46. The resulting 65 is a lower bound, not a certified final sortie total.

07 · THE LAST APPROACH

103 Lt. Col. Gerald Brown, letter of condolence to Irene M. Lukakis, 7 November 1950, Lukakis-OMPF005.pdf, PDF p. 1 (reports as-yet-undetermined difficulty and crosswind); Department of the Air Force, Casualty Report AF931637-R-1X, prepared 13 November 1950, ibid., PDF p. 3 (actual report details; take-off at 0645, 500 yards).

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SOURCES

SOURCES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dossier tells the story of 1st Lt. George M. Lukakis from his Official Military Personnel File and Individual Deceased Personnel File, the histories of the 39th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron and the 35th Fighter-Interceptor Group, official correspondence with his family, contemporary newspapers, and the photographs, letters and recollections kept by his family. Full references are given in the Notes.

It is based on the chapter on George Lukakis in the Greek book *Έλληνες σε ξένα cockpit*, Volume IV, and on the original records cited in the Notes. Where the surviving documents disagree, the text says so.

PHOTOGRAPHS. Family archive courtesy of Christina Luke; Robert Dunnavant (formation photograph); Allan Lambert (Taegu, August 1950); USAAF via Wikipedia (Spence Field); National Archives 66384 AC (B-29 ‘Rush Order’). Further information on the F-51D from nationalinterest.org.

AIRCRAFT PROFILE. F-51D 44-73728 ‘FF-728’ by Gaëtan Marie.

THANKS to the family of George M. Lukakis, who kept his memory, his letters and his photographs for more than seventy years.



The 39th Fighter Interceptor Squadron in Japan, August 1949. George Lukakis sits first on the left in the front row.

“He has gone in honor and in the worthy company of his compatriots.”

MAJ. GEN. R. E. NUGENT · TO IRENE LUKAKIS · 26 JANUARY 1951

1ST LT. GEORGE M. LUKAKIS · 10 JANUARY 1924 – 6 NOVEMBER 1950

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