



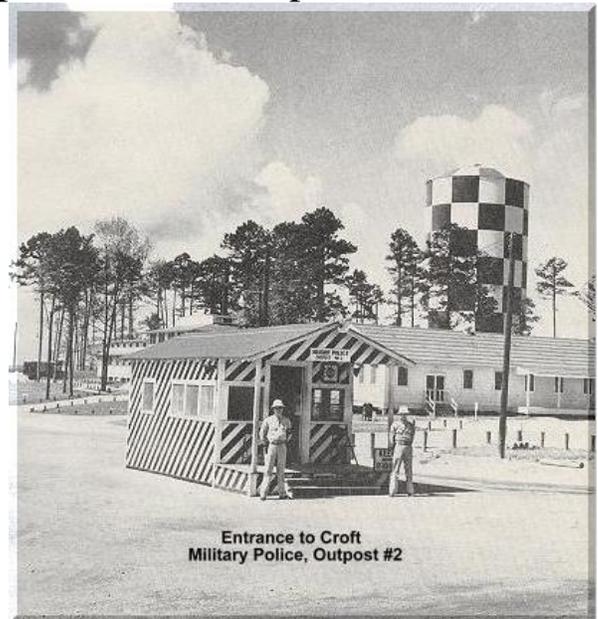
MSG Leonard Black
21st Headquarters Squadron
21st Fighter Bomber Wing
June 1955 to June 58
Chambley Air Base France

Leonard Black was born March 12, 1927 in Leesville, South Carolina. Leesville is a small town in South Carolina and in 1992 it merged with a sister town called Batesburg. The town is now known as Batesburg-Leesville, South Carolina.

Leonard was drafted into the service in April of 1945 and was sent for eighteen weeks of basic training a place called Camp Croft.

Camp Croft was a World War Two Army Infantry Replacement Center located near Spartanburg, SC. In June 1940, the United States Army quickened its mobilization activities to train personnel in response to the situation in Europe. In the fall of 1939, Army personnel numbered a little more than 200,000 men. By November 1944, the Army had facilities to house and train six million troops in the continental United States. This drastic increase

necessitated the construction of numerous mobilization training camps known as Replacement Training Centers (RTC), Camp Croft being one of four camps intended for the instruction of Infantry replacements. By March 1941, twelve RTCs were set up to provide Infantry, Field Artillery, Coast Artillery, Cavalry, and Armor.



After basic training Leonard was suppose to ship to the Far East however an instant in our history stopped that. On the clear morning of August 6, 1945 the first atomic bomb, nicknamed Little Boy, was dropped on the city of Hiroshima. Leveling over 60 percent of the city, 70,000 residents died instantaneously in a searing flash of heat. Three days later, on August 9, 1945 a second bomb, Fat Man, was dropped on Nagasaki. Over 20,000 people died instantly. In the successive weeks, thousands more Japanese died from the after effects of the radiation exposure of the blast. Because of this devastating event Leonard's orders were canceled and he was shipped to Europe as a part of the occupation.

He was assigned to France in late August of 1945 and then onto to Belgium where he was assigned to guarding German prisoners of war. He did this for six weeks. At the end of the six weeks he was placed on a boxcar train to Munich, Germany. The train ride took about ten days due to the many detours that they had to take because of the instability of the country side at the time.

He was sent to the 9th Air Force Service Command outside of Nuremberg in a town called Erlenstegen, Germany. He was made First Sear gent of the unit even though he was only 19 years old. The reason was because everyone was rotating back to the states and even though he was a rifleman he had another skill. He could type!

While assigned to Erlenstegen, they were holding the war crimes there at Nuremberg. The major trials included Hermann Goering and Rudolph Hess. One of the trials was a General Joachim von Ribbentrop.



**Hermann Goering
and Rudolph Hess**

Leonard remembers in particularly the trial of General Joachim von Ribbentrop. Ribbentrop was the German dictator Adolf Hitler's favorite foreign policy adviser, partly by dint of his knowledge of the world outside Germany, but mostly by means of shameless flattery and sycophancy. According to Leonard General Joachim von Ribbentrop continued to say that he did nothing wrong. He was only a soldier obeying orders. Leonard said, "They still hung him". Leonard stayed in Erlenstegen the base closed in October of 1947.



Gen Joachim von Ribbentrop

1947 Leonard transferred to Munich, Germany over to a Signal Depot that was located in the same town where the 1972 Olympics was held. He lived on the 3rd floor of a hotel, worked on the 2nd floor and ate on the 1st floor.

After leaving Munich in 1947, Leonard transferred back to states to Mitchell Field in Hempstead, Long Island. His intentions at the time were to get out of the service and go to college. However he had gotten married in February 1948 and when it was time for his discharge he had one child and his wife was pregnant. He couldn't see living on \$102 per month and at the same time go to college so he stayed out seven days and reenlisted in November of 1949.

He was a Staff Sergeant at the time assigned to the 20th Fighter Bomber Wing at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina. Shaw Air Force Base mission is to provide, project and sustain combat-ready air forces. Shaw also serves as home to Headquarters Ninth Air Force and U.S. Air Forces Central (USAFCENT), whose primary mission is to project decisive air and space power for U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) and America.

According to Leonard the Korean War broke out on a Sunday. He was on his way to church about 30 miles from Shaw. The Officer of the Day (OD) called him and said for him to come on out to the base. Leonard said he'd be there after church. The OD told him that he didn't understand what he had said. He needed him to come out to the base now! After arriving at the base he was asked how long it will take you to move out. At the time he was the personnel Sergeant Major. He said we can move out in about a week. Capt Cunningham, his boss, and Sgt Black were out of there by Thursday but they did not go to Korea they went to England.

He spent six months at Manston, England which is north of Dover and then returned to Shaw Air Force Base, SC.

After the Korean War broke out he was immediately promoted to Tech Sergeant and six months later to Master Sergeant. He then returned to England to serve consecutive tours. It was at that time, in June of 1955, that he was assigned to the 21st Fighter Bomber Wing, Chambley Air Base, France. He was assigned to the 21st Air Base Group as the Sergeant Major under Cornet John Stokes.

One of his jobs was sorting distribution. After about 10 days Col Stokes called him in and wanted to know how come he was getting the distribution. Sgt Black told him he was sending him what he thought he needed to see. Col Stokes became irritated and told him he wanted to see everything. Then Leonard worked for Col Lynch and when the base was closing he went to the Inspector General's office to destroy classified documents under a Col Smith. After the base closed Leonard was reassigned to Washington, DC for six years. He was in Washington from January 1958 until September of 1963. He returned to Europe in 1963 and was assigned to Ramstein Air Base in Germany.

He left Germany three years later in 1966 and was assigned as the Sergeant Major of the Commando Wing in Louisiana. He served from January 1966 to September 1970 as the Sgt Major of the United States Air Force Air Commandos and retired from the Air Force in 1970 with twenty five years of honorable service.

After Leonard retired he went into Restaurant Business in Tampa Florida. He said that he really enjoyed the restaurant business. Even though he had no experience in this profession he found that his military career and the fact that he went to school and received his degree from the University of Maryland in Personnel Management and Labor Relations was a big factor in his entrepreneurship success. He stated that the management he learned while in the military applies to civilian life as well.

Had a successful 28 years in the restaurant business sold out in January of 1998 and since then he has been simply enjoying life and retirement.

Leonard has three children, two girls and a boy. His son graduated in pre law from Louisiana State University and went on Missionary work in Guatemala for eighteen months. When he came back to the US he decided to work with youth programs in Tampa, Florida. Unfortunately he was killed in a car accident while attempting to help a young man in November of 1974. He was only twenty-four years old.

Leonard's older daughter lives in Tampa with her daughter who graduated from the University of Florida and has a Masters degree. She now works for Martha Stewart.

Leonard's youngest daughter is an Attorney in Fort Myers Florida and is a graduate from the University Of Miami School Of Law.

Leonard lost his wife Betty in April 2004. They had been married for fifty-six years.

At the time of the September 2008 Chambley France Reunion Leonard was living in Tampa, Florida and as far as we know is still enjoying the sunny weather there.

