

BLANDING, Leon M.

“Lum”

B: 30 October 1918 Sumter, SC

D: 15 April 1998 Sumter, SC



Hometown: Sumter, South Carolina

Rank: Major

MOS: 1055 - Pilot, single engine fighter

Unit: 335th Fighter Squadron
4th Headquarters Squadron

Aircraft:

P-47D-10-RE 42-75051 WD-R

P-47D-6-RE 42-74686 WD-M

P-51B-7-NA 43-6753 WD-M

P-51D-5-NA 44-13319 WD-G

4th Service: 14 October 1942 – 24 March 1944
24 May 1944 - 20 September 1944

Designated Flight Commander B Flight

30 NOV 43 Promoted to Captain

3 FEB 44 Designated Squadron Operations Officer

10 MAR 44 Promoted to Major

24 MAR 44 Transferred to 495th Training Group

20 MAY 44 Transferred to the 335th Fighter Squadron

21 JUN 44 Appointed Squadron Commanding Officer;
Participated in Operation FRANTIC II, the
Russia Shuttle mission. (RTB 5 JUL)

29 JUL 44 Assigned to 4th Headquarters Squadron

8 AUG 44 Aircraft was struck by flak returning from
mission to Norway. Canopy shattered
severely wounding him on the side of the
head. Made and fixed a tourniquet by
ripping cloth from his pants while fighting
to keep his Mustang aloft.

Escorts Lts. Kolbe and Berry stated he
seemed to “lapse into semi-consciousness at
times, and then his plane would take a
swerve and then dive down a few feet.”
With Kolbe and Berry talking with him the
whole way, Blanding was able to land his
fighter at Acklington Airdrome. He was
rushed to a nearby hospital having lost a
great deal of blood. He eventually
recovered from his wounds, but was taken
off of flight status. WIA.

Victories:

1

Post 4th Fighter Group:

Retired from the USAF as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Owner/Operator Blanding Iron Works in Sumter, SC.

Decorations:

Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal, Purple Heart,
European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, World
War II Victory Medal.