

William H. Pierson

28 November 1919 - 2 November 1942

William Henry Pierson was born on 28 November 1919 in Chicago, Illinois to Stephan Norton and Gertrude L. Pierson. He was the couple's first-born child. The 1920 Census showed the family living with Gertrude's parents on W. 60th Place in Chicago. Stephan was a Tractor Laborer. Grandfather Joseph Berger was an Engineer. The 1930 Census showed 10-year-old William joined by little sister Dorothy, 8. The family moved to Anthony Avenue in Chicago to a home they rent for \$45.00 a month, and they did have a radio set. Stephan owned an Oil Station. William was a student at Tilden High School in Chicago, class of 1938. The 1940 Census showed the family moved again to E 88th Place in Chicago, which was rented for \$36.00 a month. Stephan was working in Recreational Insurance. Grandfather Joseph was living with the family and working as a Tool and Die Maker at the age of 79. William has finished his first year of college at Wilson Junior College. William had a Private Pilot's License, having flown 100 hours in a plane with under 100 HP.

William's draft card, dated 1 July 1941, showed he was working for the Santa Fe Railroad, had blue eyes and blonde hair. He was 5' 8" tall and weighed 150 lbs. William enlisted 20 January 1942 as an Aviation Cadet. He had 2 years of college and was given Army Service #16066514.

REGISTRATION CARD			
SERIAL NUMBER 5-118	1. NAME (Typed) WILLIAM HENRY PIERSON	ORDER NUMBER 1693	
2. PLACE OF BIRTH (Typed) Chicago	3. DATE OF BIRTH (Typed) 28 NOV 1919		
4. PLACE OF BIRTH (Typed) Chicago Cook Ill			
5. MARITAL STATUS (Typed) Single			
6. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT (Typed) Santa Fe RR			
7. OCCUPATION (Typed) RR			
8. NAME OF SPOUSE (Typed) Gertrude Pierson			
9. NAME OF SPOUSE (Typed) same as above			
10. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT (Typed) 1200 So. State St Chicago			
11. SIGNATURE (Typed) William Henry Pierson			



He was in Flight Class 42-H. Pre-Flight was at Kelly Field, Texas. Flight training started with Primary at Tulsa, Oklahoma from 27 February to 27 April 1942. Primary is where Cadets first learn to fly. He flew PT-19s for a total of 60:08 hours, 28:57 dual and 31:11 solo. Next was Basic flight at Enid, Oklahoma. The type of plane was not readily available. Aviation Cadet Pierson flew 70:10 hours, 35:10 dual and 35:00 solo. Advance flight was next at Foster Field, Victoria, Texas. Here he flew AT-6s for a total of 79:20 hours, 13:10 dual and 66:10 solo. Upon graduation, William was awarded his wings and commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant. Now being an

Officer, he was given a new officers service #O-664651. Soon after this he was sent to the Boston Air Defense Wing. The 319th Fighter Squadron, 325th Fighter Group was created 22 September 1942 at Rentschler Field, East Hartford, Connecticut, home of the Pratt and Whitney plant. Lt. Pierson flew a P-40 for the first time on 25 September. He had 5 more flights in September for 6:50 hours. On 3 October the 319th Squadron was moved to Providence, RI airport at Hillgrove. Flight training was intense, long days, 6 days a week. October was a busy time, with 27 flights for 32:45 hours, plus 1 hour in a Link Trainer.

Lt. Pierson was lost 2 November 1942 during one of these intense training flights, his second flight that day. He was involved in a mid-air collision with group mate F/O Smallsreed, who was killed in combat 28 May 1943. This was during a late afternoon training flight where they were practicing a Lufberry Circle. F/O Smallsreed was

WAR DEPARTMENT THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE WASHINGTON REPORT OF DEATH		
DATE: February 11, 1943		FORM: 1052
NAME: PIERSON, WILLIAM H.		ARMY SERIAL NO: O-664651
GRADE: 2ND LT.	COMP: 1st AF Corp, Hillsgrove, R.I.	DATE OF BIRTH: Nov. 28, 1919
HOME ADDRESS: 7504 S. Cornell Ave., Chicago, Ill.		
DATE OF DEATH: 11-2-42	PLACE OF DEATH: Near West Barrington, Rhode Island	CAUSE OF DEATH: Airplane accident
FAMILY ADDRESS: Mrs. Gertrude L. Pierson, mother, 7504 S. Cornell Ave., Chicago, Ill.		
REMARKS: Accidentally killed. In Jan. 29, 1942 while on aviation cadet, he was shot down by his enemy, Gertrude L. A. 1st AF Corp, Hillsgrove, R.I. at 7504 S. Cornell Ave., Chicago, Ill. 28 participants. (No other in service)		
REPORTED BY: J. D. Pierce		REVIEWED BY: J. D. Pierce

able to land, and another P-40 took off to inspect Lt. Pierson's plane. It was determined his plane was too damaged to land, so he bailed out. Lt. Beck, pilot of the other P-40, watched Lt. Pierson bail out and followed him down. A strong wind blew him over Narragansett Bay, with rough waters. Four Volunteer Firefighters searching for him almost drowned when the boat they were using was capsized by waves. A witness on shore saw the firefighters being rescued by the Coast Guard and thought this was the pilot. Tragically, the rescue was called off for a few hours. With cold temperatures and a strong tide going out, he was not found until 30 November. Lt. Pierson was flying a P-40 F, serial #41-14135. Lt. William H. Pierson is buried at Oak Woods Cemetery in his hometown of Chicago, IL.

In September 1964, Mrs. Robert Hutchings wrote a letter to request the records of Lt. Pierson. It could not be determined why she requested them or if she was family.