

## **Emerson York Barker 1920-1944**

### **Service to his Country**



**Indiana Central Class of 1941**

Originally from Bloomfield, Greene County, Indiana, Emerson York Barker was born on January 17, 1920, the son of Elza and Margaret York Barker. After graduating from Scotland High School in 1937, he entered Indiana Central College, a private institution in Indianapolis founded in 1905 by the Evangelical United Brethren, and now known as the University of Indianapolis. He graduated in 1941 with a double major in History and Physical Education.

During his college days, Emerson participated in several sports, including Track where he excelled in the javelin.



**Indiana Central Track Team 1939-40. Emerson is on the second row, third from right.**

He was also very active in Intramural Athletics.



**Intramural Basketball Team Champions 1939-40**

Non athletic activities included memberships in the Zetagathea Literary Society, the Men's Glee Club, and the Dramatics Club.



**Zagathea Literary Society 1939-40**



**They trained at Stout Field, the former Indianapolis municipal airport built in 1927. By then abandoned, it was leased to the Army Air Force which expanded it for this purpose.**



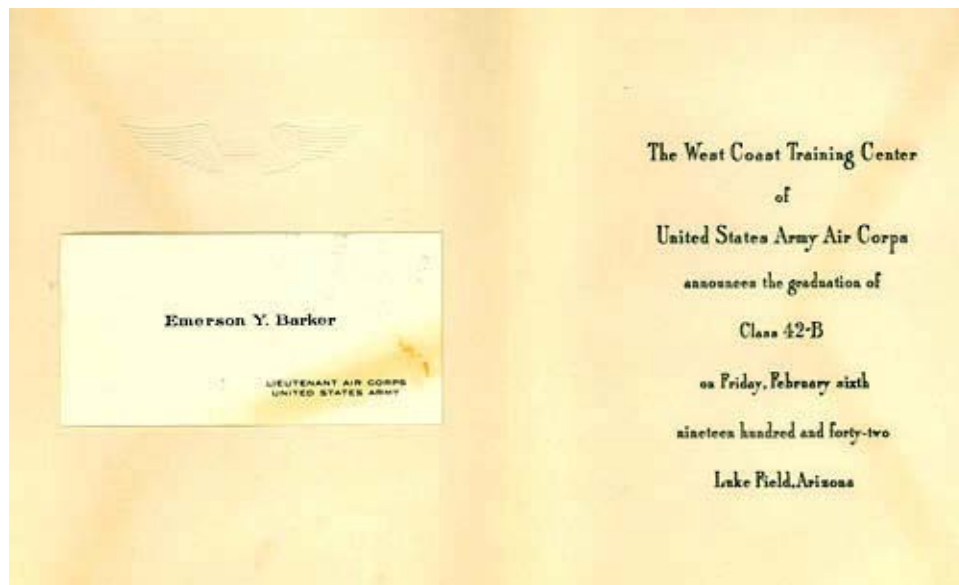
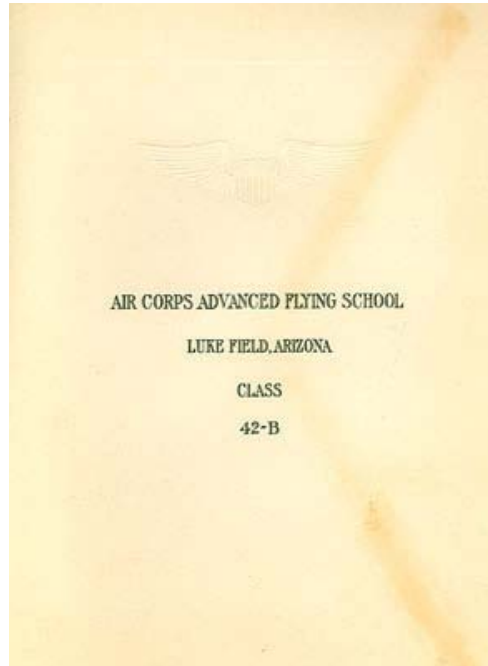
**Training at Stout Air Field, Indianapolis 1941**



**Stout Air Field Today**

**After college graduation in 1941, he won a scholarship for pilot training with the Army Aviation Cadet class and, in July, went into training in Ontario, CA. He was then sent to**

the Air Corps Advance Flying School at Luke Field, Arizona, and graduated Friday February 6, 1941.



He further trained at several air bases in California, Arizona, Georgia and finally at Orlando Air Force Base in Florida, where he flew P40s, P38s, P47s and P61s.



While at Indiana Central, he met Frances Van Buskirk, whom he married on October 19, 1942. They had one son, Emerson Jr.



**Indiana Central Girls Quartet. Frances is the second from right.**

Later in the year, he was sent to Guadalcanal where he flew the first night raid on Rabaul, a strategic Japanese Air Base in the South Pacific.

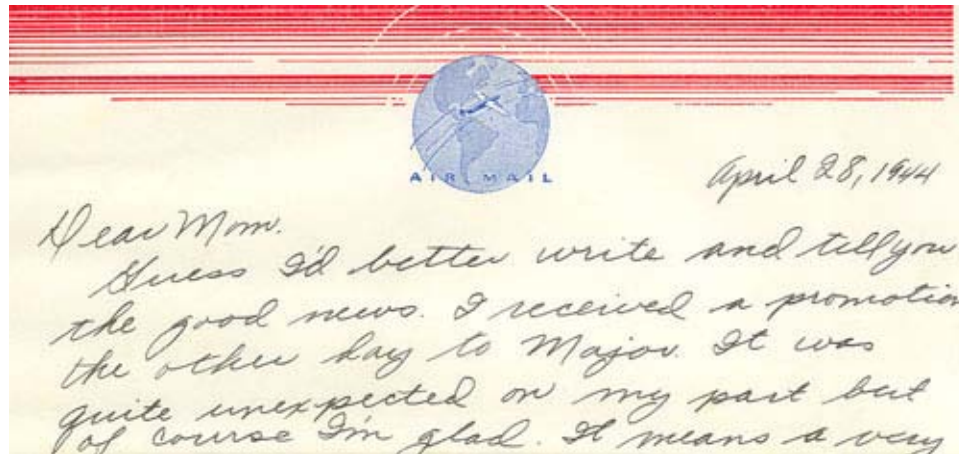


**Major Barker's plane on the Guadalcanal runway. USAF photo. Courtesy Garry R. Pape**

He was awarded the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Cluster for meritorious achievement.



Emerson Barker rose quickly within the ranks and was promoted to Major, thus becoming the commanding officer of the 419th Night Fighter Squadron comprising P61 Black Widow planes equipped with radars. The 419th NFS would eventually be assigned to the Japanese invasion.



**Writing home the good news. ( Frederick D. Hill Archives, University of Indianapolis)**

Unfortunately, Emerson's plane exploded on June 12, 1944, and disappeared into the Pacific. He is memorialized in the Tablets of the Missing at Manila Military Cemetery, Philippines. (<http://www.abmc.gov/search/wwii.php>)



**Emerson in 1942**



**Dwight and Kenny Barker, Emerson's brothers, 2008.**