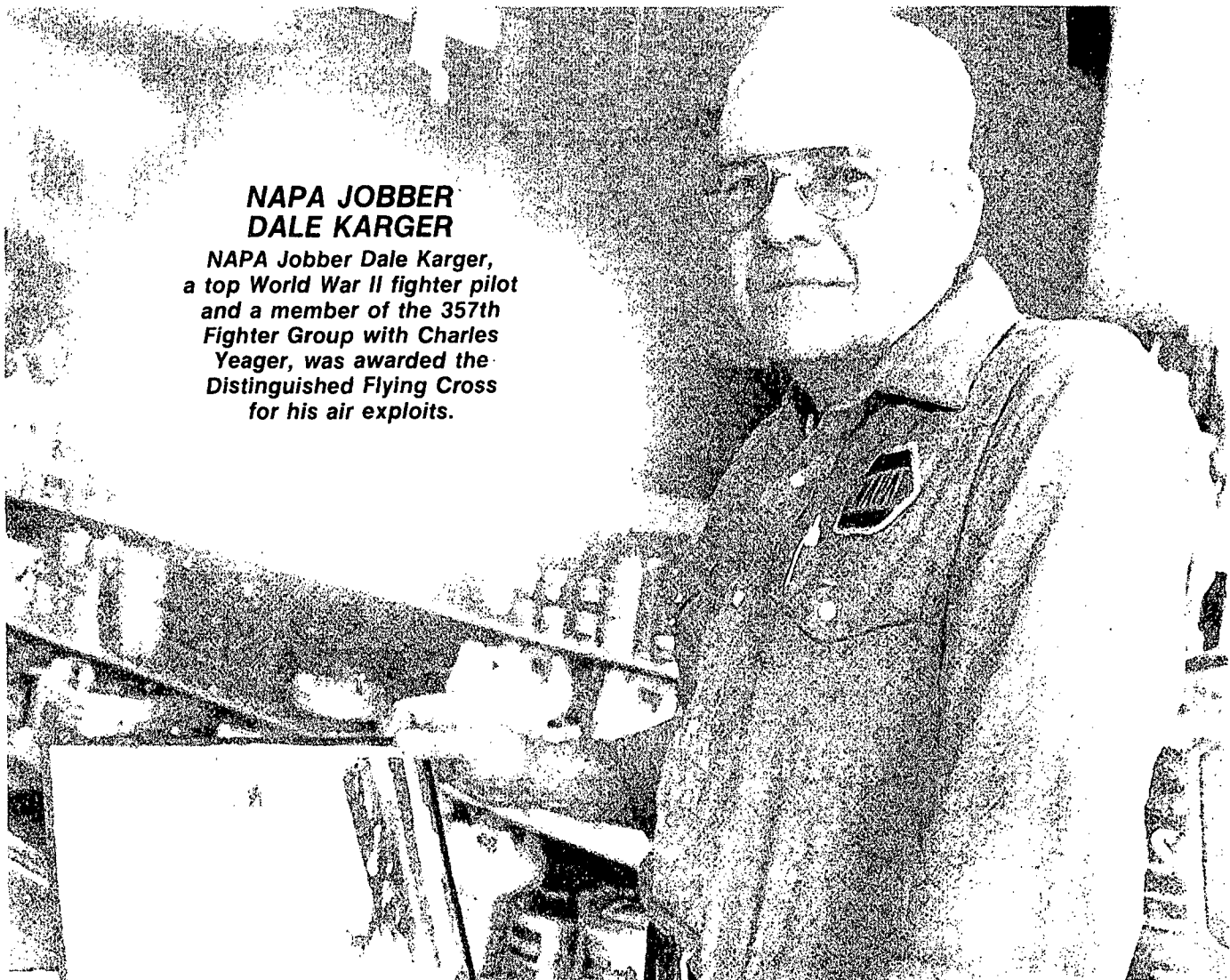


NAPA JOBBER DALE KARGER ALSO HAD

'THE RIGHT STUFF'



NAPA JOBBER DALE KARGER

NAPA Jobber Dale Karger, a top World War II fighter pilot and a member of the 357th Fighter Group with Charles Yeager, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his air exploits.

Charles E. Yeager, a captain in World War II's elite 357th Fighter Group and the pilot of the first plane to fly faster than the speed of sound, recently gained national fame and attention from his role in "The Right Stuff," the popular book and film about the Mercury space program.

Few people who have seen the film, however, can appreciate its background more than NAPA Jobber Dale Karger, owner of Beaver Valley Auto in Beaver, Pennsylvania (serviced by the NAPA Pittsburgh Distribution Center). For along with Yeager, Dale Karger was one of the 105 chosen pilots in the 357th Fighter Group.

Karger knew at an early age that he wanted to become a fighter pilot; however, openings in flight school were hard to come by. So when a newspaper ad announced that 90 candidates from the Pittsburgh area would be chosen for flight school, Karger

applied — along with 300 others. Karger was one of the 90 selected.

Although the customary training program lasted 18 months, Karger's training was condensed into 8½ months. The intensive training program proved too much for many of the candidates, but Karger hung in — and received his wings and commission in February of 1944. After more training, he joined the 357th Fighter Group overseas.

During his overseas missions, First Lieutenant Dale Karger shot down 12 aircraft with his propeller-driven plane — the same number downed by Charles Yeager — and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his air exploits. Unlike Yeager, however, Dale Karger flew his last mission without fanfare and without knowing it would be his last mission; he returned from a one-week leave in time for the end of the war.

Feeling that too many fighter pilots would be competing for jobs after the war, Karger returned home to McKees Rocks to marry his long-time girlfriend, Cathy Mae, for whom he had named his plane.

Although many things have changed in the 40 years since Karger flew in the 357th Fighter Group, many things have not...

...Karger still loves to fly (although he finds civilian flying to be a practical, yet tame, use of his flying skills; he prefers aerobatic planes);

...he still occasionally receives letters from fighter ace enthusiasts requesting autographed pictures, or from authors seeking information for books;

...and after 40 years, Karger's wife Cathy Mae, the woman he returned to marry, is, as Karger says, "still my girlfriend."