

Lerch, Alfred

Downs Seven Nip Planes On First Mission

Ensign Alfred Lerch, son of Mr. and Mrs. H. D. Lerch of Springfield Central Farm, Pleasant Valley, had the unusual distinction of shooting down seven Jap planes within 13 minutes on his first combat flight. Lerch, in the Naval Air Force, is 22 years old and a graduate of Springfield High School. His wife, Mary Lee (nee Gordon), resides in Coopersburg.

In describing the unusual action, Lerch made light of his part and took no honor for himself. "It was fast work for a while," he said. "After the fifth plane went down my guns were without ammunition. Finally I got one reloaded and found myself climbing to the rear of a Jap who still had his two wing bombs. I gave him a burst and broke to the right. He exploded and splattered my ship with his engine oil and debris. One ship tried to ram me in a 180 degree turn. A burst knocked him down. My lieutenant then called me out of the chase."

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Ensign Lerch has two brothers in the service, Luther, in a C. P. S. Camp in the west, and Clifton, with the U. S. Army.