

History The P-38 Goes to War

In the beginning, a P-38 *Lightning* was the first American fighter to shoot down a German plane in World War II—a Focke-Wulf brought down over Iceland just minutes after the United States declared war on the Nazis.

At the end of the war, it was the P-38 *Lightning* chosen to escort Japanese officials from their homeland to Ie Shima on their way to sign surrender papers when the Allies achieved final victory over the Axis. The P-38s were still engaged in missions that took them deep into Germany at the end of the European conflict.

Lightning's shot down more enemy planes in the Pacific than any other American fighters. Major Dick Bong, who downed 40 enemy planes, flew only in P-38s. The top three American aces of WWII flew only in the P-38.

No single quality but rather an effective balance of all qualities needed for a fine fighting plane earned the P-38 its enviable place as the most versatile of all WWII planes. Before the U.S. entered WWII, many military men believed that a plane should be built for one purpose if it were to reach its highest efficiency in combat. It is true that many planes achieved fame through excellent performance in a single operation of the air war. The *Lightning*, however, led the way toward versatility. It out-performed the *Zeros* and later Japanese fighters at all altitudes. Its success against German first-line fighters caused Nazi fliers to name it the "Fork tailed devil." At the same time it performed equally well as a "heavy" bomber or long-range reconnaissance plane.

The P-38/F-5 held its own as one of the war's greatest fighters, and reconnaissance/long-range bomber escorts. It performed with peak efficiency at tree-top levels and at altitudes up to 40,000 feet. With two 300-gallon auxiliary drop tanks it was capable of flying nonstop missions of 3,000 miles.

From start to finish, the P-38 was there. It was the only American fighter produced before the war still in production on the day the war ended. This is the legacy of the P-38 *Lightning* in World War II.

Bob Alvis President, P-38 National Association



Lightning Strike...The Edge of the Storm

Painting by Jack Fellows

"The unsung heroes of the air after the Normandy invasion, the first week in June, 1944, are the pilots of the fighter-bombers of the Ninth...facing down the formidable, defensive firepower of the German anti-aircraft batteries at minimum altitude, point-blank range.

In the painting, elements of the 402nd Fighter Squadron, 370th Fighter Group attack German supply trains in a French rail yard in July, 1944. The P-38 nearest the viewer is "Peg O' My Heart II, flown by Captain Cy B. Coenen, who named his P-38 after a popular song title of the period. Immediately behind Coenen is Major James E. Tucker, Commanding Officer of the 402nd Squadron. Major Tucker was killed in action on August 10, 1944, when he was brought down by defensive ground fire while attacking a train. Coenen, luckily, survived the war."

"Lightning Strike...The Edge of the Storm" reprinted with permission from the artist, Jack Fellows, with our thanks for his ongoing support of the P-38 National Association.

Membership

Dues: \$30 U.S., \$35 Canada, \$40 all others

Name: _____

Address: _____

Zip code: _____

Occupation: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Veteran Status:

WWII _____ or other _____

Military or aviation background, if any:

Connection to P-38: _____

Send payment to:

P-38 National Association
P.O. Box 6453, March ARB, CA 92518
or pay with credit card or PayPal
on the website

Membership includes the newsletter "Lightning Strikes" published three times per year and much more!
Visit our website regularly, and encourage your friends to do so too!

www.p38assn.org

to those who flew them...



to those who promoted them...



and to those who celebrate their future



Website

www.p38assn.org

When the P-38 Association website was launched back in 2001 we had a vision of what it could become and how instrumental it might be in the growth of our organization. It has far surpassed our hopes and expectations.

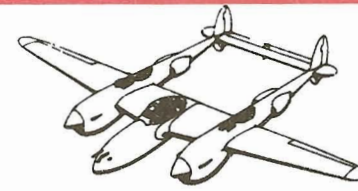
Our website has become the P-38 authority site on the internet and the #1 destination for anyone seeking information about the *Lightning*. It is consistently ranked at the top of the major search engines, and the newsletter we launched in 2007 now has thousands of subscribers, with new people signing on every day.

The P-38 Association website has become the primary avenue for visitors to join our organization as new members, and our gift shop has enabled us to open a new revenue stream to support our mission. With the technology available to us today that was not available when we first launched the site, we have so much more potential to do the things we envision for the future. Projects like an enhanced "Premium Membership" area, where those who have upgraded their membership level are able to access a password-protected area of the website. This section of the site has content created exclusively for Premium members and includes a members interactive forum, merchandise and event discounts, member profile pages, audios and videos and material not available to the general public or anywhere else online.

Just because our organization is based on a WWII airplane, does not mean our team isn't looking to the future. We intend to guarantee that those who love the P-38 will have an opportunity to enjoy their membership in the P-38 Association for well into the 21st Century.



Association Museum at March ARB, Riverside, CA



P-38 National Association

The P-38 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION WANTS TO PUT



YOU

in the cockpit of the greatest combat airplane of World War II!

From their inception...



to their production...



through their maintenance and support...

