

Hello, Fellow P-38 Fans.

On the following pages you can see samples of some of the great articles we include in each edition of, "Lightning Strikes," our membership publication.

There are harrowing war stories, of course, but also fun articles about the P-38 that you probably didn't know. For example:



SAMPLE "LIGHTNING STRIKES" COVERS



Did you know that there is a P-38 Memorial on the grounds of Highclere Castle, which famously doubled for the fictional Downton Abbey in the hugely successful British TV series?

Notice the P-38 tail that is part of the bench to the left of the statue. There are a total of three benches and each one has pieces of the wreckage of the P-38J-10 that was flown by 24-year-old 2nd Lt. Thomas Dee Stewart of the 402nd Fighter Squadron who tragically lost his life when it crashed on their grounds.

You can read the whole story on the following pages.

Did you know that the only woman on the original team of 40 at Skunk Works was an award-winning Native American who began her work there as an engineer focused on solving many of the design issues involved with the high speed flight and aeroelasticity of the Lightning?

Her name is Mary Golda Ross, and you can read her story here, too!

Once you read through these articles, if you'd like to join our mission, it's easy to become a member of the P-38 National Association.

Everyone is welcome We have both domestic and international members who decide to join us, renew their membership each year or to upgrade to Life members!

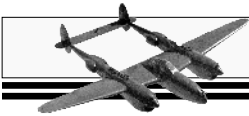
We hope you'll decide to join us. We'd love to have you as part of our mission,

Just click on this button and head for the wild blue yonder with us!



Join Now!





Saint-Exupéry–Lightning Pilot

By Steve Blake

One of the oldest pilots known to have flown a Lightning operationally was also one of the most famous, although not primarily for that reason. And, he was not an American, but rather a Frenchman, serving with a French Air Force (*Armée de l'Air*) unit. Antoine Marie Jean-Baptiste Roger, comte de Saint-Exupéry—whom his friends and fans called "St-Ex"—although famous as a pilot, was much more so as a writer.

Antoine was born in Lyon in 1900 to an aristocratic family that fell on hard times after his father's sudden death when he was only three. He joined the French Army in 1921, but after taking private flying lessons he transferred to the air force and became a fighter pilot. Later in the '20s he became a commercial air mail pilot, in Europe, Africa and South America. He also began to do some serious writing, mainly about his flying experiences, and by the early '30s he was a rising star in the literary world, as both an author and a journalist.

When World War II broke out St-Ex, although by then nearing 40, rejoined the French Air Force and served as a photo reconnaissance pilot with its *Groupe de Reconnaissance II/33*. After the Germans overran France he escaped to the United States. He was quite prolific during his American exile, writing, among many other things, his two most famous books—*Flight to Arras* and *The Little Prince*.

St-Ex finally became restless and anxious to get back into the war, especially after the Allies took over Vichy French Northwest Africa in late 1942. He wanted to participate in the liberation of France, despite the fact that he was now well past 40, overweight and suffering from injuries incurred in *five* airplane crashes. In his favor was the fact that he was famous and acquainted—and had considerable influence—with many high-ranking military officers and politicians.

In April of 1943 St-Ex sailed from New York on an ocean liner that was part of a military convoy transporting American troops to North Africa, arriving at Algiers on May 4. Thanks to his connections, he had been able to obtain an exemption to the age limit of 35 for combat pilots and joined the Free French *Armée de l'Air* as a *capitaine*, effective May 1. He was assigned to his old unit, GR II/33, which was now based in North Africa and still equipped with the twin-engined Bloch MB.174s he had flown in 1940, but was transitioning to the Lockheed F-5A Lightning. This took place at La Marsa, near Tunis, where two USAAF F-5 units, the 5th and 12th Photo Reconnaissance Squadrons of the 3rd Photo Reconnaissance Group, were also based.

The French pilots were trained to fly the F-5 by their counterparts in those American units. The Lightning was a faster and more complicated aircraft than the Bloch 174, and learning to operate it competently would prove to be a challenge for the semi-crippled, middle-aged St-Ex.

Saint-Exupéry arrived at La Marsa on June 4 and flew an F-5 for the first time four days later. He was promoted to *Commandant* (equivalent to a USAAF major) on June 22, and a week later, on his 43rd

birthday, he was somehow medically cleared for long-distance and high-altitude missions.

He flew his first operational sortie since 1940 on July 27, to the southeast coast of France between Marseille and Toulon, which lasted six hours. Unfortunately, the high he felt from completing that successful mission was followed by a terrible low after his next one, on August 1, from which he had to return after just an hour due to engine trouble. On landing back at La Marsa he failed to brake properly and ran off the end of the runway. The Lightning's undercarriage collapsed and its left wing hit an obstacle. Although St-Ex was unhurt, the crash destroyed his aircraft. As a result of this *faux pas*, he was grounded, which perturbed him greatly.

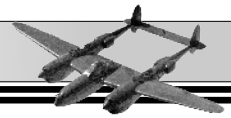
Now also relegated to the inactive Reserve, St-Ex spent the next few months as a civilian in Algiers and Casablanca, writing, drinking heavily and doing everything he could to return to operational flying. Unfortunately, on November 5 he injured himself in a fall down some stairs and this further delayed the process.

He utilized every contact he could think of and finally succeeded in being reinstated to active duty effective April 1, 1944, but was assigned as a co-pilot to a French Air Force B-26 squadron in Sardinia. He kept up the pressure, however, and was finally allowed to return to GR II/33 on May 16. It was then based at Alghero, Sardinia, and attached operationally to the 23rd PRS of the 5th PRG.

St-Ex had to re-familiarize himself with the Lightning (this time around its much improved F-5B model) before returning to ops. His first mission, on June 6, was a disappointment. His left engine caught fire while he was en route to his target, in the Marseille area, and he



North Africa, 1943: St-Ex taxis out for takeoff in F-5A-10 serial number 42-13080. Note the French roundel on its boom.



St-Ex in the cockpit of an F-5

had to turn back. He managed to land safely despite a large hole burned into the engine cowling. He did fly a successful recon to France on the 14th.

Flying for hours at 30,000 feet in an unpressurized cockpit was extremely uncomfortable for the aging, pain-wracked pilot. Reportedly, by this time St-Ex wasn't able to dress himself in his flight suit unassisted, or to turn his head to the left to check for enemy fighters!

On June 29—his 44th birthday—he flew a mission to Annecy in eastern France, the area where he had been raised. Unfortunately, his left engine failed once again and he had to shut it down and feather the prop. He managed to make it to Corsica, where he landed safely.

His next two missions were also plagued with problems. On July 11, he couldn't photograph the targets near his hometown of Lyon because of the cloud cover, and on the 14th, during another sortie to that same general area, his oxygen system failed, resulting in his briefly losing consciousness. He was able to recover and return to Alghero safely, however.

On July 17, GR II/33 and the 23rd PRS moved to Borgo airfield on Corsica. The following day St-Ex flew another, successful, sortie to southern France.

St-Ex's Final Mission

Around 0845 hours on July 31, 1944, *Commandant* Saint-Exupéry took off in F-5B-1 serial number 43-68223 to collect intelligence on German troop movements in and around the Rhone Valley—specifically the Annecy-Grenoble area, which mission was part of the preparations for the upcoming Allied invasion of southern France. He was neither seen nor heard from again. St-Ex and his Lightning just disappeared!

No sign of him or the F-5 were found until 1998, when his silver identity bracelet was recovered from the sea off the Mediterranean coast near Marseille. Then, in the same area, in 2000, the partial remains of a Lightning were discovered by a diver. After a delay imposed by the

French government, they were finally recovered in October 2003. Following six months of research and investigation, it was confirmed that they were from Saint Exupéry's F-5.

There has, of course, been a lot of speculation over the years as to what happened to St-Ex—and even more so after the discovery of the remains of his F-5. Was it hit by anti-aircraft fire? Was he shot down by a German fighter? Did his Lightning once again develop a mechanical problem? Although various theories have been put forth, no concrete supporting evidence has come to light for any of them. We will probably never know for certain his exact fate.

Saint-Exupéry's disappearance increased his already considerable fame, especially as a military pilot. (He was awarded the French *Croix de Guerre* twice—once for his actions in the Battle of France in 1940 and again for his F-5 missions in 1943-44.)

[You can check out—and purchase—books by and about Saint-Exupéry at: <http://p38assn.org/st-ex>]



Lightning Ground Crewmen: Camera Technicians

Here is the caption for this official USAAF photograph, featuring an F-5 and personnel assigned to the 8th Air Force's 7th Photo Group (Reconnaissance) in England in mid-1944:

"As soon as the plane has stopped moving and before the pilot, 2nd Lt. Donald A. Schultz, 24, of Melrose Park, Illinois, has jumped to the ground, S/Sgt. Charles J. Mader, 30, of Topeka, Kansas, and Cpl. Morris Berkoff, 25, of



Chicago, Illinois, open the nose of the plane to remove the important film taken on the mission. In short time, these photographs will be developed, printed and ready for study."

Lt. Schultz was a pilot in the group's 13th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, while Sergeant Mader and Corporal Berkoff were members of its Camera Repair department. Known as "The Eyes of the Eighth," the 7th PG provided high-altitude photographs of the 8th AF's targets for the use of intelligence officers in the planning and briefing of bombing missions—and follow-up photos to assess the damage that was done. The USAAF's photo recon pilots and their support personnel, including the above-mentioned camera technicians, provided a service that was vitally important to the successful prosecution of the war.



Hundreds of USAAF pilots were killed flying Lockheed Lightnings in World War II, whether in combat or—as in the majority of cases—in accidents. Among the *most* tragic of these tragedies were those pilots who survived overseas combat tours only to die in training accidents in the U.S. or another non-operational area. This is the story of one such P-38 pilot.

Urban Francis Stahl was born on September 27, 1921 in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and grew up there. After graduating from high school he joined the US Army Air Corps (USAAC) and was trained as an aircraft mechanic. In 1941, Urban was able to take advantage of a great new opportunity presented to enlisted USAAC personnel. The Air Corps was expanding rapidly as war seemed imminent for America, and it needed lots of new pilots—and quickly. To help obtain them, it suspended the requirement that aviation cadets have at least two years of college. This opportunity was first made available to USAAC enlisted men (EM); they could now apply for flight training if they had a high school diploma and met the age requirement (18 to 27) and would be accepted if they passed some rigid physical and written exams—all of which Urban Stahl did.

Urban began his flight training in January 1942 with Primary at Jackson, Mississippi; he then moved on to Basic at Montgomery, Alabama, and to Advanced at Columbus, Mississippi, where he graduated with Class 42-H and received the rank of Staff Sergeant, as did all the other former EM pilots. He moved on to single-engine operational fighter (Curtiss P-40 Warhawk and Bell P-39 Airacobra) training at Drew Field, near Tampa, Florida. After completing it he was sent overseas, traveling from New York with hundreds of other U.S. servicemen, including many new pilots, to Britain on the luxury liner *Queen Elizabeth* (which had been temporarily converted to a troop transport) in late November of 1942. Urban arrived in Scotland on the 30th and was then transported south to England, where he would spend the next two months.

In England he and the other pilots were first assigned to the Replacement Control Depot at Yarnfield, near Stone in Staffordshire, about 40 miles south of Manchester. This was a processing center where they underwent theater indoctrination and orientation while awaiting their slots in a training unit. While there, on December 20, Urban and his fellow staff sergeant pilots were promoted to flight officer (F/O), a temporary wartime USAAF rank that corresponded to Army warrant officer.

A week later the new flight officers were sent 30 miles southwest to Atcham, near Shrewsbury in Shropshire, where for the next month they received additional fighter training to prepare them for combat operations in the European Theater (8th Air Force). Urban trained in P-39s there, as he had in the U.S., although there was more classroom instruction than actual flying, due to the poor weather.

At the end of January 1943, Urban became part of a large group of USAAF fighter pilots

A P-38 Pilot Tragedy

By Steve Blake with Dick Butler

training in England who were suddenly reassigned to the 12th Air Force in North Africa. (The Allies had invaded French Morocco and Algeria in early November and were then fighting for Tunisia.) They shipped out from England aboard a passenger ship on the 24th and arrived in Oran, Algeria, a week later. On board the ship were 67 replacement fighter pilots who, soon after their arrival in North Africa, formed an informal group that called itself "The Sad Sacks," after a popular wartime cartoon character.

Starting in mid-February, these men received further instruction at the Médiouna airfield near Casablanca in French Morocco. The Fighter Combat Crew Replacement Center there trained them in the aircraft they would soon be flying in combat from North Africa. Urban was assigned to its P-38 squadron. Upon its completion, effective April 5, he was assigned to the 97th Fighter Squadron (FS) of the 82nd Fighter Group (FG) at Berteaux, Algeria, and was soon flying Lightning missions over the Mediterranean. (The group subsequently moved to Souk-el-Arba, Tunisia, in mid-June and to Grombalia, Tunisia, near Tunis, in early August.)

Urban accomplished quite a coup during the famous strafing of Axis airfields near Foggia, Italy, by Twelfth AF P-38s on August 25, 1943. While attacking the Triolo airfield, he exploded or burned four twin-engine Junkers Ju 88 bombers, all of which were confirmed destroyed.

His only aerial victory was achieved three days later. This was an escort of North American B-25 Mitchell twin-engine bombers to the railroad marshalling yards at Cancellio, Italy, just north of Naples. As it left the target the formation was attacked by enemy fighters. According to the 82nd FG mission report, "Our fighters turned into them. The attacks were aggressive and persistent; they followed our fighters out to sea about 15 miles." Three of the enemy were claimed destroyed in these skirmishes, including an Italian Macchi MC.202 by F/O Stahl.

A week later, on September 5, Urban flew his 50th mission, completing his tour, and was soon on his way home. After enjoying some leave with his family, later that year Urban was assigned as an instructor pilot to a squadron of the 360th FG, a P-38 operational training unit, at the Van Nuys Metropolitan Airport, near Los Angeles—which, as of April 1, 1944, became the 441st Base Unit. He had by then received his commission as a lieutenant.

In the summer of 1944 Urban evidently requested another overseas assignment, and on August 24, as a first lieutenant, he joined the 72nd FS of the 21st FG, which was then based in the Territory of Hawaii at Mokuleia Field on Oahu's north shore. By that time Hawaii was a rear echelon area, as the war against Japan was then being fought several thousand miles to the west. The 72nd FS had been flying P-39s but began re-equipping with P-38s in July.

On December 1, 1944, Lt. Stahl, flying P-38J-20 serial number 44-23357, was killed when it crashed in a "power dive" two miles south of Kipapa, a small town between Honolulu and Wheeler Field, during a "local training" flight. The cause of the accident was determined to be "unknown." Yet another pilot hero had been killed in a flying accident after surviving a combat tour!

Although he was originally buried at the Schofield Barracks post cemetery, north of Honolulu, in 1949 Urban's remains were moved to the new National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, inside Honolulu's famous Punch Bowl.



Lt. Stahl in the cockpit of a P-38 while serving as an instructor pilot at Van Nuys. (Photo courtesy of Dick Butler)



The “Downton Abbey” Lightnings

By Steve Blake

Highclere Castle, which famously doubled for the fictional Downton Abbey in the hugely successful British TV series, is located in the county of Hampshire, 50 miles southwest of London, whose southern boundary is the English Channel.

Ten miles southwest of the castle is the city of Andover, just to the west of which, from 1917 to 2009, there was a Royal Air Force airfield of the same name. From February to July of 1944, RAF Andover was the temporary home of a 9th Air Force P-38 fighter group, the 370th, which flew its first combat mission from there on May 1 and departed for its new station in France on July 20.

During the war, the British Isles were dotted with hundreds of military airfields that were utilized by the RAF and its Commonwealth air forces, the USAAF and the USN. On a typical day, hundreds of aircraft (some of them possibly enemy) could be seen overhead, and inevitably some of them crashed to earth (or into the sea), for a myriad of reasons and often a combination of them: poor weather, mechanical problems, battle damage, pilot error, etc.



Thomas Stewart as a USAAF aviation cadet, with Class 43-H

Lady Carnavon, the owner of Highclere Castle, had learned that at least eight Allied aircraft crashed onto or near her estate during the war and decided to create a memorial to their deceased crewmen on the castle grounds. A team of researchers was assembled to uncover their stories.

Lady Carnavon already knew where a P-38 had crashed onto her property and she took some of the researchers to the site. There they found trees still displaying burn marks from the crash and, with the help of

a metal detector, "that a lot of metal was still scattered over the floor of the peaceful leaf-strewn wood." These were determined to have been part of the wreckage of the P-38J-10, serial number 42-67890, that was flown by 24-year-old 2nd Lt. Thomas Dee Stewart of the 370th Fighter Group's 402nd Fighter Squadron.

This accident took place on May 15, 1944, after another 402nd Squadron pilot, 1st Lt. William E. Evers, also 24, had been tasked with leading Lt. Stewart, a newly assigned replacement pilot, on an orientation flight. Evers, a married West Point graduate from Nebraska, was one of the group's original pilots. During the course of the flight, just before four o'clock in the afternoon, their Lightnings somehow collided near Highclere Castle. Evers (flying P-38J-15 43-28274) bailed out of his plane but was killed when he struck its horizontal stabilizer. Stewart was not able to exit his Lightning and he was killed when it crashed into that peaceful wood, just south of the castle, twelve miles from the airfield and a little over a mile from the site of the crash of Evers' P-38.

Because the collision occurred above a cloud layer and there was no survivor, there were also no eyewitnesses and its cause could not therefore be determined definitively—although it was surmised that the two pilots had been engaging in a mock dogfight. There *were*, however, witnesses to the collision's immediate aftermath. In the official accident report, according to a British Army private:

"Looking up he saw two P-38s diving out of the overcast. One was headed for Woodcote Downs [a small town just south of Highclere Castle] in flames. He saw this aircraft crash into a hedge row near Ashmansworth [another small town a couple of miles southwest of the castle]. It immediately burst into flames. At almost the same moment the body of the pilot, Lieutenant Evers, landed in a field nearby. The ripcord had not been pulled. Part of the left wing and the props were found near the Woodcote Bombing Range."

An RAF sergeant on duty at the bombing range witnessed the crash of Stewart's Lightning: ". . . he heard a loud clash above the clouds directly overhead. Looking up he saw two P-38s diving out of the overcast. This one exploded and crashed in flames about a mile away. The propellers flew off while the aircraft was still several thousand feet in the air and landed in the bombing range in front of Sgt. Donaldson. The pilot, Lieutenant Stewart, was in the airplane when it hit and buried itself in the soft earth."

Thomas Stewart's remains were eventually interred in the cemetery of his hometown, Alamo, in Lincoln County, Nevada, while William Evers' lie in the American Cemetery in Cambridge, England.

The two-year-old Highclere Castle memorial consists of the wooden sculpture of a World War II pilot (titled, simply, *The Airman*) that was carved from a single tree on the estate, plus three wooden benches carved in the shape of the tail of a P-38 (horizontal stabilizer and vertical stabilizers/rudders), as can be seen in the accompanying photo. There is also a plaque memorializing the two Lightning pilots and the deceased crews (pilots and navigators) of two twin-engine RAF De Havilland Mosquito fighter-bombers that crashed nearby.

The amazing "Airman" sculpture and two of the very special benches in the Highclere Castle war memorial. (Photo courtesy of Cliff Stone)



BLACK PANTHER

WITH FISTS FULL O' FIRE!

Here's a salute to the 84th Fighter Squadron, whose fighting insignie is the snarling panther with fists full of fire. True to their battle emblem, the men of the 84th are daring and skillful fighters. Their Lightning fighter planes are among the fastest and highest fliers of all. And at their command is the Fire-Power of long-range, fast-firing, heavy-hitting cannon! Good luck, "Black Panthers," and may you have "good hunting" in every mission against the enemy!

OFFICIAL INSIGNE
OF THE
84TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
U. S. ARMY AIR FORCES



THEY'RE FIGHTING
FOR US—AND
COUNTING ON US!

Let's not let them down. The closer we get to Victory the tougher the fighting becomes. Now's the time for all of us to pitch in and . . .

Buy War Bonds!



Some of the heroic performances of America's fighter pilots in this war have been almost unbelievable. There's the group of fliers, for example, who attacked and sank an enemy destroyer with nothing but the Fire-Power of their cannon-firing Lightnings . . . the officer who shot down two enemy fighters with only three cannon shell . . . the pilot who exploded enemy locomotives, knocked out enemy tanks, smashed enemy

installations—all with cannon Fire-Power . . . Such deeds stand as a fine tribute to the courage, the skill, the all-round fighting ability of the Army Air Forces personnel. We, at Oldsmobile, feel it has been a privilege to build thousands of the cannon these men are using. In addition to aerial Fire-Power, we also produce cannon for tanks and tank destroyers, shell for tanks, artillery and naval guns. All to "Keep 'em Firing!"

OLDSMOBILE DIVISION OF **GENERAL MOTORS**

FIRE-POWER IS OUR BUSINESS



Droop Snoots in Italy

By Steve Blake

In August of 1944, 1st Lt. Richard E. Willsie, a pilot with the 82nd Fighter Group's 96th Fighter Squadron, and two other pilots from the 1st and 14th Fighter Groups were transported from Italy to England to pick up some Droop Snoot P-38s and fly them back. They left England on the morning of the 19th and soon ran into a massive weather front over France with thunderclouds rising to over 30,000 feet. The other pilots soon aborted, but Willsie was determined to complete the mission and began climbing through the front on instruments. He later recalled what happened then:

"For the next four hours I had the most exciting experience of my career. First, I experienced vertigo, which makes you feel like the airplane is flying at a tilted angle. But I refused to disbelieve my instruments and continued to fly, although I felt like I was flying sideways. I couldn't see anything. I was sitting up there lost. Finally, when the weather cleared, I started hunting for landmarks. Later I discovered I had been blown off course, but at the time I didn't realize it.

"I said a few prayers and then made up my mind to fly a certain distance and then make a turn. Luckily, just before I made the turn I flew across a town which appeared familiar. I circled and spotted a dam which we had used as a checkpoint several weeks before, when we were on a fighter-bomber mission over northern Italy. Although I was still over enemy territory, I felt like I had reached home.

"Oh yes, somewhere over France, possibly near Lyon, I noticed vapor trails streaming off the tips of my wings. Then I saw four more vapor trails: enemy planes! I turned into the two Fw 190s, who immediately broke away, and then I went back on course. I don't know what I would have done if those enemy fighters had come on in to fight. I was flying an unarmed plane!"

The 82nd Fighter Group flew its (and the 15th Air Force's) first Droop Snoot mission in this plane on August 29.

Technical Sergeant Ted Latta became the crew chief of the 96th Squadron's Droop Snoot, serial number 42-104118, which it received in October. It was named *Miss Barbara* and coded BF—the "B" standing for the 96th and the "F" for that plane within the squadron. Latta remembered years later how he happened to take a ride in "Baker Freddy":

"As usual, I was up at 4 a.m. to preflight the Droop Snoot, which had been loaded with a bomb and a belly tank the night before. Everything ticked off just fine in preflight, so I went for chow [after which] I went back to the field to 'sweat out' takeoff. I was standing there when BF turned around and taxied back to the dispersal area. The pilot informed me the engines were cutting out when he ran them up for mag check at the end of the runway. The whole mission was scrubbed and the bombs and fuel unloaded.

"Being very frustrated, the crew really dug into those engines to see if we could locate the problem. Everything we could come up with checked out OK. Our flight chief came by and ran her up himself but



*96th Fighter Squadron pilot Dick Willsie
(Writer's collection)*

couldn't make either engine cut out. So, in our inordinate wisdom, we sent word to Operations for a test pilot to take the plane up and wring her out.

"The pilot came out and said, 'Chief, if you really believe in your work, climb into the front and we'll see what's up.' So, making sure I had the forerunner of the airsick bag (a hydraulic fluid can with the top cut off), I climbed down into 'the bubble' and buckled myself in. The only view out I had was straight ahead.

"With the hatch secured, we started to taxi out to the end of the runway. As we taxied I heard one engine cough and cut out—then it started back up and ran well. I took a deep breath, but then the other engine spat and sputtered several times. I was mentally going over everything I could think of that might be the problem when the second engine smoothed out and we pulled

up at the end of the runway. The pilot ran up both engines and they were smooth as silk.

"I heard the pilot call the tower for takeoff instructions and my grip tightened on the armor plate surrounding the seat. To this day there must be a piece of armor plate floating around somewhere with my fingerprints dug into it. We roared down the runway and barely cleared the fence at the end. The pilot then proceeded to 'wring out' the Droop Snoot and its white-knuckled crew chief! He then said he would give me a little lesson in navigation. He pointed out the ocean and the mountains, and after several tight maneuvers he asked which direction the ocean was. I couldn't tell it from the sky!

"He checked out everything possible and all the tests came out OK. It was only after we landed that I finally figured out what was happening during the taxiing. The pilot deliberately cut out first one engine and then the other, just to shake me up. Believe me, he succeeded!

"I was elated over the fact that I had at last made a flight in my P-38, and that the hydraulic can was still clean and dry."

*The 96th Fighter Squadron's P-38J-15 Droop Snoot, BF
(Writer's collection)*





Another Hidden Figure

By Kelly Kalcheim

Many of you have seen the movie "Hidden Figures" about the first female engineers (called "computers") at NASA. Well, this is about the first female engineer hired by the highly secretive Skunk Works project at Lockheed Corporation.

Although she worked on many aerospace designs during her career, we honor her for her work on the P-38. She worked her way up the ladder at Lockheed to become the only woman on the original team of 40 at Skunk Works.



Mary Ross certainly was a trailblazer in her field. She was born on August 9, 1908, in the small mission of Park Hill, Oklahoma, which became home to many Cherokee people who arrived there on the "Trail of Tears." She was a proud Cherokee woman and the great-granddaughter of Chief John Ross, the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation.

She enrolled at Northeastern State Teacher's College (now Northeastern State University) in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, when she was 16 years old, where she completed her bachelor's degree in mathematics. Subsequently, in 1938 she earned her master's degree at Colorado State Teachers College.

Mary was hired as a mathematician by Lockheed in 1942, during a time when people of her gender and ethnicity did not often have those kinds of opportunities. She began working on the effects of air pressure on the P-38 Lightning and helped to solve many of the design issues involved with high speed flight and aeroelasticity. Although metal may seem strong and stable, at the high speeds the P-38 was able to fly the air pressure could cause the metal to deform or behave unexpectedly, causing instability problems. Because of this, the Skunk Works team had to change the shape and structure of the plane to make it stable at those higher speeds. Mary's job was to analyze the data and make the calculations needed for those changes.

Ross retired in 1973 at the age of 65, but she didn't stop working. She began recruiting the next generation of Native Americans and women for careers in engineering. In 2004 she joined 25,000 other Native Americans for the opening of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. According to the Smithsonian Magazine Ross attributed her successes to the rich heritage of her Cherokee people and the importance of tribal emphasis on education and preparation for the future. "I was brought up in the Cherokee tradition of equal education for boys and girls," she said. "It did not bother me to be the only girl in the math class."

Mary Golda Ross remains an excellent role model for young women today, especially young Native American girls. If you would like to learn more about this exceptional woman, just do a Google search. You will be amazed at the amount of information you can find about her.

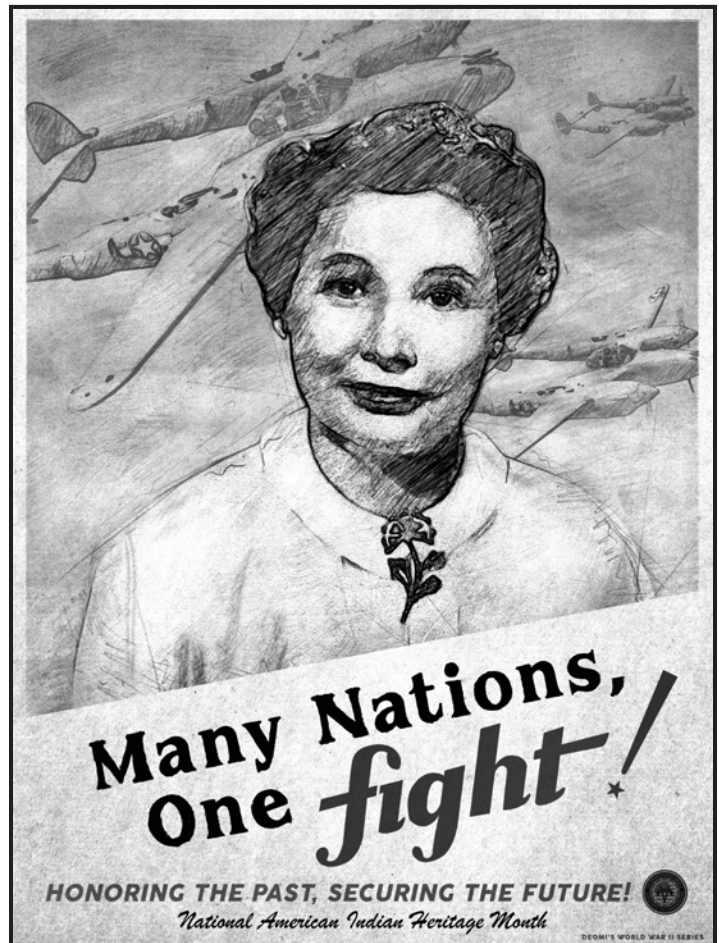
If you want to read more about Mary, you can pick up a copy of this book: "The Girl Who Could Rock the Moon—An Inspirational Tale about Mary G. Ross" from Amazon: [amzn.to/3zT0HBS](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B073T0HBS)

Fun fact: She appeared on the old quiz show "What's My Line?" You can watch that here: [p38assn.org/TV](https://www.p38assn.org/TV)

Mary Ross received many honors during her lifetime. These are just a few:

- Mary Golda Ross Middle School in Oklahoma City was named after her (2018).
- She had one of those famous "Google Doodles" honor her (2018).
- She is depicted on the Native American \$1 coin by the US Mint celebrating American Indians in the space program (2019).
- She had a scholarship established in her honor by the Society of Women Engineers (1992).
- She became a member of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (1984).
- She was inducted into the Silicon Valley Hall of Fame (1992).

Ross passed away on April 29, 2008, just shy of her 100th birthday, in Los Altos, California.☺





WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Robert Blethrow, who has joined as a Life member
Mallen Cunningham, whose father, Floyd, was a P-38 mechanic on Guadalcanal

Jeff Green, a gift membership from Ron and Lydia Swearingen

David Lidstone, a gift membership from Jerry McDougald

Bruce Loewenberg, who joined as a Life member, is the son of Jerome Loewenberg, the administrative executive officer of the 82nd Fighter Group in Italy

Janell MacMurray, the daughter of the late 479th Fighter Group P-38 and P-51 pilot Lt. Col. Arlett G. "Art" Mosier Jr. Her mother, Ardelle, is one of this issue's Folded Wings.

Robert Pflumm

Matthew Reeser, a gift Life membership from his father, Edwin Reeser. He is the grandson of 94th Fighter Squadron P-38 pilot and C.O. James Hagenback.

Robert Shuemaker

Rear Admiral (Ret.) Murray J. Tynch III

Also, **Dan Flatley**, son of World War II P-38 pilot Robert Flatley, and Cindy Astor, whose father was Robert Wright, a P-38 pilot of the 82nd Fighter Group in Italy, have upgraded their memberships to **Life**.

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

We'd like to acknowledge the following individuals for their financial help and let them know how much we appreciate their donation:

82nd Fighter Group Association

Lillian Ayars

Robert Blethrow

Jeanney Horn

Dain Leadmon

Robert Nishimura

Kyle Riddle

E. D. Shaw III

Ron Swearingen

Patrick Swift

James Tyler

Kenneth Underwood

A Big "Thank You!" to our Volunteer P-38 Museum Docents:

Tim Atherton

Kris Blouir

Jim Bridges

Tim Mallis

Marcos Oviedo

Bob Pepper

Howard Ramshorn

Maryann Ramshorn

Leland Rash

Larry Segrist

Sherry Segrist

Isaiah Suso

It's Easy to Help!

As our friends, parents or grandparents who were "hands on" with the P-38 Lightning are continuing to leave us, keeping our website and this membership publication available as a tribute to them is vital.

This aircraft was an important part of their lives and our history, and to carry on this legacy we need funding. We are not affiliated with the USAF or Lockheed or any other support organization, and our entire operation is supported by people like you.

What would you pay for a good aviation DVD or book? If you enjoy *Lightning Strikes* and our P-38 Association website, please consider a financial contribution of the same amount to help defray our increasing costs and ensure that this part of aviation history continues to be available to people all over the world.

No donation is too small; after all, \$5 from a thousand visitors will keep us going for a long time! Donate here with your credit card (*it is completely secure and guaranteed against fraud*):

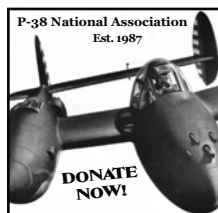
p38assn.org/donations

You'll also find a link to our complete list of donors there.

Since we are a 501(c)(19) non-profit organization, your donation may also be tax deductible. Check with your accountant. We also accept donations via USPS. Just make your check payable to "P-38 National Association" and mail it to:

DigiPrint
PRODUCTSSM
DESIGN AND PRINT PROFESSIONALS

Lightning Strikes printed by:
DigiPrint Products
2730 S. Harbor Blvd.,
Suite B
Santa Ana, CA 92704
714-850-8833



P-38 National Association
PO Box 6453
March Air Reserve Base, CA
92518



The Lady Buys a Lightning Final Takeoff



This is a great photo of Nadine Ramsey and her new, personal P-38. Below is the text of an article about her purchase of it that appeared in *The Los Angeles Times* on February 15, 1946 (see the review of the new book about Nadine on Page 15).

"While most women are still waiting for their postwar dreams of nylons, clothing and household articles to materialize, Nadine Ramsey of 5300 Hanbury St., Long Beach, had hers all wrapped up yesterday. Only it wasn't a feminine item. For Miss Ramsey bought herself a P-38 from the War Assets Corp. in Kingman, Ariz., yesterday morning and flew it home to the Long Beach Municipal Airport in the afternoon."

"It's what I've been dreaming about," said the attractive young woman who is a civilian preflight instructor attached to the 6th Ferrying Group at Long Beach. "I used to fly P-38's when I was a member of the WASPs two years ago, and I've wanted one of my own every since. It's an exciting plane to handle."

"Miss Ramsey, who has held a pilot's license for nearly 10 years, demonstrated and sold light planes before the war. She joined the WASPs in 1942 and ferried planes for the A.T.C. She is the only woman to have purchased a P-38."

"The officers at the Kingman field thought I was crazy when I picked out the plane," she said. "It cost me \$1250 as surplus property and the original price was somewhere around \$165,000. All the regular equipment was left in the plane, including a VHF radio set."

"After registering the plane with the C.A.A. [Editor: Civil Aeronautics Authority], Miss Ramsey plans to use it 'just for pleasure flying,' though she may use it for commercial work at a later date."

The caption for these official USAAF photographs is deceptively simple: "Lockheed P-38 of the 1st Fighter Group which was wrecked on a runway by collision with another Lockheed P-38 at Biskra [Algeria], North Africa. 15 January 1943."

Typically, the full story of this incident was less simple and much more tragic, as a witness to it, 27th Fighter Squadron pilot 1st Lt. Elmer Hartman, described in his diary:

"This afternoon a [flight school] classmate, [1st Lt. Richard W.] McWherter in the 94th [Fighter Squadron] was taking off with a flight of new boys on a practice mission and hit another ship on the runway taxiing. Threw him clear of the ship but killed him. Dust was so thick he couldn't see the other airplane."

Dick McWherter, who was from Dallas, Texas, and had graduated with Class 41-I at Luke Field, Arizona, was one of his squadron's best pilots. He had been awarded an Air Medal for his participation in the mass flight of the 1st FG's P-38s over the North Atlantic from Maine to England the previous July, as part of Operation *Bolero*. He had also shot down two Me 109s in an air battle over Gabes, Tunisia, on December 2, 1942, for which he was awarded a posthumous Distinguished Flying Cross.

The plane Lt. McWherter was flying that day was probably his assigned P-38F-1, serial number 41-7550, which he had received back in California, flew to England and continued to fly in North Africa after the group moved there in November, but it cannot be confirmed due to the paucity of official records from that unit, time and place. As has been noted in *Lightning Strikes* before, many more P-38 pilots were killed in flying accidents than died as the direct result of enemy actions.

MOVED?

Please notify Membership Chairman Steve Blake of any address changes (see page 3)



Tony LeVier in England

By Steve Blake

Anthony W. "Tony" LeVier was arguably the most skilled P-38 pilot ever—military or civilian. A successful air race pilot during the 1930s, in April 1941 he was hired by Lockheed to test fly and ferry its Hudson bombers. He began test flying P-38s in February 1942 and a few months later he officially joined Kelly Johnson's Experimental Flight Test Division.



Tony LeVier poses with Snafuperman—P-38J-10 serial number 42-68006—somewhere in the British Isles.

On January 17, 1944, Tony was informed of a special mission of which he was to be a part. The P-38 was having a rough time of it in the skies of northern Europe at that time, including the "blowing up" of many of its Allison V-1710 engines during its long-range, high-altitude bomber escort missions. To help solve that and other technical problems, Lockheed dispatched to England its top aeronautical engineer, its leading expert on turbo-superchargers and Tony, one of its best test pilots.

In addition to helping to find solutions to those technical problems, Tony would have another important assignment in Britain: boosting 8th Air Force Lightning pilots' confidence in their aircraft, and thereby their morale and competence, by putting on instructive flight demonstrations for them, lecturing them and answering their questions. This was something he had been doing at P-38 operational training units in the U.S. for some time.

One of the first places Tony visited in England was Nuthampstead, home of the 55th Fighter Group, shortly after reporting in to VIII Fighter Command Headquarters at Bushey Hall and being issued his flight gear. During a flight test there of a P-38J that had been modified with a revamped induction system his right engine detonated and blew up, and he was forced to make an emergency landing at another airfield, after which he ended up in hospital for a week due to the effects of the

accelerated series of inoculations he had received just before leaving the States.

After his discharge from the hospital Tony visited the 364th Fighter Group at Honington. He later described a flight demonstration he put on there that he began with a simulated engine failure on takeoff:

"I took to the air, and at 120 mph indicated I chopped power on the left engine with my feet off the rudder pedals to allow the plane to yaw to the left, just as it would on an engine failure. Then, by jamming my right foot all the way to its limit and regaining full control, I feathered the left engine propeller, trimmed the rudder and secured the engine in proper order. I accelerated to 150 mph and climbed up a few hundred feet to start my various maneuvers. I whipped the P-38 into a left turn—dead engine down—and started making accelerated stalls. Then I made aileron rolls to the left during a complete circle of the field."

Next on Tony's agenda was a visit to the 8th Air Force's Technical Operations Section at Bovington, where he flew a number of Allied aircraft. Then it was on to the Lockheed Overseas Corporation facility at Langford Lodge, in Northern Ireland. There he was presented with a brand-new P-38J-10, serial number 42-68006, that had been specially equipped with the new dive flaps he had helped test back in the States—which would not be included on production models until the J-25, several months later. He named it *Snafuperman*, and with it he would perform many more flight demonstrations and engineering test flights.

While at Langford Lodge in March Tony put on a particularly impressive aerial display. According to Warren Bodie in his book *THE LOCKHEED P-38*:

"There was a very low ceiling that day, and if he ventured much above 300 feet he disappeared into the cloud cover. Most of the flying was done within the airfield perimeter, frequently on one engine. More often than not, he would bank into the 'dead' engine, something that would never be done if it could be avoided. Most of the short-radius vertical turns at about 100 feet altitude were completed to the cheers and applause of the crowd. At the low speeds involved at times, there was no chance of faking. It was a classic demonstration."

On April 9, Tony visited the 20th Fighter Group at Kings Cliffe, where he received a somewhat less than enthusiastic welcome at its officers' club. To attract its pilots' attention he fired up his P-38 "and climbed to 20,000 feet right over the base. I put the P-38 into a vertical dive with max rpm. At about 10,000 feet, I saw people coming out of every building. The noise of a P-38 in a dive is the most awesome sound known to man.

"Having everyone's attention, I concentrated on the officers' club. Coming out of my dive at 520 mph, I gave them the full P-38 treatment. After landing, I returned to the O Club to see

Continued on Page 18



Nose First

By Gary Koch

Sunday, November 26, 1944, was one of those crappy days for Lt. Milton Graham of the 474th Fighter Group's 429th Fighter Squadron. The 429th was part of an armed reconnaissance mission lifting off from its airfield, A-78, near Florennes, Belgium, that took them and the rest of the 474th Group to the vicinity of Dullenburge, Germany.

Lt. Graham's plane, P-38J-15 serial number 43-28366, coded 7Y-I—which had been transferred to the 9th Air Force from the 8th Air Force's 364th Fighter Group after the latter converted to P-51s—took off carrying two 1,000-lb. instantaneous-fused bombs. As he lifted off the runway his nose tire blew out. Graham and the rest of the 429th attacked a marshalling yard with some 100 cars on its sidings, and while they scored hits in or near the tracks and buildings, the results were unclear.

Returning to Florennes, Lt. Graham eased his plane down onto the runway only to have the nose gear collapse. Amid the noise of tortured metal striking the tarmac and the destruction of the propellers, 7Y-I came to a stop. This resulted in a blocked runway, forcing following planes to be diverted to other airfields. Surprisingly, the damage was not too extensive, and 7Y-I was repaired and returned to service.



474th FG ground crewmen checking the damage to 7Y-I and deciding how to proceed (474th Fighter Group Association photo)

And the answer to the question on Page 4 is . . .

This is kind of an easy answer because the P-38 was utilized for *all* of these things, depending on which modifications were made to it. Stay tuned for the next issue of *Lightning Strikes* where we will go into depth on each of these variations and their uses.

Continued from Page 8

the effects of my obnoxious behavior. I was the hit of the evening, and the pilots all wanted to know how I did all those maneuvers. I invited the flight commanders to fly my P-38 and gave them instructions on how to use the dive flaps."

On April 24, Tony visited the 9th Air Force's 474th Fighter Group at Warmwell, just before its first combat mission later that day. Lt. Robert D. Hanson, a pilot of the group's 428th Fighter Squadron, remembered it well many years later:

"Tony LeVier did more than demonstrate the dive flaps. He really showed us how the P-38 could perform by doing maneuvers such as completing a takeoff on single engine, slow rolls at low altitude on one engine and more amazing tricks than I can remember. The primary purpose of his demonstration . . . was to instill confidence in the airplane."

Tony finally left England on May 27 and was soon back to work at the Burbank plant.

Postscript: Tony, who passed away in 1998, was a charter member of the P-38 National Association. Our P-38 Hangar Museum, which opened in 1996, was named in his honor, and a bust of Tony sits atop the monument outside its entrance. ☺

Visit our Association's website regularly, and encourage your friends to do so too.

www.p38assn.org

Page 19, Top: This is the colorful art work depicting "Snafuperman" that appeared on the nose of the P-38J Lockheed test pilot Tony LeVier flew during his sojourn in the British Isles in early 1944 (see the story on Page 8). It also appears on the P-38 Association's full-scale P-38 replica that is on display at its museum adjacent to March Field.

Page 19, Bottom: Ground crewmen of the 14th Fighter Group's 37th Fighter Squadron are readying a new Allison V-1710 for a P-38 engine change at Triolo, Italy, in the early fall of 1944. From left to right: Technical Sergeant Curtis Jones, Staff Sergeant Fred "Pappy" Colton and Technical Sergeant Lenert. (Photo courtesy of Jim Stitt)

Back Cover: Talented—and generous—P-38 Association member Hayman Tam took and contributed this great photo of White 33 getting ready to take off at an air show.



In Harm's Way

By Steve Blake

As many of our readers already know, during World War II more pilots were killed in the hundreds of non-combat-related Lightning flying accidents than during combat missions. The majority of these deaths took place while the pilots in question were learning to fly the Lightning in Stateside operational training units (OTUs), inexperience being the main culprit.

The late P-38 Association member Phil Chuey described a fatal P-38 accident (though not to the pilot) that he witnessed while assigned to the 431st Base Unit, an OTU at Moses Lake Army Air Field (AAF) in Washington State, after graduating with Class 44-E at Luke Field, Arizona.

Phil at first flew "war weary" Bell P-39 Airacobras at Moses Lake, until the late summer of 1944, when "we received brand-new P-38Ls as a reward, and with just about three hours of preliminary cockpit orientation we were allowed to solo. But as accidents continued to occur, [on September 6] a truckload of pilots were taken to the runway, alongside the temporary control tower, an ambulance and several fire engines, to view landings. It was hot and time was passing slowly when, suddenly and quietly, a landing began to unravel.

"A P-38 [L-5 44-24348] flown by Lt. [Richard C.] Livingston got uncontrollably caught in the prop wash of a prior plane about fifty feet from the ground. Lt. Livingston tried desperately to recover, as his line of flight was directly in line with our vehicles. As it became apparent he was out of control, panic took over. The two officers in the control tower literally dove out, as did the pilots in the truck. The plane crashed right in the midst of our position; in fact, it pancaked on top of the parked vehicles in such a way that Lt. Livingston was able to climb out unharmed. Out of about forty people in the area there was only one fatality—the truck driver, who was asleep and was killed instantly. True to tradition, those of us

who witnessed the accident were ordered back up in the air that afternoon.

"Just after our landing accident Lockheed sent its chief engineering test pilot, Milo Burcham, for the express purpose of illustrating how easy it was to fly the P-38. He lost no time; as he approached our landing strip in his personal P-38 he proceeded to land out of a perfect loop. At the top his wheels popped out, as well as his flaps. He cut his engines and proceeded to execute a dead-stick landing in amazing fashion. Later that day Milo held a workshop for our benefit."

While recounting some of the many P-38 accidents that resulted in the deaths of military personnel (most often the pilot), we might tend to forget that sometimes there was collateral damage in the form of civilian deaths. Once such incident was a crash involving a P-38 (J-15 serial number 43-28975) of the 440th Base Unit, an OTU at Santa Maria AAF, which was located near the central California coast.

On January 30, 1945, Lt. Elmer R. Steffey Jr. lost control of said Lightning during a training flight and crashed into the Rusconi Cafe on Main Street in the nearby city of Santa Maria. The crash and the resulting explosion and fire killed not only the pilot but Mrs. Phil Rusconi, the cafe's owner, and John Dolph, a cook—and, of course, devastated the building.

This wasn't the only accident in which 43-28975 was involved. On July 13 of the previous year it experienced a landing accident at Daggett AAF in California's Mojave Desert, which was utilized for gunnery training. The damage was not serious and the aircraft was repaired and returned to service. Its pilot on that occasion, Captain Murray J. Shubin, was a bona fide hero, having scored eleven air victories in the Solomon Islands flying P-38s with the famous 339th Fighter Squadron, including five Zeros in one day over Guadalcanal that earned him the Distinguished Service Cross.

The devastating aftermath of the P-38's crash into the Rusconi Cafe





Member Spotlight



Ed Baquet in the cockpit of a 49th FS P-38

Edwin C. Baquet was born on May 5, 1922, in Unionville, Missouri, and like many of his generation who served in World War II, he grew up on a farm. His lifelong love of the Air Force speaks for itself. He joined it early in his life and remained in the USAF both as an airman and as a civilian employee for his entire career. He even named one of his children after Kelly Air Force Base (now Kelly Field) in San Antonio, Texas. Kelly Baquet Kalcheim is now a director of the P-38 National Association.

"Eddy," as his wife Oresa called him, was a good man. He was a good husband, who loved his wife. He was a good family man, who loved them all unconditionally. He was a good neighbor, who never hesitated to offer a helping hand. He was also a good citizen, a patriot, and a good member of his community.

Ed belonged to two organizations that meant the world to him, the Order of Daedalians (a fellowship of military aviators) and the P-38 National Association, which honored his favorite aircraft. He participated eagerly in both organizations until his health got in the way, which annoyed him beyond words.

Ed loved his time in the Air Force as a fighter pilot and would have stayed in indefinitely if they had let him. At that time, however, if you joined the military as a reservist, once you had your 20 years in you had to retire, which he did as a lieutenant colonel. He took great pride in being a decorated P-38 combat pilot in WWII, and also served in the Korean War. When he grudgingly had to leave the service after the mandatory 20 years, he found another, civilian, job "on base," as a safety officer. He remained in that job for another 20 years and would have continued to do so had it not been for his declining health.

But, let's back up a bit. Ed was living in Oregon when he joined that state's National Guard on June 12, 1939, at the ripe old age of 17, and served with it until February 27, 1940. When he turned 20 he enlisted in the US Army Reserve and entered the Aviation Cadet Program six months later, in February 1943. He was awarded his pilot wings and received his commission as a second lieutenant at Luke Field, Arizona, in December 1943, with Class 43-K.

After receiving additional training to fly the P-38, Ed was sent to Italy as a replacement pilot and on June 26, 1944, was assigned to the 49th Fighter Squadron, 14th Fighter Group of the 15th Air Force at Triolo, near Foggia. He flew his first combat mission four days later. As a first lieutenant, Ed led the 49th Squadron for the first time on November 20. On December 17, during an escort of some B-24s to Odental, Germany, he damaged two Fw 190s that were attacking the bombers under his care. He completed his combat tour on December 27, 1944, when he flew his 50th mission.

Ed's tent mate in Italy was Lt. Jim Zingg, with whom he got together again years later at a P-38 National Association reunion.

Somewhere in his busy military career he took the time to marry his high school sweetheart, Oresa Adams, who had also joined the military, as a marine—and after whom he named his assigned P-38 in Italy. There was a lot of good-natured rivalry between the two of them about whether the Air Force or the Marine Corps was the better branch of the military. They took their vows on February 10, 1945.

Being an Air Force pilot gave Ed the chance to fly a variety of aircraft, including, in addition to the P-38, the Air Force's first jet, the Bell P-59 Airacomet, Lockheed's F-80 Shooting Star, and the North American F-100 Super Sabre.

One of the givens when you are in the Air Force is moving around a lot. Two of the places where Ed was stationed were Long Beach Municipal Airport, California (with the 1738th Ferry Squadron) and Brookley AFB in Mobile, Alabama (with the 1708th Ferry Group). Around this time Ed had been promoted to major and completed B-57 Canberra training. He moved with his family to Johnson AFB in Japan to serve with the 8th Bomb Squadron and remained stationed there until 1960. Then on to Texas, where he served with the 1st Aerial Tracking Squadron, followed by service as an operations officer with the 4758th Defense Systems Evaluation Squadron—both at Biggs AFB in El Paso. He retired from the USAF in 1965.

Finally, retirement. No more moving around, right? Wrong! First stop Oxnard AFB in California and then south to March AFB in Riverside, both in a ground safety officer civil service capacity.

Ed passed away four months after his wife of 60 years, coincidentally on Christmas Day, her favorite holiday. He is buried next to her at the Riverside National Cemetery in California



Lieutenants Ed Baquet and Jim Zingg posing outside their tent at Triolo, Italy

Ed Baquet, USAAF pilot and Oresa Baquet, USMC



Right:

A young "Rosie the Riveter" tightens some screws on a P-38. Lockheed had many publicity photos taken of the hard-working female employees on its assembly line, doing their part for the war effort.

Below:

P-38 Association President Scott Frederick's Christmas tree ornaments included a three-plane flight of P-38s.





Reunion/Air Show Diary

By Steve Blake

Two of the things our members have particularly enjoyed over the years were the P-38 Association's conventions/reunions and its participation in air shows—the latter often coupled with the former. These have been great opportunities for P-38 fans to get together to chat about their favorite warbird; meet their heroes, the World War II Lightning veterans; listen to various presentations about the P-38; and check out some actual Lightnings, up close on the ground and in the air.

The 1987 Convention, remembered on Page 6, set the standard for future conventions/reunions: a host hotel, with rooms for special functions such as hospitality/cocktail mixers, banquets, P-38 symposiums/history panels, Board of Directors meetings and General Membership meetings; and a visit to a nearby airfield/air museum where the attendees would view at least one P-38.

At the Association's first Board meeting, in October of 1987, Dayton, Ohio, was chosen as the site of its first official convention, for 1989. Those plans did not pan out, however, and arrangements began to be made for another one, to be held in 1990 at the same hotel in Hollywood, California, as the 1987 Convention. It was, in fact, very similar to the latter, including a visit to the Chino Airport to once again see Lefty Gardner perform his aerobatic magic in *White Lightning*—as he would continue to do for the next two reunions.



Steve Hinton chats with P-38 Association members at the Palm Springs Air Museum during the P-38 Grand Reunion Year 2000. Steve put on a great aerial display there in Joltin' Josie.

There was a reunion every two years for the next fourteen. The 1992 event, held in Colorado Springs in conjunction with the 475th Fighter Group Association, included the formal dedication ceremony for the beautiful P-38 sculpture the P-38 Association had commissioned and paid for that was installed at the Air Force Academy. The attendees really enjoyed their visit to the Academy, which included a flyover by three P-38s. There was another, much larger, ceremony—also featuring an air show and the P-38s—at nearby Peterson Air Force Base, a major WWII photo reconnaissance training field, celebrating its 50th anniversary.

The next two reunions took place in Houston, in 1994—in cooperation with the Lone Star Museum of Flight in nearby Galveston—and in Riverside, California, in 1996, the latter featuring visits to the March Field Air Museum (for the dedication of *another*, identical P-38 sculpture) and to the Planes of Fame Museum at Chino, both of which included flyovers by at least one P-38. The 1998 Reunion, held in Irvine, California, was notable because it included the Grand Opening of the P-38 Association's new Tony LeVier P-38 Hangar Museum.

The next convention was the *pièce de résistance* of P-38 Association events: the P-38 Grand Reunion Year 2000 in Palm Springs, California, which had been years in the planning. With a total of over 1000 attendees, it was and remains by far our largest gathering. It included events at both our P-38 Museum and the Palm Springs Air Museum, one of the country's finest. At the latter event Steve Hinton put on a great show in the Planes of Fame's P-38, *Joltin' Josie* (later *Porky II* and now *23 Skidoo*). There were also some mini P-38 squadron and group reunions.

The Association did finally hold a reunion at Dayton, in 2002, which included a tour of the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB. Two years later we held a convention in Ontario, California, the highlight of which was attendance at the annual Planes of Fame warbirds air show at the Chino Airport, one of the biggest and best in the world.



Longtime P-38 Association member and Glacier Girl Project Manager Bob Cardin poses with Porky II during the 2004 Chino Air Show. He is holding his winning ticket in a "Win a Flight in a P-38" raffle.



WWII P-38 pilots Bill Starke (on the left) and Ed Baquet pose with two young fans and 23 Skidoo at Nellis AFB during the Association's 20th anniversary Celebration in Las Vegas. Behind them are Ed's fellow Directors Bob Alvis and Howard Ramshorn.



The next major Association gathering was a "Celebration" of its 20th anniversary in Las Vegas during the 2007 Veterans Day weekend, which included two notable events. The first was what one attendee described as "an evening of dining, entertainment and patriotism hosted by the faculty and students of the Clifford O. Findlay Middle School in North Las Vegas." (The school, which has adopted the P-38 as its symbol, is named after the late Clifford "Pete" Findlay, a local businessman and WWII F-5 photo recon pilot.) Those who were privileged to attend—including 79 WWII Lightning vets—will never forget the experience.

The other event was equally enjoyable. The P-38 Association's contingent was ensconced in two complimentary tents during Aviation Nation's Nellis AFB Air Show celebrating the 60th anniversary of the USAF—and what a show it was! There was an amazing variety of both historic and modern military aircraft on display, on the ground and in the air, including a spectacular flight demonstration by an F-22A Raptor.



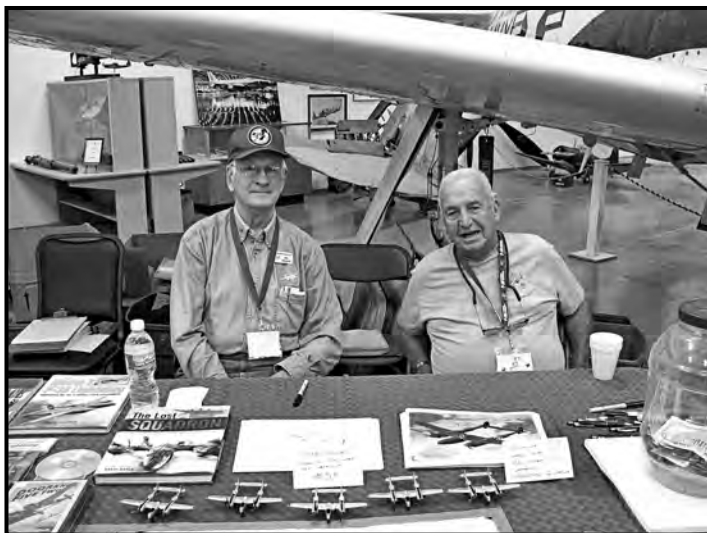
Jeff Harris and Allied Fighters' beautiful Honey Bunny were among the "stars" of 2010's California Capital Airshow in Sacramento.

sponsored by the Southern California Wing of the Commemorative Air Force, which has a facility at the Camarillo Airport; the California Poppy Festival; the Los Angeles County Air Show at William J. Fox Airfield (both held in Lancaster); and the Riverside Air Show at the Riverside Airport.

Our booth always attracted a large crowd at these events. There were typically several WWII P-38 pilots present to chat with air show attendees and sign autographs, lots of great P-38-related merchandise to be purchased—and new members of the P-38 National Association to be signed up.

The most impressive of these more recent events was the 2013 Chino Air Show, where five P-38s flew together in the Southern California skies for the first time since 2010. The air show, whose theme was "Lightning Strikes Chino," was the centerpiece of that year's Ontario reunion. A "VIP" registration option included front-row seating there in a cushy VIP tent and lots of other perks.

We hope to see you at the next special P-38 Association event!



Two P-38 Association stalwarts, Joe Onesty (on the left) and Bob Waggoner, man our booth during the 2009 Valle Membership and air show event. Both men were Directors as well as WWII P-38 pilots.

Starting in 2008, five General Membership Meetings were held at the Planes of Fame Air Museum in Valle, Arizona, near the Grand Canyon, as guests of the Museum during its annual High Country Warbirds Fly-In. These were really mini reunions that included informal dinners, speeches and symposiums in addition to the business meetings. At the 2009 event the attendees celebrated the dedication of a new, permanent P-38 Association display that includes exhibits honoring two WWII P-38 pilots—Archie Jackson and Shannon Estill. Other exhibits have since been added to the display.

There were two big events in 2010. First up was the General Membership Meeting at Valle in June. The Planes of Fame's 23 Skidoo was there, and nine members paid for rides in it, which was quite a thrill for them. The huge California Capital Airshow, which featured four P-38s, took place in September. Association Director Dayle DeBry recalls that memorable experience on Page 12.

During this time the Association's booth and its crew were regular fixtures at air shows and other military- and aviation-related events throughout Southern California. Besides the huge annual Chino warbirds air show, there was the Wings Over Camarillo air show,



Association President Ron Smith, his wife Marilyn and Director (and WWII Lightning pilot) Jack "Fox" Olson display P-38 merchandise at the 2008 Poppy Festival in Lancaster, California.



D-Day for the 474th Fighter Group

By Scott Frederick

Around nearly every English port, large or small, could be seen the build-up for the D-Day invasion. In the woods and along the roads, tent cities sprang into existence, occupied by thousands of soldiers. New roads were laid, complete with checkpoints to bar civilians. Miles of trucks loaded with equipment lined these roads, their front ends pointed toward the ports.

The men of the 474th Fighter Group could sense the imminence of the operation. In early June, all personnel received orders to bear their arms constantly—pilots their pistols, ground officers and crew chiefs their carbines. Foxholes were to be dug near each P-38's parking place. As of June 3, all personnel were restricted to base, and those who had been away were recalled. The booms and wings of the group's planes received the distinctive black-and-white striping that would identify Allied planes during the invasion. The 474th adjusted the boom striping. Instead of the official white-black-white-black-white paint scheme, the pilots created a black-white-black-white-black pattern that gave the bold markings on each boom a white background.

The movement of tens of thousands of soldiers and their equipment had also begun on June 3. The men flooded the embarkation ports in a highly orchestrated ballet that matched each unit to the ship that would deliver it across the channel. The invasion of France, originally planned for June 5, had been aborted because of bad weather in the English Channel. Many ships had set out on the evening of June 4, expecting to land on the following day, but when the weather deteriorated, they were recalled. The invasion was rescheduled for June 6, for which a narrow window of good weather was forecast.

Group and squadron commanders and intelligence officers were called to preliminary meetings on June 4. There they learned of the invasion plans.

Before dawn on the morning of June 5, the 474th placed pilots in warmed-up P-38s for two-hour shifts on a constant scramble alert, ready to take off at a moment's notice. Early in the afternoon, Major Earl Hedlund and Captain Ernie Nuckols, the commanding officer and the operations officer of the 428th Fighter Squadron, were ordered to Group Headquarters for a briefing with the other squadron leaders to hear of a special mission. Each of them was instructed to select the pilots they wanted on the mission and to report back to Group at 4:00 p.m. for further orders.

Arriving at the briefing room, the selected pilots of the 428th, 429th, and 430th Squadrons stared at a large map on the wall. The map revealed invasion fleet assembly areas from the Isle of Wight to the landing beaches south and east of the Cherbourg Peninsula. The pilots realized that since their base, Warmwell, was so close to the English Channel, they had front row seats for the invasion.

The briefing ended in less than an hour. The 474th Fighter Group was to fly cover over the invasion fleet and to engage any German aircraft that might try to interfere. The 474th would be



Major Earl C. Hedlund, the 428th Fighter Squadron's CO

broken up, augmenting six other P-38 squadrons. The 428th would join three of those other squadrons in providing coverage. The commanding officer and selected pilots of the 428th were sequestered. They ate alone and then waited in the alert room for the mission to begin.

Slipping their lines or weighing anchor in the early evening hours, four thousand ships left England's ports, harbors, quays, bays, and estuaries for a rendezvous off the Isle of Wight. They were organized into sixty distinct convoys that converged at a point just south of the island called Piccadilly Circus.

Tension mounted as the mission time approached. The usual pre-mission banter was absent as the men wondered how the Germans would respond to the invasion. Finally, it was time for each pilot to strap on his flight gear, parachute, and dinghy. The mission



started taking off at 9:37 p.m. Plane after plane of the 474th roared down the grass runways of Warmwell into an angry looking evening sky.

Once into formation, the three squadrons went their separate ways, climbing quickly into heavy clouds at 4,000 feet. Once through them, they headed southeast to their rendezvous points with the other assigned squadrons. As they met up, they dropped back down through the clouds to begin their patrols.

For several thousand feet all that was seen was a gray, gauzy, undulating mass of clouds whipping past the pilots' windshields until they suddenly broke through the clouds. Although the sun had set at 9:17, there was still enough light to see the panorama unfolding before them. From horizon to horizon, the English Channel was filled with ships of every size and shape.

Below the cloud cover at 4,000 feet, the pilots crossed the channel toward the Cherbourg Peninsula. They tried to be on the lookout for enemy planes, but their eyes were constantly dragged back to the scene below them. Twilight came at 10:00 p.m. and the sea darkened. Little by little, night hid the might of the Allied forces on the water below. Now it was the flotilla in the air that mesmerized the pilots.

The transports that carried the American 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions and the British 6th Airborne Division had lifted off from dozens of inland airfields. Their goal was to seize key objectives ahead of the Normandy invasion, and they began passing over Warmwell not long after the 428th Squadron had begun its protective mission. Hundreds of C-47s passed over toward the French coast. As darkness fell, they turned on their blinking green and amber navigation lights.

It looked like a massive Christmas display, constantly changing as the planes crossed the channel at various altitudes. Time crept by and still the airborne armada came on, a seemingly endless display of military might. Over the darkened landmass of France, other lights

began to join the constantly shifting light configurations of the airborne invasion force. Tracer shells of white, red, and orange soared lazily upward toward the masses of planes. Red and white blossoms of flak, like briefly glimpsed ornaments on a Christmas tree, appeared among the green and amber aircraft navigation lights.

Just before midnight, the 428th headed back toward Warmwell, flying above the southbound transports. When its pilots arrived, they found that in order to land they were forced to circle down through the endless stream of transports and bombers, now towing gliders. Cautioned again to remain silent about what they had seen, the pilots headed for the Bachelor Officers Quarters for some much-needed sleep.

Early in the morning of June 6, the bombers and C-47s that had flown south began to return. Many returned to their home bases, but those that were damaged made for the nearest airfields. Warmwell was soon crowded with planes that had been riddled with small arms fire, or pierced or scorched by flak. In order to maintain the combat readiness of the 474th Group, ground crews cleared each arriving aircraft from the runway as quickly as possible. It was soon lined with torn and battered planes.

The 428th was involved in only one combat mission during the daylight hours of D-Day, June 6, 1944. The squadron successfully dive-bombed a railway bridge over the River Seine at Oisel. For the 430th Squadron, it was a painful day. A dive-bombing attack on a road on the Cherbourg Peninsula was followed by low-level strafing runs in support of the invasion. Just southwest of Carentan, Major Leon Temple's P-38 was hit by flak and dove into the ground and exploded. This was followed by Lt. Joe Belford going down at Periers. He was also hit by flak and killed. The 430th flew one more bombing mission that afternoon. ☪

The 430th's CO, Major Leon B. Temple Jr., was killed by anti-aircraft fire over France during the squadron's D-Day mission.



Also killed by AA fire on D-Day was the 430th's 2nd Lt. Robert J. "Joe" Belton. Note the squadron insignia on the nose of his P-38.



Lightning Strikes

Hard-striking, fast-striking Lightning... a wizard of high-altitude maneuverability... the Lockheed *Lightning* is a tough-sinewed interceptor, a ship built to reach new sky ceilings—and stay there to take and give plenty of fight.

It is a 'plane made to stop enemy bombers... dive or long range, high or low altitude... before they get to their objectives.

Built, too, as a fighting guard for our own bombers, it is a 'plane to sweep enemy skies as well as our own, teaming up with other hard-fighting American-built aircraft flying for the United Nations to win air supremacy to win this war.

**... for Protection today
and Progress tomorrow**



LOOK TO *Lockheed* FOR LEADERSHIP





A Lightning Crew Chief

By Lee Pasteris



27th Fighter Squadron Crew Chief Technical Sergeant Felix Pasteris poses with his assigned P-38G, *Shoot . . . You're Faded*.

This past June, P-38 National Association member Felix Pasteris' family joined together to celebrate his 100th birthday. Shortly thereafter, his son Lee interviewed him at length, with emphasis on his World War II service as a P-38 crew chief, one of the most memorable periods of his long and productive life. This is a pertinent sampling of the results of that interview.

Felix was born on June 11, 1921, as Felice Leach Pasteris, but he later changed it by crossing out Felice on his birth certificate and writing in Felix. His parents were immigrants from northern Italy, and he is a lifelong resident of Joliet, Illinois.

Felix joined the US Army Air Corps three weeks after graduating from Joliet High School and was trained as an aircraft mechanic. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, he was serving with the 1st Pursuit Group at Selfridge Field, Michigan. A few days later the group was sent to southern California, where it was based in San Diego and Los Angeles, and where Felix was promoted to sergeant. It had started receiving P-38s several months before the war and was now completely re-equipped with them.

Unfortunately, soon after his arrival in California Felix had an attack of appendicitis and was hospitalized for three weeks. At the end of May the 1st (now redesignated Fighter Group), commenced its move to England. Its pilots flew their Lightnings across the Atlantic Ocean from Labrador—with stops at Greenland and Iceland—accompanied by some ground support crews (including Felix) in transport planes. Sergeant Pasteris' squadron, the 27th, was temporarily based in Iceland for a couple of months before joining the rest of the group in England.

During his stopover in Greenland Felix learned how to shoot a Thompson submachine gun, his target a glacier. He also remembers playing volleyball at midnight in Iceland—in bright sunlight!

The 1st FG flew a few "milk run" missions from southern England before moving to Algeria shortly after the Allies invaded it in early November 1942. It operated initially from a former French airfield. Felix remembers that the land "was flat and good for airfields." The ground crews had to fill their planes' gas tanks from five-gallon cans; a P-38 carried 150 gallons, so it was a lot of hard work. He recalled how cold it was in North Africa that winter—and that due to enemy air raids they often slept in their fox holes, which they had dug using their helmets as tools since they had no shovels.

The 1st FG soon moved to an airfield in eastern Algeria that was closer to the Tunisian Front. In early 1943 Felix was assigned as crew chief to a new P-38G-13, serial number 43-2308, whose pilot was Lt. John A. MacKay, a future six-victory ace. MacKay named the plane *Shoot . . . You're Faded*.

Those desert airfields were not pleasant places in which to live and work. Felix recalls that the ground at one of theirs had three-inch-wide cracks filled with scorpions. Each night they would take flashlights and gasoline and kill hundreds of them.

The group was subsequently based in Tunisia and Sardinia before moving to Salsola, Italy, near Foggia, in January 1944. It also operated from Corsica briefly the following summer, to support the invasion of southern France. By then the group's pilots were flying very long range missions to Axis targets throughout southern and eastern Europe.

Felix remembers filling bullet holes in his plane with melted aluminum and sanding it smooth, and making sure all of its rivets were tightened. Maintaining a P-38 properly required a lot of time and effort on the part of its three-man crew.

The war in Europe ended in May of 1945, and Felix returned home by ship. He was discharged in Chicago and returned to civilian life after six years of military service.

Felix says his best wartime memories are of making lifelong friends—and that his worst are of the deaths of young men he knew personally.☺

MOVED?

**Please notify Membership
Chairman Steve Blake of any
Address changes
(see Page 3)**



The Resurgam Lightnings

By Steve Blake

Some of our readers may have seen World War II photographs of Lightnings with a pair of unusual markings on their noses that perplexed them. They were comprised of a winged gold star, like those displayed in the windows of families who had suffered the loss of a close relative serving in the military, which symbol contained the word "Resurgam" with a name below it, next to which was another, scroll-type, symbol with the same name and some additional words.

Resurgam is a Latin word meaning "I shall rise again." These markings, which were applied to the aircraft at the Lockheed plant before they were delivered to the USAAF, were memorials to former Lockheed employees or close relatives of current employees who were killed while serving in a branch of the U.S. military. Here is a very incomplete list of the Resurgam Lightnings that this writer has been able to assemble:

The individual F-5C-1 serial number 42-67121 was honoring is not known. It served with the 22nd Photo Reconnaissance Squadron of the 8th Air Force's 7th Photo Reconnaissance Group in England and was destroyed in a takeoff accident on April 19, 1944.

It is also unknown who Resurgam F-5C-1 42-67557 honored. It was serving with the 37th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron while it was training at Muskogee Army Air Field in Oklahoma when it was badly damaged in a forced landing on July 31, 1944, after running out of fuel.

P-38J-15 44-23108 was dedicated to Lt. Donald Keith Emerson, who was "lost at sea" in the South Pacific on December 20, 1942, while serving with the 90th Bombardment Squadron, a B-25 unit. It served in Hawaii and in Panama.

In the spring of 1944 Lockheed test pilot Dick Field posed with P-38J-15 44-23108, fresh off the assembly line and displaying its tribute to Lt. Emerson. The writing on the scroll symbol says: "This is a fighting memorial to Donald Keith Emerson." It would soon be on its way to Hawaii. (Photo courtesy of Mike Bates)



A-71, an airfield near Clastres, France, October 11, 1944: Lt. Clement Pawlowski and his assigned P-38L-1, 44-23818, displaying its tribute to Robert Fenn Cole. (USAF photo)

Another Resurgam Lightning is known to have been dedicated to Lt. Richard Norton Long, who was killed in a P-40 training accident near San Francisco on October 24, 1941. The serial number of this P-38 is not known.

Yet another Resurgam Lightning honored John Wesley Stara, who worked at Lockheed from July 1940 to March 1942. No details of his service have been located, and the identity of the aircraft is also not known.

If you have additional information on any of the Resurgam Lightnings or the individuals they honored, please share it with Association historian and *Lightning Strikes* co-editor Steve Blake, so he can then share it with our other members (his contact information is on Page 3).



Modelers' Corner



This photo is of 21-year-old 1st Lieutenant James P. Dibble, a pilot of the 1st Fighter Group's 94th Fighter Squadron. The aircraft with which Lt. Dibble is posing is his assigned P-38—a G-10 model, serial number 42-13411—which carried the name *Mickey* (his nickname for his wife, Maxine) on its nose. It was taken on September 4, 1943, at the group's base at Mateur, Tunisia.

Lt. Dibble, a Michigan native, had joined the 94th Fighter Squadron in May and at the time of his final mission, five days after the photo was taken, he was one of its most experienced pilots. He had, among his other accomplishments, shot down two Me 109s and probably destroyed another.

September 9 was the day on which elements of the U.S. Fifth Army landed on the west coast of Italy at Salerno, just south of Naples, and the 1st Fighter Group was one of the Allied air units assigned to protect them from German intervention, in the air and on the ground. Flying temporarily from the airfield at Dittaino, Sicily, Lt. Dibble led a patrol over the beachhead late that afternoon. It was his 49th mission (a combat tour was 50 missions). His flight was ordered by their controller to strafe a German convoy comprised of an estimated 400 vehicles approaching the beachhead 30 miles east of Agropoli, which is on the coast south of Salerno. According to his wingman, 2nd Lt. Raymond L. Shulze:

"The formation dived down and strafed this convoy from the right and crossed the road on the deck, completing a 360 in doing so. A few seconds after the completion of this 360

I saw Lieut. Dibble pull his aircraft up from the deck to about two thousand feet, open the cockpit and bail out. The cockpit appeared to be on fire, apparently caused by the anti-aircraft fire from the convoy. When I last saw Lieut. Dibble he was in his parachute at approximately fifteen hundred feet above the ground on the left side of the road, drifting away from the convoy."

Sadly, Lt. Dibble, after parachuting to earth safely, died during a firefight with some German soldiers. Later the citizens of Padula, the town near which he was shot down and then killed, dedicated a monument there to his sacrifice for their freedom.

Fast forward more than 75 years: Lt. Dibble's grand-nephew, Matt Dibble, and Matt's son Jackson have constructed a large-scale radio controlled (R/C) model of *Mickey* to honor his service and sacrifice. They fly it at the Fox Valley Aero Club in St. Charles, Illinois. (Check out the color photos of Jackson and their model on Page 19.)

Our thanks to P-38 Association member Jim Dibble, Lt. Dibble's nephew, for contributing the photos and much of the other material for this article.

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK

Go to our website at the address below and you will automatically be forwarded there.

p38assn.org/FB

And the answer to this issue's P-38 question on Page 5 is . . .

In 1937 the U.S. Army Air Corps agreed to pay the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation \$163,000 for an experimental version of its Model 22 design for a new interceptor, to be called the XP-38. However, it cost Lockheed \$761,000 to develop and build it, so it was a huge financial risk for the company, especially as the country had not yet recovered from the Great Depression.

Of course, Lockheed's gamble on the Model 22/P-38 paid off, big time. As orders increased for each successive model, the price per unit decreased. The early production models, which were built in small numbers from 1939 to 1941, cost the government \$134,000 each, while in 1942 the price went down to \$120,000, in 1943 to \$106,000, in 1944 to \$97,000 and in 1945 to \$95,000.

The USAAF began divesting itself of its P-38s after Japan's surrender, and in 1946 it was asking civilian buyers just \$1,250 for them. Of course, as they became rare commodities and the warbird movement exploded in the following decades, their market prices went up a bit. For example, what is now the Allied Fighters P-38 (once named *Honey Bunny*) sold for one and a half million dollars in 1990.



Decided to join us? Great!
Just click this button!

