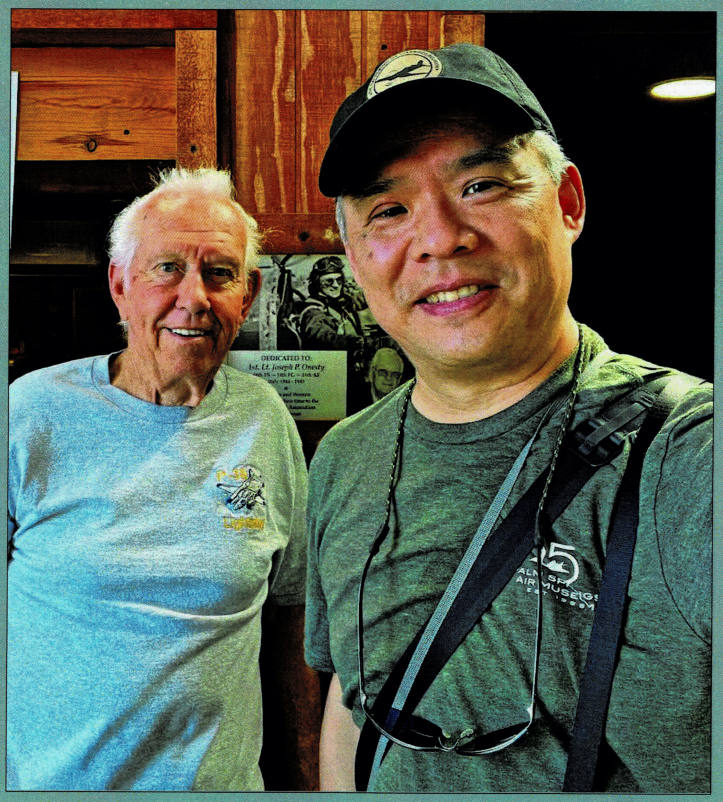
Vol. 36, No. 1 *P-38 National Association* March 2023

Lightning Strikes!



Left:
This past September 20, P-38 Association Member (and professional warbird photographer) Hayman Tam visited our P-38 Museum and was hosted there by Howard Ramshorn and Tim Mallis. Hayman took this "souvenir photo" of him and Howie.

Below:
Association member Rick May shared this 1990 photo of him and his young son Andrew posing with P-38L-5 44-26996, which was purchased that year by William Lyons. Rick's father was Harry May, a P-38 pilot with the 49th Fighter Group in the Southwest Pacific.

P-38 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

21392 Palomar St., Unit 56
Wildomar, CA 92595-5004

Website: p38assn.org | Email: staff@p38assn.org

Lightning Strikes is published three times per year: March, July and November.

Submissions of articles and photos are gratefully accepted and should be submitted to the above mailing or email address.

Should we publish your submissions, appropriate credit will be given. We reserve the right to edit articles and photos.

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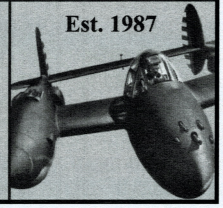


2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Location: P-38 Museum

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Dates: April 8 and June 10

On Our Front and Back Covers

Both the front and back covers of this issue feature the beautiful, shiny aluminum Red Bull P-38. Note that its nose art has changed from one photo to the other.

The back cover photo was taken on July 14, 2018, at the famous World War II airfield at Duxford, in Cambridgeshire, England. This was during that year's Flying Legends Airshow.

Visit us on Facebook

go to

p38assn.org/FB

for activities and photos posted from the P-38 online community.

MEMBERSHIP INFO

Annual Dues: US $30, Canada/Mexico US $35, Other International US $40

LIFE Memberships (US ONLY): $300

PAY DUES BY MAIL:

Checks must be made payable to P-38 National Association *only* and mailed to:

STEVE BLAKE
7211 E PRAIRIE RIDGE RD
PRESCOTT VALLEY AZ 86315

PAY DUES ONLINE:

p38assn.org/renew

Membership issues (dues, changes of address, nonreceipt of *Lightning Strikes*, etc.) should be directed to Membership Chairman Steve Blake at the above address or to his email address: steveblake1944@gmail.com

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

You should notify Steve Blake ASAP whenever you have a change of mailing address. If you don't and your copy of *Lightning Strikes* is returned to us, we must pay a USPS "address service" fee—**and** you will not receive that issue.

There is a $6 charge to mail a replacement copy.

See Page 8 of this issue for some important news about our P-38 Museum.

This is the beautiful P-38 National Association sign on the hangar housing our P-38 Museum in Riverside, California, which is clearly visible from the adjacent I-215 Highway.

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.

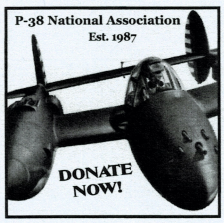
What would you pay for a good aviation DVD or book? If you enjoy *Lightning Strikes* and our P-38 Association website, please consider a financial contribution of the same amount to help defray our increasing costs and ensure that this part of aviation history continues to be available to people all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



P-38 National Association
21392 Palomar St., Unit 56
Wildomar, CA 92595-5004

Dear Lightning

Dust stood still against the old rubber tires
Of the old metal plane people would always admire.

Despite her shiny steel wings, she'd never move,
But she was in our hangar, so she'd have nothing to prove.

She wrote her fateful story, nearly 81 years ago,
In the heart of a world war's chaos, fighting against our greatest foe.

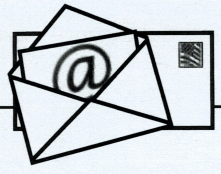
She and a few like her burned bright into today,
As the war smothered candlelight after candlelight,
Leaving the world in dismay.

Decades have passed since her candle was lit,
So soft museum doors welcome her to sit.

Flocks of people still gather to admire
Her old metal wings and old rubber tires.

I believe this will continue to be so,
Because her candlelight still burns bright from long ago.

The author of this poem, Isaiah Suso, is our P-38 Museum's youngest docent. Isaiah is currently a high school student who is actively involved in the JROTC, and he plans to enjoy a career in aviation after college. His poem is about the full-scale P-38 replica that is the museum's centerpiece



We Get Mail

I really enjoyed the article and the general coverage throughout the [November] issue given to the 82nd [Fighter Group Association].
John Parliman

Another great issue [November 2022], read cover to cover!
Harold Moritz

[I wanted] to tell you how awesome *Lightning Strikes!* issues are, and WOW!, the website is fabulous! I am so grateful for the Photo Recon [website] page—it is so special—and I'm seriously crying right now not just because of the Photo Recon page, but because the website is truly wonderful. The layout is terrific, the content is first class!
Jeanney Horn

All of you in the P-38 Association are very much appreciated.
Ron Swearingen

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:

Fred Bailey

Tom Braun

Forrest Byas

Gary Cortner, in memory of his father, Warren J. Cortner, a P-38 pilot of the 475th Fighter Group in the Pacific Theater

Iris Critchell

David Doudy

Patrick Epps

Jeanney Horn

Douglas Johnson

Steven Krick

Brian LaClair

James Lux

San Martin, in memory of Lt. Merle Trumball, a P-38 pilot of the 54th Fighter Squadron in the Aleutian Islands

John Mavromatis

Michael McKissick

Dorothy Messinger

Jill Messinger

Edward Neffinger

Gerald Runyan

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714-850-8833

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Jeffery Barrette, a huge Fan of the P-38, who has joined as a Life Member

Richard I. Bong Historical Center

Gary Brounstein

Darrell Longwell, a gift membership from **Forrest Byas**

Michael McKissick, who has joined as a Life Member

Peggy Powell, President of the 82nd Fighter Group Association

Leonard Thompson, whose brother Leon was a P-38 pilot in World War II

Also, **San Martin** and **Jerry Schuber** have upgraded their memberships to Life.

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

Tim Atherton	**Maryann Ramshorn**
Jim Bridges	**Leland Rash**
Tim Mallis	**Denny Rugenstein**
Bob Pepper	**Larry Segrist**
Howard Ramshorn	**Sherry Segrist**

Isaiah Suso

Do You Know . . .

why the sound of a P-38 flying overhead is so distinctive?

The answer is on Page 13.

Dicing With Death

By Jack Wassom

Prior to May of 1944, photo reconnaissance planes flew at altitudes of 20,000 to 35,000 feet over German-occupied Europe. The high altitudes lent an element of safety from enemy anti-aircraft guns. But with the Normandy invasion imminent, the strategic war planners needed clear, detailed pictures of the positions of enemy beach obstructions and gun emplacements. Many Allied invasion troops' lives depended on this information.

When pilots from the 31st Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron of the 10th Photographic Reconnaissance Group suggested flying at 10 to 15 feet levels to capture accuracy and details on film, other reconnaissance groups in England stated it would be certain suicide. These beaches were known to be the most heavily defended anti-aircraft areas on the European Front. One 31st pilot, however, was determined to try it.

Lieutenant Albert Lanker from Petaluma, California, was that pilot. Louie, as everyone knew him, was ruggedly handsome with piercing dark eyes and a nose that must have been broken in some bygone skirmish. His chest, arms, and neck were very well developed. With his sleeves rolled up, as they always seemed to be, his physique would have impressed any college football coach. Louie possessed a combination of daring determination and a love for his twin-tailed Lockheed Lightning. He named his F-5 *Outlaw* in reference to the movie of the same name starring Jane Russell. With her famous voluptuous pose painted on the nose of his plane, *Outlaw* seemed to be a fitting title for Louie, Jane, and the Lightning.

This official USAAF photo of 31st PRS F-5 pilot Lt. Albert "Louie" Lanker was taken in May 1944.

To increase speed, P-38s in photo reconnaissance were stripped of their armament. Guns and protective armor plating were usually replaced with one 12-inch continuous exposure camera in the nose and two 24-inch cameras in the armament compartment. By World World War II flying standards, *Outlaw* was a very fast ship.

Louie continually persisted to be assigned to a low-level flying mission. His clearance came on May 6, 1944. He took off from the base at Chalgrove, England, started across the Channel at Dungeness, and gradually lowered until he was flying so near the whitecaps that German radar could not pick him up. After hitting the Continent at Berksurmer, his assigned point, he fire-walled as he turned around a sandbar. With its forward camera and both left and right obliques running, the *Outlaw* headed down the beach. At Le Treport, Louie headed home with about 20 miles of low-level beach pictures on his cameras. The photos later showed that "sandbar" to be a gun emplacement. Louie said his most vivid memory of that mission was how the Germans working on landing obstructions scattered. They were so startled that the only one he saw shooting at him was standing on the cliffs.

It was a joyous day for the 31st, since Lt. Lanker proved lower-level flying missions were possible. "Dicing with death" is what Louie called it. From that day on, all low-level missions were called dicing. Several pilots of the 10th Group lost their lives dicing, but the beaches were completely and accurately photographed.

Along with Captain Robert Holbury and Lieutenant Rufus Woody of the 31st, Louie flew dicing missions over some of the most critical areas between Cherbourg and Calais, France. The Royal Air Force originally took credit for a widely published photo reconnaissance picture actually taken by Louie on one of his dicing missions. But he was duly recognized when the Air Corps' Maj. Gen. Otto P. Weyland [CO of XIX Tactical Air Command] came to the base to decorate Louie, Woody, and Holbury in honor of the significant roles these men played in the battle for Europe.

Lieutenants Thair Best, Russ Ward, and I, the novices in the squadron, were impressed with these men's records. Louie became a big brother to us. At night, he sat on our bunks in the Nissen hut barracks at Chalgrove, telling us of his methods of navigating and evading enemy fighters and flak. He told of flying back from missions at treetop level. When asked how he found the base, he replied, "You've got to develop your own radar. You'd better get to work on it." His procedures were not always orthodox, but then neither was Louie.

In wartime, rules and regulations were relaxed, but Louie bent and stretched them even further. He knew he was not a conformist. Even with his outstanding flying record, he did not expect promotion beyond first lieutenant. His knowledge prompted him to call himself our Underground Flight Leader.

As the Allies began to break out of the Normandy beachhead, word came from headquarters that the 31st was soon to move to a landing strip called A-17 near Carentan, France. By the time some of the engineering and ground troops got there, our squadron had been ordered instead to occupy the former German air base at Rennes that had just been captured by Patton's Third Army. Instead of Nissen huts, our homes were now GI six-man tents.

Unsure of where the Germans would be that first night at Rennes, Louie chose a tent he considered to be positioned in a strategic spot. Looking like a freedom fighter with his .45 pistol strapped across his chest and a razor sharp trench knife on his hip, he made the announcement that, "Anything that moves in the tent tonight I'll deal with in hand-to-hand combat." Louie's build backed up his warning, so no one argued. The fear that pervaded that evening was more of Louie than of the Germans.

With Patton breaking out and starting to roll, 31st pilots were fast logging flying time shooting reconnaissance pictures for the 9th Air Force and the Third Army. Louie sustained his love for dicing even when the assignment was "bomb damage assessment from 20,000 feet." On the way back, Louie always diced in to see what the country and people looked like at close range. He told of how he once slipped between two rows of frauleins working in a potato patch. During interrogation, he never explained the small arms fire holes that pierced the top side of his plane.

After the squadron moved to a new landing strip in France (at Chateaudun), Louie decided to take a look at some property his family had been deeded in Bern, Switzerland. It was well known that the Swiss were neutral and entering their country was forbidden.

On a gray October day in 1944, Louie received the assignment to fly a bomb damage assessment mission to the Strasbourg area. He left for this mission using his self patented *Outlaw* takeoff. He set the throttle to 45 inches of manifold pressure, held it just off the ground until his airspeed reached 300 miles per hour, then headed straight up as far as his two Allison engines would pull him. Unlike other pilots who dared this method of takeoff, Louie never stalled out. His Underground Flight knew he would fly two sorties that day. Although Bern officials must have seen an evasive Lightning far inside the Swiss border, 31st Intelligence never did thoroughly interrogate Louie about this incident. "Boy, I know where I'm going to live after the war!" gave us the only clue we needed. What Louie did not know was that in a few short months another kind of dicing mission would end his dreams.

When the squadron moved to the temporary airfield A-64, at St. Dizier, France, it was the closest base to enemy lines on the Continent. The 10th Group shared it with the 354th Fighter Group, who by that time had an impressive list of flying aces to back up their arguments about who was actually winning the war. Louie envied them and confided that many times he had wished to have "just a couple of little old .50 calibers sticking out of *Outlaw's* nose."

The weather started to get colder that October. Penetrating deep into Germany for the coverage of targets, 31st pilots flew some days when even the ducks were grounded. If a most urgent priority target came in, someone tried to fly the mission. Heavy reliance was placed on the Allied forward radar men, whose navigational assistance saved the lives of numerous reconnaissance pilots that winter.

Late in November, the 31st moved again, to Jarny, France, near the forts of Metz. Patton's forces had bypassed some of the Germans there, leaving them still holed up defending their thick-walled concrete fortifications. Louie often mentioned his great admiration for General Patton and what a great crew of tank drivers he had. When Patton's 4th Armored Division pulled back from the Saar River, they remained in our area overnight before heading straight north into heavy fighting. While talking with the men from the 4th, Louie shouted, "Hey, how about taking us on a test drive tomorrow?" The Patton troops answered, "Drive one yourself!" And drive one Louie did! He was as daring on land as in the sky, as he drove the tank through ditches, over fences, jolting over ground swells, and rumbling down the road again. Sticking his head through the porthole, he really looked the part.

By late 1944, the 31st Squadron was flying all types of reconnaissance, depending on the nature and size of the enemy's offensive. Meanwhile, Patton's Third Army was blasting away on the south flank of the German army. The 101st Airborne Division was holding out at Bastogne. The 101st radioed the 31st and requested accurate photography of all the territory surrounding them. We complied. Captain Woody shot the first group of pictures. He had to dice in at treetop level and drop the pictures to the 101st in a modified aircraft fuel tank while the German tanks were firing 88mm's at him point blank. The 101st radioed for more of the same the next day. Veteran Captain Wolcott flew the coverage. Louie volunteered to dice his way to the 101st area to lay Wolcott's pictures into Division CO General McAulife's lap.

But the dice rolled wrong for Louie that day. This time the Germans scored a direct hit on *Outlaw*. Louie gave his life flying in the gambling style he liked best. He always knew the odds against him were greatest while dicing with death, but when he scored, his feelings of accomplishment were worth it. Because he was brave enough to risk the odds, Louie's wins were many, but his life was short. He will never be forgotten by those who rolled high and low through the skies with him.

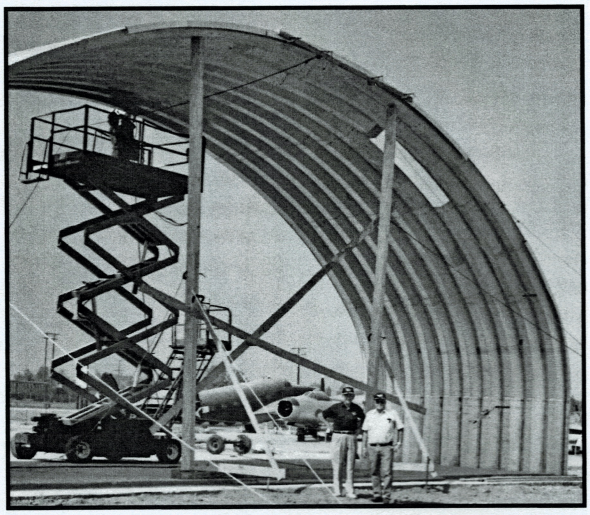
[Twenty-seven-year old 1st Lt. Albert Lanker was killed in action during the Battle of the Bulge on December 26, 1944, while flying F-5E-3 serial number 44-23703.] ✪

This is one of the many photos Lt. Lanker took on his famous very-low-level "dicing" mission over the Normandy beach defenses on May 6, 1944. Visible therein are some of the anti-landing obstacles with which the American forces would have to contend one month later. (USAF photo)

THE BRIEFING ROOM

By P-38 National Association Board of Directors

PLEASE READ IMPORTANT MESSAGE



We wanted to give you a heads up about something that has been happening over the past several months regarding the P-38 Museum. Apparently, one of the executives at the March Field Air Museum (MFAM) has taken a liking to our museum and wants to take it over for their own use. We have heard that they wish to turn it into a generic World War II "exhibit" that is no longer dedicated exclusively to the P-38 and which we would no longer own. We have had a friendly relationship with the MFAM for nearly 30 years, so it is unclear why they have chosen this path.

Although we do have a legitimate Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between our two organizations still in effect, they are proposing an entirely new one to supersede it which would allow them to take possession of our property. They have sent us several emails regarding this proposal suggesting we "negotiate" a new MOU, but any attempt at negotiation by us has instead been met with a list of demands from the MFAM, with no attempt at compromise or flexibility.

The current MOU is valid, as it was signed by authorized representatives from both organizations and has not been updated nor any changes agreed to. One of the terms of the current MOU clearly allows us to occupy our space at no fee for as long as we are in business. Although their efforts do not affect our organization as a company, one of the key assets of our association is our museum. We have spent years redesigning the museum at our own expense and with volunteer labor, of which we are very proud.

Our intention is to fight this attempted takeover of our museum by the MFAM. We will keep you updated.

Even though they are a large, multi-million dollar company, and we are a relatively small non-profit, we fully mean to defend our P-38 Museum and our right to remain housed on the MFAM grounds based on the existing MOU. So, have no fear, we are in it to win it and will continue with our mission to preserve and perpetuate the memory of the P-38 and those who designed, built, maintained, and flew it by protecting our museum and that heritage.

We built our P-38 Museum from the ground up, as shown in the accompanying historic photograph of past Association Presidents Dick Willsie and Jack Mullan on site.

Our Board of Directors approved the museum construction on April 22, 1995. After the hangar kit arrived and the concrete was poured (at an expense of $39,811) the assembly began. The structure for the P-38 Museum was completed in 1996 and dedicated to Tony LeVier, one of the most famous P-38 test pilots. The museum then officially became the Tony LeVier P-38 Hangar.

We welcome your thoughts and/or suggestions regarding this kerfuffle. Our contact info is on Page 3 of this issue of *Lightning Strikes*.

OUR NEW MAILING ADDRESS

After 26 years of a March Field Air Museum representative picking up our mail at March Air Reserve Base as a courtesy when they pick up their mail, they have now terminated this practice. This is a continued harassment policy by the MFAM Board of Directors toward the P-38 National Association (see the article above).

This new address means that our Treasurer, Howard Ramshorn, who used to make the 60-mile round-trip drive every Friday to pick up our mail at the MFAM, is now able to pick it up at a location near his residence. Our new mailing address is:

P-38 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
21392 Palomar St., Unit 56
Wildomar, CA 92595-5004

Risky Business

By Steve Blake

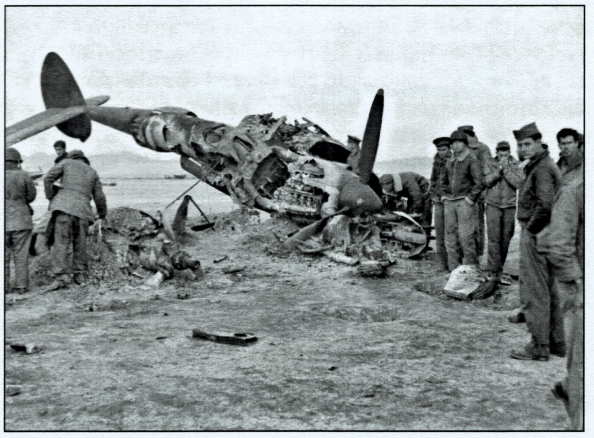
On June 22, 1943, the 23rd Statistical Control and Operations Records Unit of the Northwest African Air Force published an official report titled Combat Losses Twelfth Air Force and Northwest African Air Force (8 November 1942 thru 15 June 1943).

The report lists the number of USAAF aircraft of each type "destroyed or missing in action" during that period—a total of 517. Of that number by far the largest loss was of P-38s, it totaling 218, not including six F-4 Lightning photo reconnaissance aircraft. Most of them were assigned to the three P-38 fighter groups in North Africa, the 1st, 14th and 82nd. The next largest loss was, ironically, of Reverse Lend-Lease USAAF Supermarine Spitfires (64), followed by Curtiss P-40s (59). That means an amazing 43% of the USAAF aircraft lost while operating from North Africa during those seven months were Lightnings!

This report indicates how important the Lockheed P-38 was to the Allied air war in the Mediterranean Theater—and what a dangerous job flying it was in that place at that time. Obviously, many of the pilots of these "destroyed or missing in action" Lightnings were killed. For example, 57 of the 82nd Fighter Group's pilots were killed in combat or in accidents from January 7 to June 18, 1943.

Risky business, indeed!

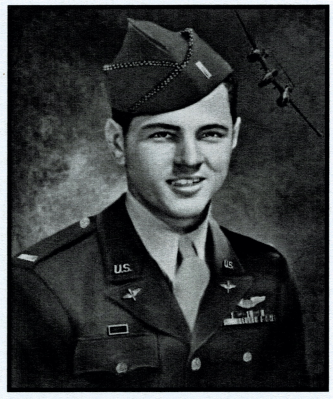
This unidentified 14th Fighter Group P-38 was one of the 218 that were lost while operating in North Africa from November 8, 1942 to June 15, 1943. It was destroyed on the ground during a Luftwaffe bombing raid on Maison Blanche Airport near Algiers, Algeria, on the night of November 18. (USAF photo)



A P-38 Pilot Honored

By Steve Blake

In a ceremony that took place on November 7, 2022, at the Russell A. Steindam Courts Building in McKinney, Collin County, Texas, just north of Dallas, the North Texas Fallen Warrior Portrait Project added six veterans portraits to the 88 that were already on display in the courthouse's Hall of Heroes. They are the work of USAF veteran and digital artist Colin Kimball. One of his latest portraits is of World War II P-38 pilot and hero Augustus "Frank" Reese. The purpose of this project is to put as many faces as possible to the 431 names engraved on the Wall of Honor at McKinney's Veterans Memorial Park.



This is Colin Kimball's portrait of Lt. Reese that is on display at the Collin County courthouse in McKinney, Texas. Of course, the original is in color.

Augustus Franklin Reese Jr. was born in Collin County on November 8, 1917, but at the time he registered for the draft in 1940 he was living in Shallowater, Lubbock County, Texas, nearly 300 miles west of Collin County. He had by then graduated from Texas Technology College (Texas Tech) in the city of Lubbock and was working for the Texas Highway Department. On October 30, 1941, Frank joined the US Army Air Forces as an aviation cadet. After winning his wings and receiving his commission, in early 1943 he was sent to North Africa (the 12th Air Force) as a replacement fighter pilot and assigned to the 94th Fighter Squadron of the 1st Fighter Group, to fly P-38s.

Second Lieutenant Reese was soon engaging in combat. On March 4, 1943, over Bizerte, on Algeria's northeast coast, the 94th Squadron fought with some Me 109s of the Luftwaffe's Jagdgeschwader (Fighter Wing) 53. Its pilots claimed one Messerschmitt probably destroyed and two damaged, and none of *them* were lost. Lt. Reese was credited with the probable victory.

Unfortunately, Frank's combat service—and his life—came to a premature and tragic end on May 14, while the 94th was strafing and dive bombing Axis ground targets near Cagliari, on the island of Sardinia. His Lightning struck the ground after strafing a train and crashed, and he was killed. A 1st Fighter Group history states that the plane had been hit by the concussion from a bomb blast.

Lt. Reese's remains were recovered from Sardinia later, and on March 28, 1949, they were buried at the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio, Texas.

During World War II Lubbock Army Air Base was utilized as an Advanced Flying School and then to train instructor pilots. It was closed on December 31, 1945, but reactivated during the Cold War on November 5, 1949, and renamed for the local Air Force war hero, Augustus "Frank" Reese. Reese Air Force Base was part of the USAF's Air Training Command until it was closed permanently in 1997. Today is its a research and business park called Reese Technology Center. ✪

Final Rest

By Bruce J. Loewenberg
with Steve Blake

Second Lieutenant Ray Allen was excited about the prospect of heading back to his hometown of Girard, Illinois. He needed to complete only two more combat missions in his 82nd Fighter Group P-38 to hit fifty, which would earn him a ticket home. It was June 26, 1944, and the day's mission was to escort a wing (three groups) of four-engine Consolidated B-24 Liberator bombers of the 15th Air Force in an attack on the Korneuburg Oil Refinery in Vienna, Austria. What Allen didn't know was that his luck was about to run out.

Thirty-six P-38s took off from the 82nd's base at Vincenzo, near Italy's east central coast, at 0700 hours. However, ten of them returned early for various reasons, leaving only twenty-six to protect the huge bomber formation from enemy fighter attack. They flew almost due north to Lake Balaton in Hungary, about 120 miles southeast of Vienna, where they rendezvoused with the bombers.

Lt. Allen was leading one of the group's three 95th Fighter Squadron flights. His wingman was 2nd Lt. Allen J. Wisner, of Lowell, Michigan. Wisner's job was to stay on Allen's wing and keep enemy aircraft away from him.

Ray Allen while undergoing flight training

Shortly after the rendezvous, some enemy fighters were spotted in the distance. Then some Messerschmitt Me 109s approached the American formation. According to the 82nd Group mission report, "Several of them then made weak passes in an evident effort to lure the escorting P-38s into dropping their belly tanks and leaving the bombers. However, all P-38s retained tanks even when turning into these attackers." Shortly thereafter, forty to fifty twin-engine fighters, Messerschmitt Me 110s and 410s, called *Zerstörern* (Destroyers)—heavily armed with large caliber machine guns, cannon, and rockets—dove into the B-24s from above.

An intense air battle ensued. After the *Zerstörern* completed their first passes at the Liberators, the 95th FS's pilots made a 180° diving turn into them as they pulled up for another. The enemy pilots then dove instead to escape the Lightnings, and during a twenty-minute fight "on the deck," the 95th's pilots claimed to have shot down four Me 110s and four Me 410s, plus one Me 109—and to have damaged nine of the twin-engined planes. The group's other two squadrons destroyed five and damaged two enemy fighters.

95th FS CO Major Herb Phillips (right) briefs his pilots prior to a mission. On June 26, 1944 he shot down an Me 410 and damaged six more.

This wasn't accomplished without loss, however, as three B-24s and two P-38s (Allen's and Wisner's) failed to return from the mission. Wisner's, P-38J-15 serial number 43-28771, went down first; one of the other Lightning pilots saw that he had bailed out of his damaged aircraft. He became a prisoner of war. Ray Allen, flying J-15 42-104393, was next. His CO and squadron leader, Major Herbert L. Phillips, "heard a radio call from a pilot believed to be Lt. Allen, saying he was low on gas and having trouble with his wing tanks." That was evidently the last any of the other American airmen heard from him.

Among the enemy fighters was a squadron of Me 109s of the Royal Hungarian Air Force's 101 "Puma" Group. Its pilots skirmished with both the bombers and their escort and claimed to have shot down three B-24s, a P-38, and a P-51 (two Mustang groups were escorting two other bomb wings to targets in the same general area), while three of its own pilots were killed. First Lieutenant Pál Irányi shot down the Lightning—the fourth of his six victories. It was seen to crash and burn just north of Tés, which was 15 miles north of Lake Balaton and near the Pumas' airfield at Veszprem. This was almost certainly Allen Wisner's.

On the ground below, southeast of Vienna and outside the town of Svätý Jur, about ten miles north of Bratislava, in Slovakia, a mother and her young son were watching the air battle taking place overhead. Suddenly, they saw a P-38 coming in for a forced landing in a nearby field. The pilot, Lt. Ray Allen, had his canopy open and it appeared to be going well. But he did not see the electrical lines along a railroad track at the edge of the field in time. His plane hit them, crashed in a swampy area at the end of the field, and buried itself into its muck. Allen must have been killed instantly.

The mother reported the crashed airplane to the local German authorities, who just told her to leave it alone. A few months later, just before the war's end, the Russians captured the area and she reported the crash again, to them. They, too, seemed not to be interested.

After the war some local historians *did* become interested in this incident, and in the 1960s they began investigating the crash site. In 1990, with the Russians finally having left their country (Slovakia became an independent democracy in 1993), they began to excavate it and found some human bones, which, based on documents they had obtained from the US National Archives, they were pretty sure were Ray Allen's.

The boy witness, now *Doctor* Jozef Mally, was one of those Slovak historians. He went to the new American embassy in Bratislava, the capital,

reported Lt. Allen's crash site, and showed them some of the evidence his group had already uncovered there. The embassy personnel sprang into action, and Ray Allen's remains (including his dog tags) and some of his P-38's were finally revealed. Bureaucracy then took over, however, and the US government refused to notify the Allen family until DNA confirmed that the remains were Ray's—a process that can sometimes take years to complete.

Nevertheless, the new Slovakian government went ahead and established a memorial to Lt. Allen, and in February 1994 the mayor of Girard received a letter from Dr. Mally for his family. Girard is a small town and the mayor knew Allen's relatives, and delivered it to them. They had finally gotten some closure about what had happened on that day back in 1944. Family members were invited to Bratislava for the dedication of the Ray Allen Memorial and several attended it, with their expenses paid by the Slovakian government. The relatives prodded their US Senator to inquire about the DNA results, which he did, and it was soon *finally* confirmed that the remains were Ray's. A funeral was arranged in Girard for January 21, 1995, which would have been his 78th birthday.

Bruce Loewenberg was then living in the St. Louis area, and Girard is just 80 miles northeast of that city. Loewenberg is the son of Air Force Colonel Jerome Loewenberg, who happened to have been the administrative executive officer of the 82nd Fighter Group in 1944.

"My parents were living in Air Force Village in San Antonio at the time, and I had just been down for a visit," Loewenberg recalls. "When I got home, I picked up a copy of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and noticed a headline that caught my eye: 'World War II Pilot Recovered in Slovakia.' It mentioned that the pilot, Ray Allen, was a P-38 pilot, and I knew my dad's unit often flew in that area."

So, Bruce Loewenberg called his father and asked if he knew the pilot. "I think so, but I'm not sure," Colonel Loewenberg replied. Bruce then mentioned that the newspaper article identified Allen's commanding officer as Herb Phillips. "He was in the 95th Squadron," the colonel said.

The article also identified Ray's brother, Russell Allen, who was then living in Springfield, Illinois. Bruce found his phone number and called him, explaining that he and his dad wanted to offer their condolences for the loss of his brother. After a brief conversation, Russell asked if Loewenberg wanted to attend the funeral. "I'd be honored to do so," Bruce replied.

On January 21 he drove to Girard and found the funeral home. To his amazement, there was Joseph Mally, who had witnessed Ray's crash as a boy, and an interpreter. They had come all the way from Slovakia to be there. Also there were two former members of the 82nd Fighter Group—pilot Roy Norris of Cincinnati and Olen Medley, a crew chief from Oklahoma City. Both had read about the funeral in their hometown newspaper after the Associated Press transmitted the story nationwide.

Then in walked Allen Wisner, Ray's wingman, and his wife, who also had read about the funeral. Wisner told of having been shot down and spending the rest of the war as a POW. He had had no contact with his unit or its men after being released. He also had no knowledge of the active association of 82nd Fighter Group veterans.

Those at the funeral home got into their vehicles at about 11 a.m. on that frigid and windy day to follow the hearse to the cemetery. "Much to my amazement, there were thousands of people there, " Loewenberg said. "Flags were flying from every veterans' organization you could think of. There was not a dry eye in the group." Illinois' governor had proclaimed it Lieutenant Ray Allen Day, and the Illinois Air National Guard performed a missing-man formation during its flyover.

Following the funeral, the family and friends retired to the First Christian Church for a meal. At Loewenberg's table were the Wisners, the two men from Slovakia, and a woman member of the church, Lois Weddle. "I had a brother who flew P-38s in the war, and he is still listed as missing in action," Ms. Weddle told them. "We never got any word about what happened to him." Loewenberg asked where it occurred. "He was flying out of North Africa," she replied," on May 5, 1943."

Bruce had brought with him a copy of the book ADORIMINI, an 82nd Fighter Group history, which includes a chronological list of the unit's casualties. He looked up May 5, 1943, and there was the name of Lois' brother, 2nd Lt. Edgar L. Weddle—of Girard, Illinois! Edgar had arrived in North Africa as a P-40 pilot but was retrained there to fly P-38s and assigned to the 82nd FG.

Lt. Weddle, it turned out, had been part of a seventeen-plane 95th Fighter Squadron mission that escorted some twin-engine North American B-25 Mitchells on a low-level shipping strike to the west coast of Sicily that day. During it, near the small Egadi Islands, they encountered six Italian Savoia-Marchetti SM.82 transports and their escorting Macchi MC.202 and 205 fighters heading for Tunis, the capital of Tunisia. A fight ensued and the six transports and three of the enemy fighters were claimed destroyed (in fact, only three of the transports and one Macchi were lost). Two P-38 pilots also went missing, one of whom was Edgar Weddle. They had crashed into the sea. (The Macchi pilots claimed to have probably destroyed *seven* P-38s.)

So that's how Lois Weddle finally received closure on what had happened to *her* brother, just short of 52 years after his death. Amazingly, he and Ray Allen were from the same small town in Illinois, served with the same P-38 squadron, and both were killed in action, more than a year apart. Possibly they had known each other, at least casually, before the war (Ray was four years older than Edgar).

"War is disruptive, and its disruptive effects on families often are lost amidst the enormity of it all," Bruce Loewenberg said. "I was happy that Ray Allen's family finally got closure, that Allen Wisner was able to reconnect with the men of his unit before he died, and that Lois Weddle finally learned, decades later, about what happened to her brother."✪

Edgar Weddle as an aviation cadet

Member Spotlight

By Kelly Kalcheim

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

Ed Baquet was one of the P-38 National Association's main leaders and boosters. He joined the Association as a Life member in 1989 and was elected as a director in 1995, and as its Treasurer in 2001. He served in that position until 2005, when Howard Ramshorn came on board as our Treasurer.

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.

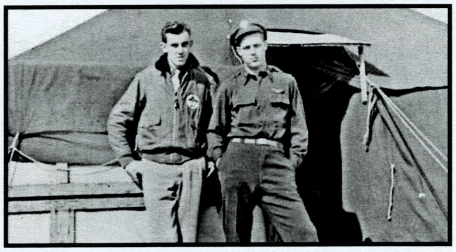
"Eddy," as his wife Oresa called him, was a good man. He was a good husband, who loved his wife. He was a good family man, who loved them all unconditionally. He was a good neighbor, who never hesitated to offer a helping hand. He was also a good citizen, a patriot, and a good member of his community.

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.



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

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.

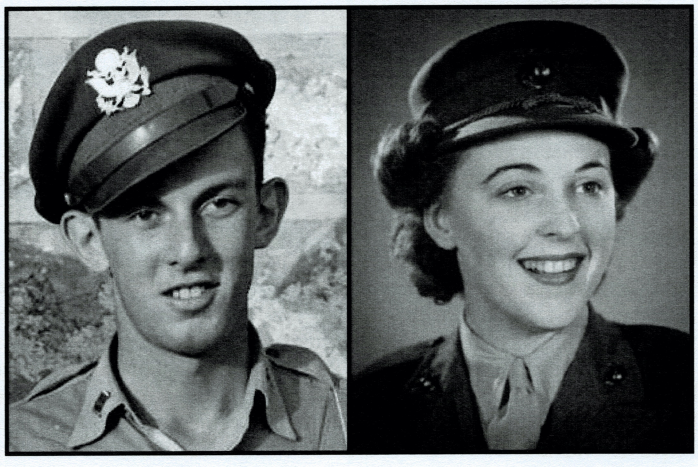
Being an Air Force pilot gave Ed the chance to fly a variety of aircraft, including, in addition to the P-38, the Air Force's first jet, the Bell P-59 Airacomet, Lockheed's F-80 Shooting Star, and the North American F-100 Super Sabre.

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 ✪

Ed Baquet, USAAF pilot, and Oresa Baquet, USMC



Lightning Ground Crewmen: **Bomb Armorers**

These two photographs are of 94th Fighter Squadron, 1st Fighter Group armorers at Salsola, Italy, loading bombs on P-38s. In the above photo one of them is reaching for the fin that will be attached to this 500-pounder. The other one (below) was taken in the early morning darkness before a mission. No less than six men are either involved in loading this bomb or perhaps just kibitzing. Note the winch and cable utilized to pull the bomb up to the shackle. This was important, grueling work with no glory attached to it—just one of the many underappreciated and under publicized jobs that were so important to the conduct of the war against the Axis.

OUR FOLDED WINGS

Graham, James (Life Member), passed away on January 18, 2021. After completing his flight training with Class 44-C at Luke Field, Arizona, and then learning to fly the P-38, Jim was sent to Italy as a replacement pilot and assigned to the 15th Air Force's 71st Fighter Squadron, 1st Fighter Group, with which he flew 31 combat missions from October 1944 to the end of the war.

Littlefield, Robert M. (Life Member), July 16, 2020. Bob earned his wings and USAAF commission with Class 43-J at Williams Field, Arizona. He subsequently served with the 8th Air Force's 55th Fighter Group (38th Fighter Squadron) as a P-38 and P-51 pilot. He was shot down over France in a Mustang on August 13, 1944, and helped to evade capture by members of the French Underground. Bob retired from the USAF as a lieutenant colonel.

Kuemmerle, Walter F. (Life Member), June 27, 2017. Walter graduated from flight training at Williams Field and after some additional operational training he was sent to England as a replacement pilot. He was assigned to the 8th Air Force's 20th Fighter Group (77th Fighter Squadron), with which he flew 62 combat missions, in both P-38s and P-51s, from February to October 1944.

McCroy, Robert L. (Life Member), November 4, 2022. Bob joined the USAF after graduating from high school and served as an enlisted man in the late '40s and early '50s. According to his obituary, Bob "was particularly passionate for the WWII P-38 Lightning fighter plane."

Mitchell, Deane H. (Life Member), July 17, 2021. Deane graduated with Class 44-A and was then trained to fly P-47s. When he arrived in the South Pacific he was transitioned to P-38s, which he flew with the 70th Fighter Squadron of the 18th Fighter Group—part of the 13th Air Force in the Philippines. Deane served in the Air Force Reserve during the Korean War and was also a corporate pilot.

Murtha, John R. Jr. (Life Member), May 19, 2018. "Jack" was a member of Class 44-E at Foster Field, Texas, and subsequently flew P-38s with the 36th Fighter Squadron of the 5th Air Force's 8th Fighter Group in the Pacific. He also became an Air Force reservist after World War II.

Sanford, Donald D. (Life Member), December 9, 2022. "Bud" received his wings and commission with Class 44-F at Luke Field. He was assigned to the 49th Fighter Group (8th Fighter Squadron) in July 1945, just before the war's end. From October 1945 to July 1946 he served as a supply/administrative officer with the 63rd Air Service Group. After the war he flew with the California Air National Guard.

And the answer to the question on Page 5 is . . .

The P-38's Allison engines are very quiet because the exhaust sound is muffled by the turbosuperchargers. Perhaps at an airshow you have heard a P-51 flying overhead, and then a P-38. If so, you will agree that the two sound much different from each other.

P-38 TECH TALK:

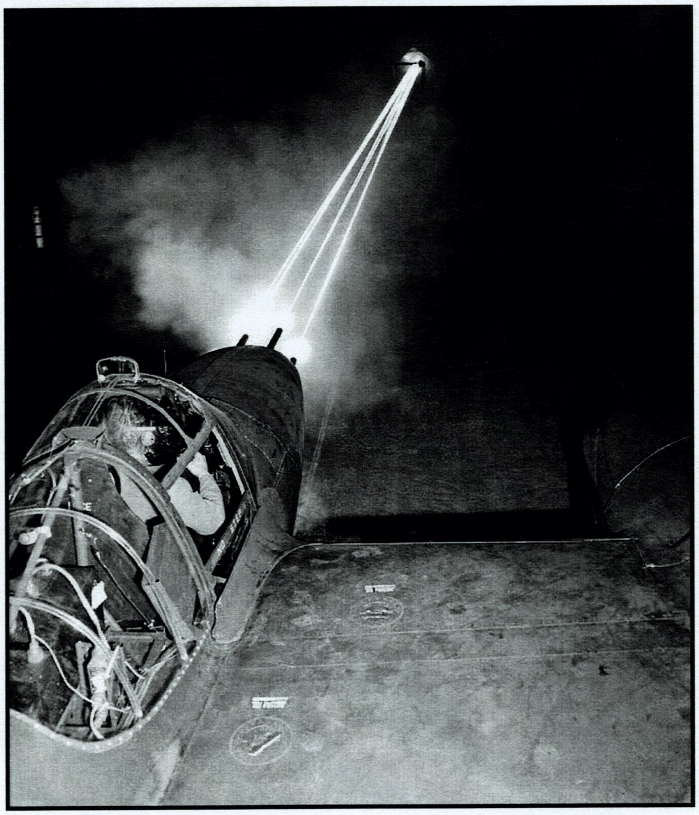
The Evolution of the P-38's Machine Gun and Cannon Package

By Walter H. Kieseling Jr.

Prior to 1937, Army Air Corps commanders believed that heavily armed bombers, flying tight formations, could defend themselves against enemy pursuit aircraft. When the Germans introduced Messerschmitt's Bf 109 into the Spanish Civil War that year, it was far more advanced than anything we had in service, so the USAAC leaders tasked 1st Lt. Benjamin S. Kelsey, the Chief Fighter Project Officer at Wright Field, Ohio, and 1st Lt. Gordon P. Saville to draft a proposal for a new pursuit aircraft.

Unfortunately, they were constrained to adhere to the old requirements, which were that pursuit aircraft should be single-engine, single-seat aircraft with armament restricted to 500 pounds, which included both guns and ammunition. To circumvent those limitations, Lts. Kelsey and Saville inserted the word "Interceptor" into the Air Corps' X-608 proposal, which created a new set of standards for pursuit aircraft to meet. For the X-608 *twin-engine* proposal, the requirements stated that liquid-cooled Allison engines were necessary, and that the airplane would have to climb to 20,000 feet in six minutes. It would also have to have the internal fuel capacity to fly for one hour at full throttle with a top speed of 360 mph and be able to take off and clear a 50-foot obstacle and land within 2,200 feet while carrying twice the amount of ammunition of previous pursuit aircraft—and have tricycle landing gear for ease of ground operations.

This test firing of a P-38's guns at night, on the ground, dramatically displays the devastating cone of fire produced by its four .50-cal. machine guns and 20mm cannon. (USAF photo)



Based on the new standards, Lockheed submitted a proposal designated Model 22, which won the X-608 twin-engine contest. Lt. Kelsey recommended that the Army award Lockheed a contract for one prototype aircraft, which it did on 23 June 1937 with contract #9974 and the Army serial number 37-457. This resulted in the XP-38.

Upon winning the X-608 proposal, Lockheed's Hall Hibbard and Clarence "Kelly" Johnson sat down to carefully study it. They were both familiar with twin-engine and twin-tail configurations, having had great success with the Electra series of aircraft. Kelly drew up six different designs, all with twin engines and tails, three of which also had twin booms. Of the six designs they chose the one we now know as the P-38 Lightning. Two points were apparent from the start: they would need turbosuperchargers to reach the speed and altitude requirements, and inline engines instead of radials for streamlining.

As to armament, the XP-38/Model 22 mockup was designed to accommodate two .50-caliber (cal.) M2 Browning machine guns with 200 rounds of ammunition per gun, two .30-cal. (7.62mm) Browning machine guns with 500 rounds of ammunition each, and a Hotchkiss 25mm cannon then being tested at the Army's Ordnance Department. The Hotchkiss cannon never came to fruition, so they substituted it with the T1 Army Ordnance .90-inch/22.86mm cannon with a 50-round rotary magazine. However, this also had operating problems and was modified twice, with a T2 and a T3 version. With its ongoing problems, they settled instead on the Madsen 23mm belt-feed cannon with 100 rounds.

The XP-38 was completed in late December 1938 and officially rolled out on January 27, 1939. After only six test flights it was decided that the aircraft would be flown to Wright Field to complete its test program. Upon arriving at Wright, it had made such good time the decision was made to fly it on to Mitchel Field, Long Island, New York to try to set a new cross-country speed record. Unfortunately, on approach to landing its carburetors iced up, the XP-38 was unable to maintain altitude, and it crashed short of the runway. Two points of note regarding the XP-38: the gun package was never installed and the Army serial number 37-457 was never applied.

Even though the XP-38 was a total loss, it had outperformed most of the requirements of Circular Proposal X-608, and on April 17, 1939, Lockheed was given a contract to build 13 YP-38 service test aircraft, for which Lockheed's designation was Model 122. As soon as the YP-38 project started Lockheed incorporated numerous changes to improve on the defects they had experienced with the XP-38. The proposed armament package for the YP-38 was the same as the XP-38 except the 23mm Madsen cannon was replaced with the 37mm Oldsmobile M-9 cannon with three five-round clips. However, there were numerous problems with the 37mm cannon;

early models had jamming problems and limited supply issues. They were also extremely heavy for fighters and they had a slow rate of fire, a limited amount of ammo, plus a heavy recoil.

Next was the Lockheed Model 222-62-08, the RP-38—the "R" indicating that these aircraft were "Restricted" to training and familiarization flights. Only 29 were built, from June to August of 1941, and only a few were armed, with the gun package staying the same as the YP-38's.

Prior to that order the war in Europe was heating up and the Anglo-French Purchasing Committee came to the US to purchase fighter aircraft to supplement their existing fighters. The British ordered 143 Model 322-Bs (for Britain) and the French ordered 524 Model 322-Fs (for France). These fighters were to be built to each country's specifications. Unfortunately, France fell to the Germans in June of 1940, so the British took over the purchase of all the 322-B and F series P-38s, but only three Model 322-Bs were built and taken to England for testing. However, these were without the turbosuperchargers installed, so the British were not satisfied with their performance and canceled the remaining order. This caused an enormous problem for Lockheed, so the US Army took over the remainder of the British order. Ironically, it was the British that named their model 322-B Lightning Mark I. The US Army changed the designation of these fighters to P-322-I and P-322-II. Some major improvements came out of the Model 322. Of importance, the P-322-I had the retraction linkage on the nose wheel relocated from the front to the rear of the strut, which shortened the nose wheel door and deepened the wheel well—and made room for larger ammunition containers for the four .50-cal. machine guns and the cannon.

Subsequent in the armament development was the P-38D (Lockheed Model 222-62-08D), with only 36 built. The armament package, if installed, was changed to four .50-cal. M2 Browning machine guns with non-staggered barrels. The 37mm Oldsmobile cannon was in such short supply that Lockheed switched to the 20mm Hispano-Suiza cannon, which had a much faster rate of fire and an increased ammunition capacity, from three five-round clips to a 150-round ammunition tray that fed a rotary magazine.

The next incarnation was the P-38E, Lockheed Model 222-62-09, with 210 built. The armament package was now a 20mm Hispano-Suiza cannon and four electrically heated .50-cal. Browning MG 53-2 machine guns installed with staggered barrels. This ensured a direct feed into the gun receiver, thus relieving the jamming problem of the earlier non-staggered barrels. The P-38E also incorporated the redesigned gun bay from the P-322-I, which deepened it, enabling it to carry almost double the amount of ammo the P-38D carried. Also of interest, this gun package was concentrated in a 20-inch by 8-inch rectangular pattern area in the nose compartment and threw out 9.26 pounds of lead per second with no bullet dispersion or convergence at any feasible range. This concentrated firepower was devastating to enemy aircraft.

The P-38F (Model 222-60-09) was next up, with 527 produced. The nose armament package would remain the same as the P-38E and would also be carried through the P-38G. There followed the P-38H (Model 422), with 601 produced. This version had the cannon changed to a 20mm AN-M2C, still with 150 rounds, the difference being the M2 receiver was .02 inch longer and its receiver was bolted on instead of riveted. This package would continue through the remaining J and L models. Then came Lockheed's P-38M, which was a night fighter version of the P-38L. The gun package remained the same except for flash suppressors being added to prevent the pilots from being blinded by the flash from firing guns at night.

The preceding describes the evolution of the P-38 gun and cannon packages, but it was not the end of arming the Lightning. Fighter manufacturers and the Army Air Forces were constantly looking to upgrade existing gun platforms or add new weapon systems to enhance a fighter's ability to inflict more damage to the enemy. Below are some examples of larger caliber machine guns and cannon configurations that were concurrently being tested, and of two other prototype planes Lockheed built with different gun and cannon packages.

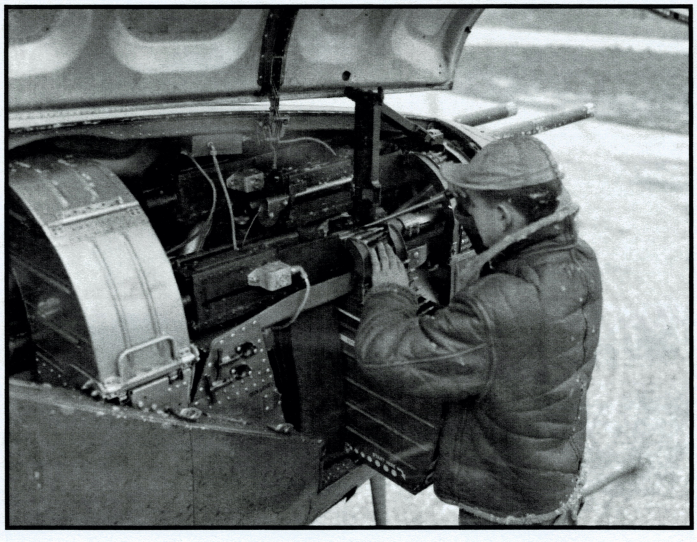
The Army Ordnance Department wanted to develop an aircraft machine gun larger than the existing .50-cal. Browning. One concept was a .60-cal. gun with armor-piercing rounds. The development of this gun is a story in itself and did not come to fruition until late 1945. The T39 version of the T17E3 was installed in the nose of P-38L-1 serial number 44-23801 at Eglin Field, Florida, in 1946; however, test flights were not successful.

Another concept was applied to P-38L-1 44-24649, which project was also carried out at Eglin. It had eight .50-cal. machine guns in the nose and two Douglas DGP-I twin .50-cal. gun pods under each wing outside the engines. There is no readily accessible information on test results, but 12 .50-cal. Brownings had to have been awesome firepower!

Little has been written about Lockheed's XP-49. It was produced because the Army was worried about the cost of the P-38, which was double that of a P-51, so they put out Circular Proposal 39-775 to all the fighter manufacturers, hoping for a less expensive alternative. Lockheed submitted a proposal designated Model 522 and ironically won the contest. The company had a new gun package for the XP-49 that consisted of four .50-cal. machine guns and two short barrel 20mm cannons. P-38G-5 42-12866 was used as a test bed for this gun package, but it was never installed on the XP-49 and the program was discontinued after a short series of test flights.

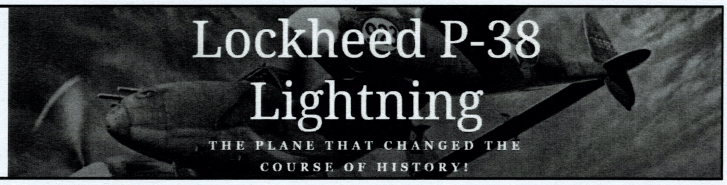
Once again, there is little reference information on Lockheed's XP-58. Similar in appearance to the P-38, with twin booms and tails and a center nacelle section to accommodate two people, it was massive in size. Its gun package would change twice, with the possibility of a third. The first package consisted of two 20mm cannons and two .50-cal. machine guns in the nose, with another .50-cal. in each tail boom, operated by a gunner seated behind the pilot with a remote-controlled gun sight. Lockheed felt this armament was not heavy enough, so it proposed that two gun turrets be added to the fuselage, each housing two .50-cal. machine guns, and changed the nose guns to four 37mm cannons. The size of the XP-58 was so large they considered mounting a T-9 75mm cannon in the nose. Ultimately, none of the suggested gun packages were ever installed.

Corporal Thomas B. Ford, an armorer of an unidentified P-38 squadron in England, works on this Lightning's .50-cal. guns in the spring of 1944. Note the 20mm ammunition drum to his left. (USAF photo)



Your P-38 Website

By Kelly Kalcheim



Most of you will have heard the story about what has arguably become the most famous of the surviving P-38s, *Glacier Girl*. The P-38 Association website has an entire section dedicated to her.

The *Glacier Girl* section includes the entire story from her crash on a Greenland glacier to her recovery and restoration to airworthiness. If you ever have a chance to see this miraculous P-38 fly at an air show, do it! It is a sight you will never forget.

For those of you who may not know the story yet, on July 15, 1942, six P-38s (including the one that would later become known as *Glacier Girl*) and two B-17 bombers took off from Presque Isle Air Base in Maine headed for the U.K. They all had to make an emergency landing on a glacier in Greenland. Miraculously, none of the crew from any of the planes was lost, and they were rescued and returned safely home.

Glacier Girl **nose art with Planes of Fame pilot Steve Hinton in the cockpit**

Fade out and then fade back in 50 years later. A small group of aviation enthusiasts known as the Greenland Expedition (headed by Project Manager Bob Cardin) decided to locate those planes, which had come to be known as "The Lost Squadron," and to recover one of the lost P-38s.

It turned out to be no easy task, as the planes had been buried under 25 stories of ice and drifted over a mile from their original location. You can read the whole story on our website here: p38assn.org/glaciergirl/

Some of you will recognize her now-famous nose art, but how many of you have seen the *original* nose art that they decided not to use?

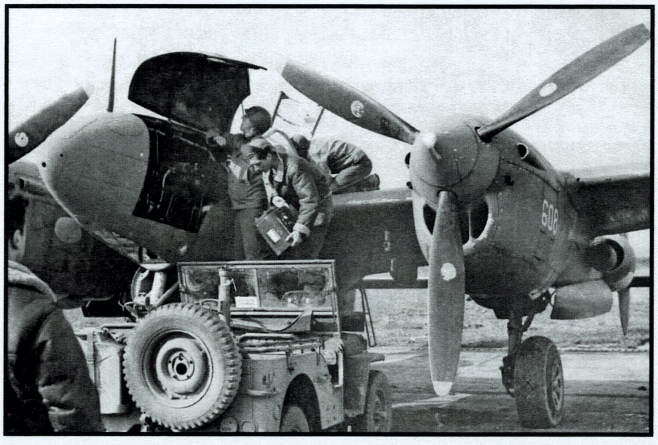
The original nose art for *Glacier Girl*

How Many F-4 and F-5 Photo Reconnaissance Lightnings Were There?

By Steve Blake

It has, in fact, proved to be impossible to determine the *exact* number of camera-equipped photo recon Lightnings. We *do* know exactly how many were built as such, but not exactly how many were converted from P-38s—and thus the actual total.

Precisely 500 F-4s and F-5s were manufactured as such by Lockheed at its Burbank factory in 1942 and 1943. The last of these were 200 F-5B-1s, which were delivered to the USAAF from September 1943 to January 1944.



Exposed film is being removed from a 31st PRS Lightning after a photo reconnaissance mission from England in 1944. This plane, F-5E-2 serial number 43-28608, had rolled off the Lockheed assembly line earlier that year as a P-38 and was then one of the first to be converted to a camera-carrying F-5 at its Modification Center near Dallas. It and its pilot, 1st Lt. Thair W. Best, were MIA during a "low level photo recon" on January 22, 1945. The plane crashed near Eisenbach, Germany, and Lt. Best was taken prisoner. He was a squadron mate and friend of Lt. "Louie" Lanker, whose story appears on Pages 6 and 7 of this issue. (USAF photo)

It was then decided that, due to the huge demand for P-38s, henceforth some of those coming off its assembly lines would be flown to Lockheed's Modification Center at Love Field near Dallas, Texas (often by female WASP pilots) for conversion to the various F-5 models—the first of which were 123 F-5-C1-s, plus a single experimental XF-5D. The purpose was, of course, to free up the lines for the production of P-38s only. The F-5 count then becomes problematic, as the subsequent allocations of P-38s to Love Field for modification as such seem to have been rather haphazard. Sometimes small blocks of serial numbers were chosen, and other times the selection process was evidently much more random, involving various individual serial numbers.

A. Kevin Grantham, the author of the book P-SCREAMERS—THE HISTORY OF THE SURVIVING P-38 LIGHTNINGS, undertook a detailed and time-consuming search of pertinent Lockheed and USAAF records and other sources and came up with the following, not 100% complete, totals for the final F-5 models converted at the Dallas Modification Center: 166 F-5E-2s, 705 F-5E-3s, 369 F-5E-4s, 111 F-5F-3s, and 357 F-5G-6s. This makes a tentative total of 2,332 PR aircraft—a little over 23% of the 10,037 Lightnings built. Again, due to the difficulty of Grantham's task and its variables, this should not be taken as a definitive number, although it undoubtedly comes very close.

If you would like to purchase a copy of P-SCREAMERS (which contains a list of F-5 serial numbers) go to: tinyurl.com/p-screamers

P-38s Take a Dip in the Pacific

By Steve Blake

Nowhere in the U.S. during World War II were P-38s spotted in the skies more often than over Southern California. There were numerous USAAF bases there that were utilized for the training of P-38 pilots. Many of those training missions were flown over the nearby Pacific Ocean, and inevitably some of the planes crashed into it. The Southern California coastal waters' seabed became littered with P-38s, among many other aircraft types. This is the story of two such incidents, both of which the Lightning pilots involved fortunately survived.

July 1942: 27th Fighter Squadron P-38s at Reykyavik Field in Iceland while en route to England. Lt. Bill Long was one of the pilots on this long flight.

On May 16, 1942, Lieutenant William K. Long took off from his base at March Field, in Riverside, California, on a training mission. Long, a pilot of the 1st Fighter Group's 27th Fighter Squadron, was flying an early model P-38E, serial number 41-1997. Riverside is about 50 miles southeast of Los Angeles and a similar distance from the ocean, to which a speedy P-38 could fly from March Field in a matter of minutes. An article in the *Daily Mirror* newspaper described what happened to Lt. Long while flying over the Pacific that day:

"He made a forced landing with his P-38 interceptor plane, in the surf 100 yards offshore in Venice between Venice and Ocean Park amusement piers [80 miles due west of Riverside and just south of Santa Monica]. Then, swimming a short distance through deep water, he waded ashore.

"Venice lifeguards and firemen used trucks to tow the plane to the beach after lines had been attached by the guards. Only visible damage was to both propellers, which were smashed.

"According to witnesses, the plane, flying at what was estimated to be about 200 miles an hour when it struck the water, came to an abrupt stop. Only the fact that its retractable landing gear was up made a landing at this speed possible.

"One witness said that smoke was pouring from one of the motors when the ship passed the Santa Monica Beach film colony north of the point of the landing [and that] the ship was flying so low that it clipped the top of a wave, then succeeded in gaining the altitude that carried it on south to Venice.

"Lieut. Long, whose home is in Glen Falls, N.Y., received his training at Maxwell Field, Alabama. On wading out of the surf at the beach, he grinned when complimented by spectators. 'Yep,' he said, 'You bet I was lucky. This was the third time.' He declined, however, to discuss his previous accidents."

We do know about one of those "previous accidents." It was, in fact, one of the very first involving a Lightning in operational service with the US Army Air Corps—which was absorbed into the new US Army Air Forces in March 1942. His squadron, then the 27th Pursuit (which designation was changed right around the time of his later accident), was the first USAAC unit to receive P-38s, in the summer of 1941, when it was based at Selfridge Field, Michigan. On August 3, 1941, Lt. Long was involved there in a landing accident while flying P-38 serial number 40-756, one of the very first production models, which was seriously damaged but repairable.

Immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor that December, the 1st Pursuit Group was sent to Southern California to provide part of its aerial defenses and to train for overseas deployment—and operated from several airfields there. A month after Lt. Long's dramatic ocean crash, the 1st *Fighter* Group began its long journey to England, during which its pilots flew their P-38s over the North Atlantic, via Labrador, Canada; Greenland, and Iceland. Lt. Long was one of those pilots; he was flying his newly assigned P-38F-1 serial number 41-7589. After training in England for several months and flying a few uneventful combat missions, the group moved to Algeria after the Allied invasion of Northwest Africa in early November 1942 to serve with the new 12th Air Force there, and was soon in the thick of the action.

Sadly, on December 3, during an escort of some B-17s to Bizerte, on Algeria's northeast coast, the 27th Squadron's pilots were attacked by some Me 109s. Lt. Long and his faithful 41-7589 were shot down, and he was killed.

Another Southern California P-38 training base was the civilian Orange County Airport, near Santa Ana, which is now John Wayne International Airport. Based there in 1943 and 1944 was the 332nd Fighter Squadron of the 329th Fighter Group, an operational training unit whose task was to teach newly minted Army Air Forces pilots to fly, and fight with, the Lockheed P-38. *The Los Angeles Times* reported on our other accident, involving a 332nd Squadron pilot, under the heading, "P-38 Pilot Saved After Sea Crash." The articles states:

"Newport Harbor, Feb. 12 [1944]. 2nd Lt. James R. Hertzler, stationed at Orange County airdrome, narrowly escaped death today when his P-38, out of control, crashed 50 yards from shore in the ocean opposite the 1500 block on Ocean Front, Balboa.

"Lt. Hertzler parachuted into the ocean and was picked up by a fishing boat. Army authorities said he suffered shock and a hip injury. He was taken to the Santa Ana Army Air Base Hospital."

Hertzler, a 23-year-old Pennsylvanian, was flying P-38H-1 serial number 42-66690. He had barely recovered from this accident when he was involved in another, on February 25, when he belly-landed P-38G-10 42-13008 at the Orange County Airport due to engine failure.

Flying a P-38, even Stateside, far from a combat theater, was a risky business, and more than a few Lightnings and their pilots ended up taking a "dip" in the ocean. ✪

Jack's Escape

By Betty Greaves

Flight Officer Jack Greaves

August 23, 1944, was a spectacular day for the 428th Fighter Squadron. The previous days had seen the first heavy rains since the 428th had arrived in Normandy [Neuilly/Isigny, A-11]. By noon conditions had improved enough for takeoffs. Squadron Mission 131—eight P-38s, each carrying two 500-pound bombs, accompanied by four others for cover, led by [474th Fighter Group C.O.] Colonel [Clinton C.] Wasem—then flew off. They found roads jammed with German vehicles trying to get to the "safe" side of the Seine. Thirty-one trucks were demolished and two tanks damaged. Within two hours, Mission 132, led by [the squadron commander], Major [Earl C.] Hedlund, was sent back to the same area. The pilots found so much flak "you could walk on it." They also found that German tanks were moving bumper-to-bumper across a pontoon bridge over the Seine about 20 miles upriver from Rouen. In attempting to knock out the bridge by dive bombing the 428th lost Flight Officer John H. "Jack" Greaves, who was flying P-38J-15 serial number 42-104306 (squadron coded F5-N) as Major Hedlund's wingman. He was not seen or heard from after the bombing run.

Jack recalled that, "The flak was really heavy, but I had a good bomb run set up, so I just kept going on in. I got hit in the right wing, and then in the seat armor. I lost all horizontal control, and, after I had dropped my bombs, I finally pulled up by using the trim tabs. I stood up in the cockpit, not sliding off the wing like you're supposed to. I went out in the slipstream and pulled my parachute rip cord. Just after the 'chute opened I slammed into a tree."

Seeing is Believing. Never was that saying more true than on a crisp fall day in 2000 as I gazed upon an indentation in some French soil. My brother, who had climbed down into the crater, waved his arms and shouted, "This is where Jack's plane crashed!"

Jack remembered the hill, some 300 yards distant, where he had landed in the tree, although the tree was no longer there. As we gazed into the indentation in the earth, Jack was interviewed and photographed by a local newspaper reporter. At that time the whole incredible story that he had told me back in 1944 about his plane crash and his escape from the enemy became a reality.

Two distinct memories remained with Jack to the end of his life. One was how difficult it had been to open the escape hatch above his head in the P-38 as it headed toward the ground at incredible speed. The second was his difficulty in opening the parachute before he landed in an apple tree some distance from the crash.

At the base of the tree was a German soldier preparing to shoot Jack, until from behind him came a voice demanding, "Halt!" Apparently, the soldier's officer thought the American airman would be valuable for information. He asked Jack if he was wounded. Then he ordered him into a jeep-like German vehicle.

They traveled for three days, leaving Jack unshackled when they saw that he had a serious limp from an ankle injury. Each night they took over a French farm. The third night, while the guards were playing cards by the light of a kerosene lantern, the edge of their vigilance removed by the warmth of a nearby stove, Jack made his attempt at freedom. He jumped from his resting corner, upsetting the card table and breaking a window. The lantern crashed to the floor and went out. Confusion ensued. Jack jumped through the window and counted the fence posts to a place where he had predetermined he could surmount the fence and flee. Over the fence, he sprinted for safety, his ankle not being nearly as damaged as he had pretended it to be. His guards continued to shoot at him until he was lost to them in the dark.

He limped four days through some woods. On the fifth day, around dawn, he heard the chopping of wood. As he emerged from the edge of the forest he saw the man who was chopping, a French farmer. He tried to explain to him that he was a downed American pilot. The farmer, who spoke only French, seemed not to believe him, because the Germans had entered farms dressed as American pilots and killed people who tried to help them. In desperation, Jack dug into the knee pocket of his flight suit and located a Band-Aid wrapper. The farmer took the wrapper and read in broken French/English, "Bauer and Black Made in U.S.A." He told Jack to come on in. The farmer then called to his wife. Once he was inside they fed him the last of their precious eggs and milk, tended to his injured ankle, and put him to bed, where he slept for two days.

They were near the city of Rouen, fairly close to a German artillery camp and not far from the Canadian Army's front line. The family also included two boys ages five and six and a girl about eleven. An SS patrol came by daily to take animals and produce. On their arrival, the farmer gave hand signals for Jack to hide on the other side of the house or in the haymow.

After eighteen days with the family, they were alerted to a Canadian artillery barrage coming their way. Their means of protection was a slit trench covered with tarpaper and cordwood that ran from the barn to the pig yard. Jack said, "Sure enough, the Canadians came through, and we got right in the middle of an artillery battle with these three kids, down in the slit trench, with nothing but apples and Calvados [apple brandy] to keep us going for about twelve hours. That afternoon, after the battle had gone beyond us, we got out, and soon the whole town of Martin-Epperville was in the yard offering us cigarettes, wine, cognac, and food."

The farmer's family hoped that Jack would stay with them longer, but he told them he had to get back to let his family know that he was alive and safe. After the celebration, Jack and the farmer borrowed bicycles and "went looking for the Canadians. The Canadians took me to Corps [Headquarters], who had me taken to London, where I stayed for two weeks for debriefing. They also let me go back to visit the 428th. I spent a couple of days with it and then was sent back to the States."

On our journey of remembrance in October of 2000, after visiting the crater from Jack's plane crash, my brother, his wife, Jack, and I attended a parade and celebration in Rouen. Following the parade through the city, a ceremony was held in a small schoolhouse. The mayor gave a speech honoring Jack. Food and drinks were served and children gave speeches and presented him with a board on which parts that had been recovered from his crashed plane (a Pitot tube and a reserve gas gauge) were mounted. Jack and I were overwhelmed by the emotional ceremony. ✪

[*Flight Officer Greaves, from Great Falls, Montana, had joined the 428th FS as a replacement pilot on July 15, 1944.*]

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.

Red Bull