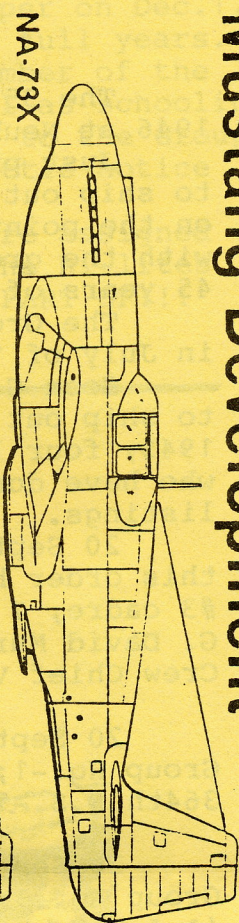
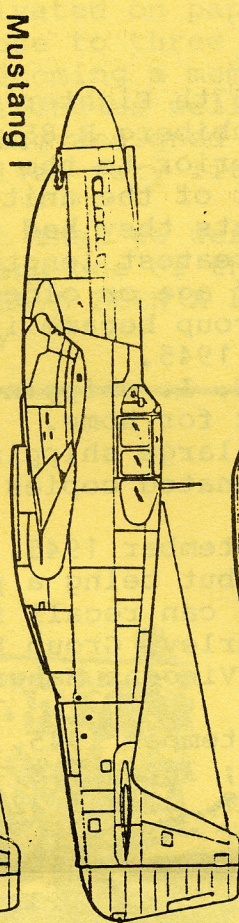


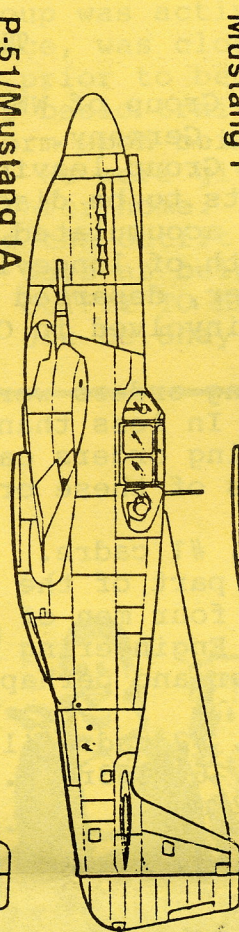
Mustang Development



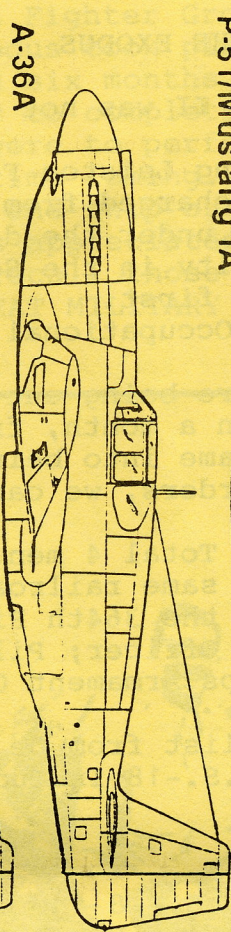
NA-73X



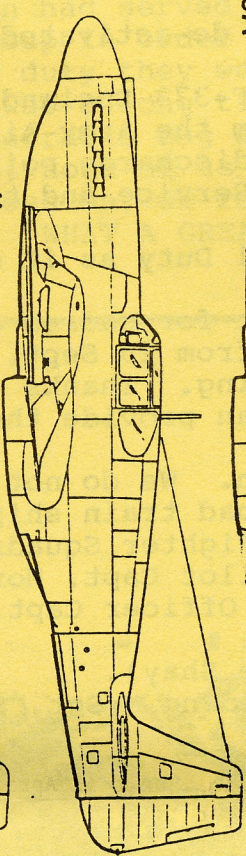
Mustang I



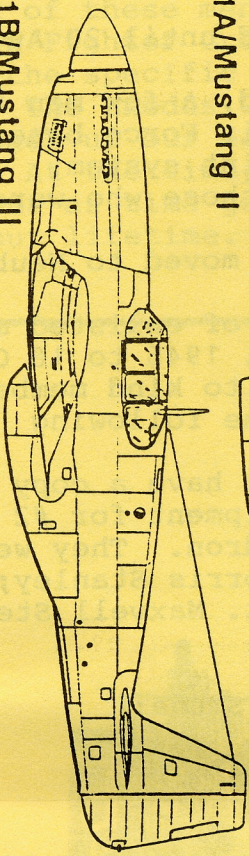
P-51/Mustang 1A



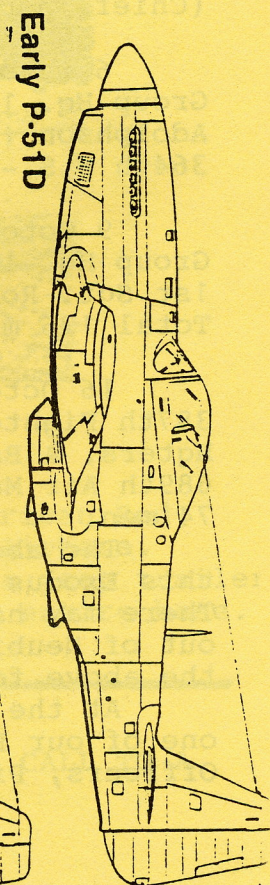
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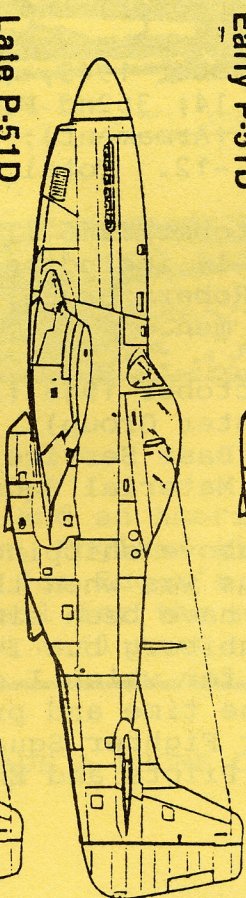
P-51A/Mustang II



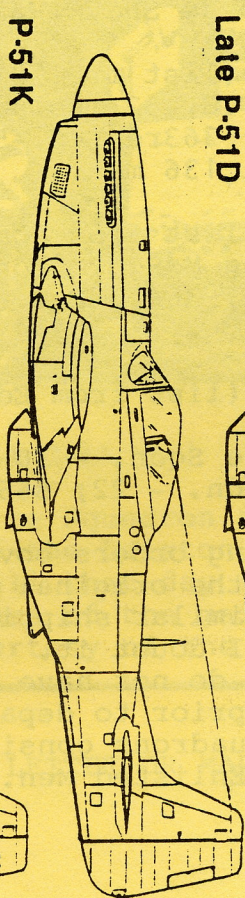
P-51B/Mustang III



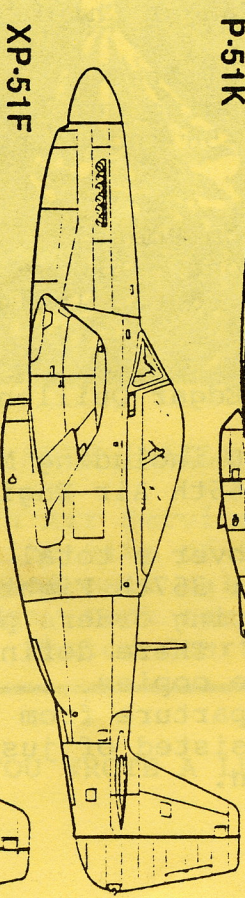
Early P-51D



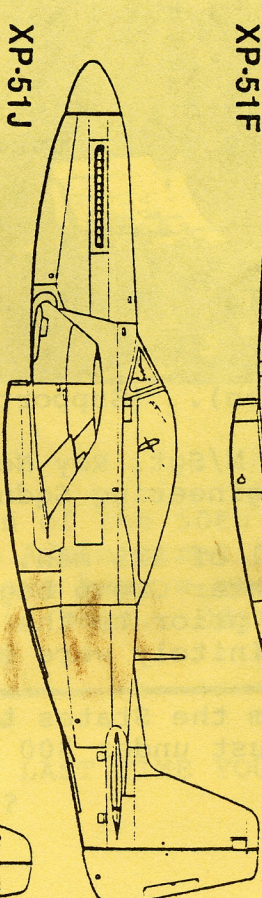
Late P-51D



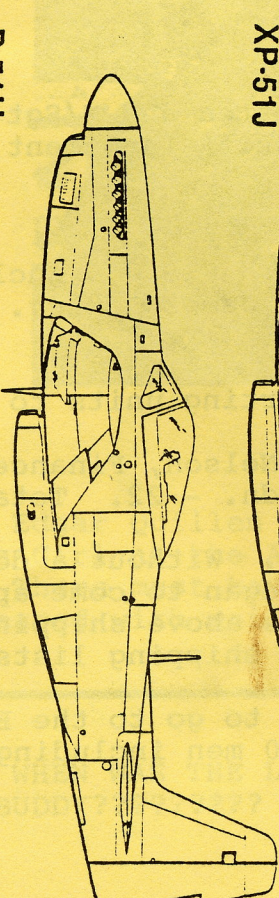
P-51K



XP-51F



XP-51J



P-51H

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE "MUSTANG"

- * 1940 British contacted North American about license-building P-40 Tomahawk-North American balked-North American suggested British build a new fighter using North American's design-British agreed-
- * January 1940-North American proposes construction of 320 NA-73s. Powered by an Allison engine-armed by British specs-cost 40,000.00 per aircraft-accepted April 1940-U.S. Army Air Corps had no interest in the new aircraft.
- * NA-73 design was result of ideas gleaned from visits to Heinkel and Messerschmitt factories in 1938, plus details of P-40 research.
- * Laminar wing design incorporated into NA-73 prototype.
- * 78,000 engineering hours and 127 days were required to complete the first NA-73X at the North American factory at Mines Field in Los Angeles. The date was September 9, 1940. It was named the MUSTANG. 20 days later it was fitted with an Allison V-1710 engine (1710 cubic inch, inline 12 cylinder, liquid-cooled)
- * On 26 October, 1940 the NA-73X was flight tested for the first time.
- * The NA-73X completed a total of 45 flights before being retired.
- * First MUSTANG I completed April 16, 1941. Rounded racing style windshield replaced by three-piece unit with bulletproof center piece.
- * September 1941 1st MUSTANG shipped to England. Arrived RAF Burtonwood October 24, 1941. Weapons-four .30 calibre machine guns in wings, two 50s in the wings and an additional pair of 50s in the nose. It flew 382 MPH at 14,000 ft. Its service ceiling was below 30,000 ft.
- * No. 2 Squadron of Sawbridgeworth became the first operational unit in April 1942. May 10, 1942 the first mission was flown over occupied France.
- * July 27, 1942 MUSTANGS were the first allied fighter aircraft to raid targets in Germany.
- * August 19, 1942 Pilot Officer Hollis Hills, of Pasadena, California, shot down an FW190 for the first MUSTANG "kill". On the same day the first MUSTANG was lost.
- * First MUSTANGS delivered to United States Army Air Corps were placed in storage at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio. The Air Corps had no interest in the MUSTANG.
- * First USAAF P-51 flown over enemy territory on April 9, 1943.
- * First USAAF P-51 shot down on April 23, 1943 by "friendly" anti-aircraft fire. (The P-51 looked very much like the BF109)
- * P-51 and A-36 continued in use well after D-Day.
- * P-51A was last to use the Allison engine.
- * September 1943 1st Merlin powered MUSTANGS arrive in Europe.
- * P-51's and Twin P-51's (F-82) on active duty in Korea.
- * Mission hours - United States Air Force (USAAF) 213,873.
- * Mission hours - Total USAF & Allies - 1,120,000.
- * 4,950 enemy aircraft destroyed, 4,131 on the ground. P-51 accounted for 48% of the total enemy aircraft loss.
- * Last WWII mission - August 14, 1945 on Osaka, Japan.

from
Tom McKee

"When I saw the MUSTANG fighters escorting the bombers over Berlin, I knew the jig was up."

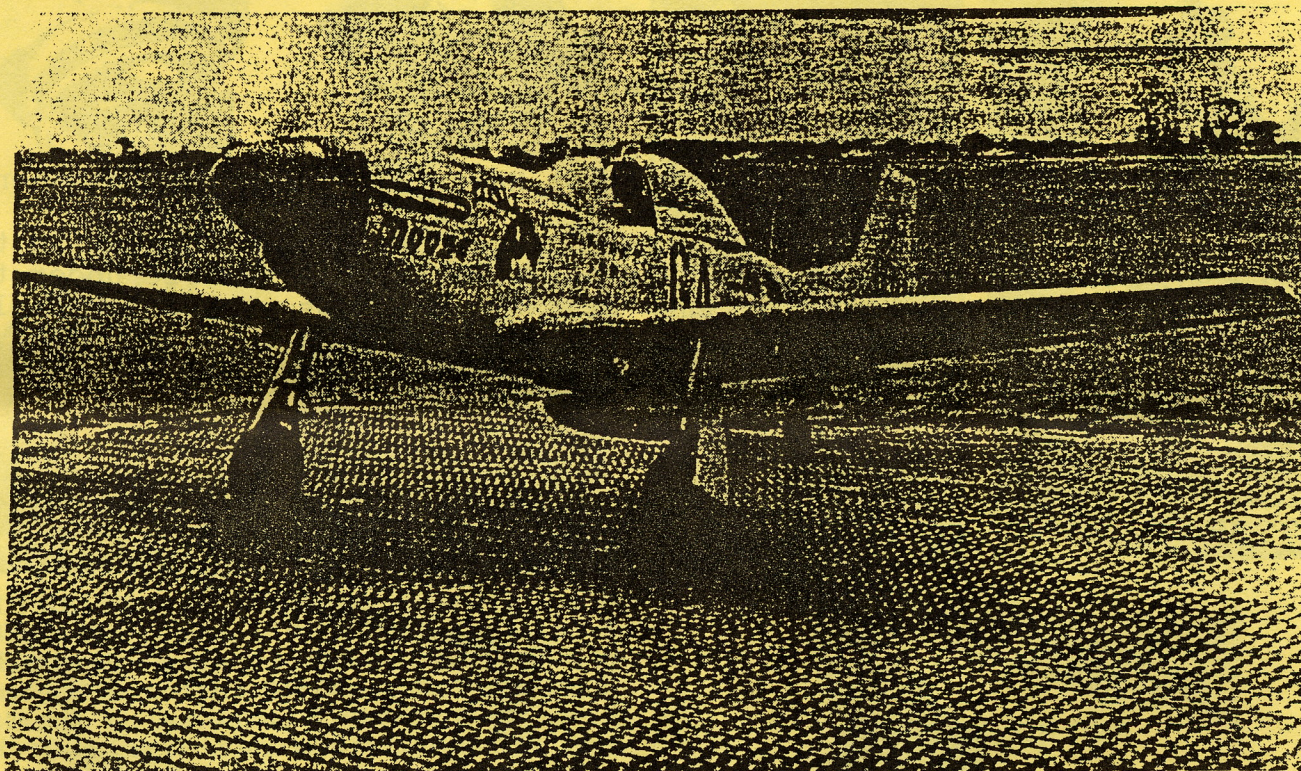
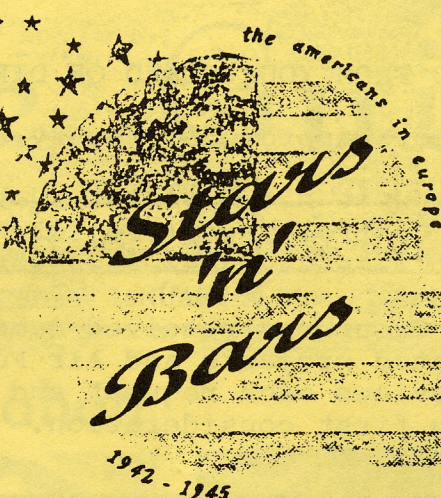
Hermann Goring, 4 March 1944

MARCH 2, 1945, 0758 hours: Myron Becraft sat in his P-51 nicknamed *Moose*, all keyed up and ready to go for his 37th combat mission, then under the command of Lt Col Broadhead. Twenty-one P-51D Mustangs of the 362nd Fighter Squadron, part of the 357th Fighter Group, took-off from Leiston, Suffolk, their mission to rendezvous with heavy bombers from the 5th Combat Group and escort them over enemy occupied Germany.

By 0850 hours they were over Ijmuiden at an altitude of 19,000ft and by 0945 they made contact with the bombers, as briefed back at Leiston, in the vicinity of Celle at 22,000ft. They escorted the Group till approximately 1010 and left them at 22,000ft north east of

was just a grass strip laden with many enemy aircraft. With no activity or *flak* present they pressed home their attack, making a total of seven passes each.

With fuel and ammunition running low both pilots decided to call it a day, leaving behind the destruction of several He 111s and 'piggyback' Fw 190s (*Mistels*) burning away with octane ferocity. After the attack on the airfield, running very low on fuel and separated from the Squadron, Becraft made a call on his radio to the nearest Allied ground station asking them for directions to the nearest Allied airfield. The ground station directions flew them over the Ruhr Valley which at this time had anti-aircraft batteries scattered about the countryside.



Leipzig when they encountered enemy aircraft below and behind the Group. On seeing them, Lt Col Broadhead led his Squadron into the attack, the enemy having already been scattered by the 20th Group.

Most of the enemy aircraft made for cloud cover on seeing the P-51s diving to attack, but for Lt Becraft his day was about to start, flying in the position of *Dollar Blue Three* alongside his wingman Lt G A Robinson in *Dollar Blue Four*, he made his attack. With so many P-51s in the sky at one time it was hard work trying to tell 'us from them'. Lt Becraft spotted a Bf109 in a Lufberry with one P-51 in front of him and three more behind him, he made his attack and from approximately 500 yards opened fire at the '109. Two short bursts saw the wing of the '109 snap in two with pieces flying off it, it disintegrated while spiralling down, before crashing in the fields below.

Becraft then spotted two more '109s below him and before he could attack them they made for cloud cover, not wanting to engage the P-51s. This again happened to Becraft and Robinson, but this time on coming out of cloud with his wingman still close behind him he came across Kamenz airfield. Not wishing to miss out on the opportunity, both pilots decided to make an attack on the 'field, which

Myron Becraft's P-51D *Moose* of the 362nd FS, 357th FG at Leiston, 1945. Note the use of codes under the wings — see *Get His Squads!* on page 10. (All photos via Author)

A Day to Remember

Charles Johnson describes
Lt Myron Becraft's 37th mission.

They made their way to Brussels in Belgium when, on arrival at the airfield which they had been advised was the nearest, Robinson's engine started to cough and splutter from fuel starvation. Becraft ordered Robinson to land first then landed himself. After being refuelled and armed they took-off and made their way back to Leiston, landing between approximately 1500 and 1600 hours, quite happy with what they had done.

The major part of the Squadron landed at 1255 and out of the 21 aircraft which had taken off two returned early with mechanical failure. The total aircraft destroyed by the 362nd, including those by Lts Becraft and Robinson was: five enemy aircraft shot down; two damaged in the air; eight aircraft destroyed on the ground and two more damaged.

Lt Becraft finished World War Two with 237.5 hours combat and left the USAAF in 1945. He was recalled to active duty again in 1947 for the Korean conflict and retired from the USAF in 1964 with the rank of Major and its currently living in the USA. Lt G A Robinson, having survived the war, is retired and living in the USA running his own company.

For both men, it was a day to remember.