

THE RUSSIAN PILOT

A 9th. Air Force Group, identified as the 357th Fighter Group, was located at an airbase designated R-85 near Neubiburg, on the outskirts of Munich, Germany. This Group had been transferred out of the 8th. A. F. into the 9th. to serve as a part of the Occupational Forces. The move from Leiston, Eng. to Germany was made shortly after the surrender of The Third Reich in mid-1945. The 357th was equipted with P-51 planes.

One afternoon, without announcement, a strange aircraft approached R-85 to land. Capt. (Earl Duke) Botti, the control tower operator, attempted radio contact with its pilot, but to no avail. As the plane passed the control tower, Earl Dukesaw the Red Star on its fuselage and he realized that he had a problem on his hands. He immediately contacted Major Hunt for advice. The plane, a Yak 9, stopped down near the hanger area and a Jeep and an emergency vehicle closed off its escape. The battery was removed from the Russian plane and the pilot was placed under Base Arrest until Higher Headquarters could be contacted for instructions. The pilot may have been lost, low on fuel, or in an act of desertion or sent there for intelligance purposes by Russian Higher Command. There were many questions awaiting answers.

Eash day one of our pilots were assigned to accompany the R. Pilot and to close watch on his behavior and to prevent him from entering areas important to Base Operations.

An interpreter was located so some communication could be carried on with the R. Pilot. Many questionr were asked but little information was learned.

I was not on the Base at the time of this excitment. I departed early the next morning on another duty assignment for the A-4 section. Most of my information had to come from others who were more directly involved in the events of the next few weeks. Lt. Lawrence Westphal of the 364th. Sqdn. related to me the following, "We had a brief encounter with several replacement pilots who had been recently transferred into the 357th. from the ATC and had been flying C-47s. They were to

BE checked out in P-51s. Late one afternoon three or four of these ATC boys were watching a pilot above wring-out a P-51, I think the pilot doing the wringing was Major Bochay. Soon the R. Pilot and his escort joined the crowd. One of the replacement pilots remarked, 'That looks to me like a good way to bust ones butt.' Immediately, thru an interperter, the R. Pilot replied, "Whats the matter with you afraid to die?"

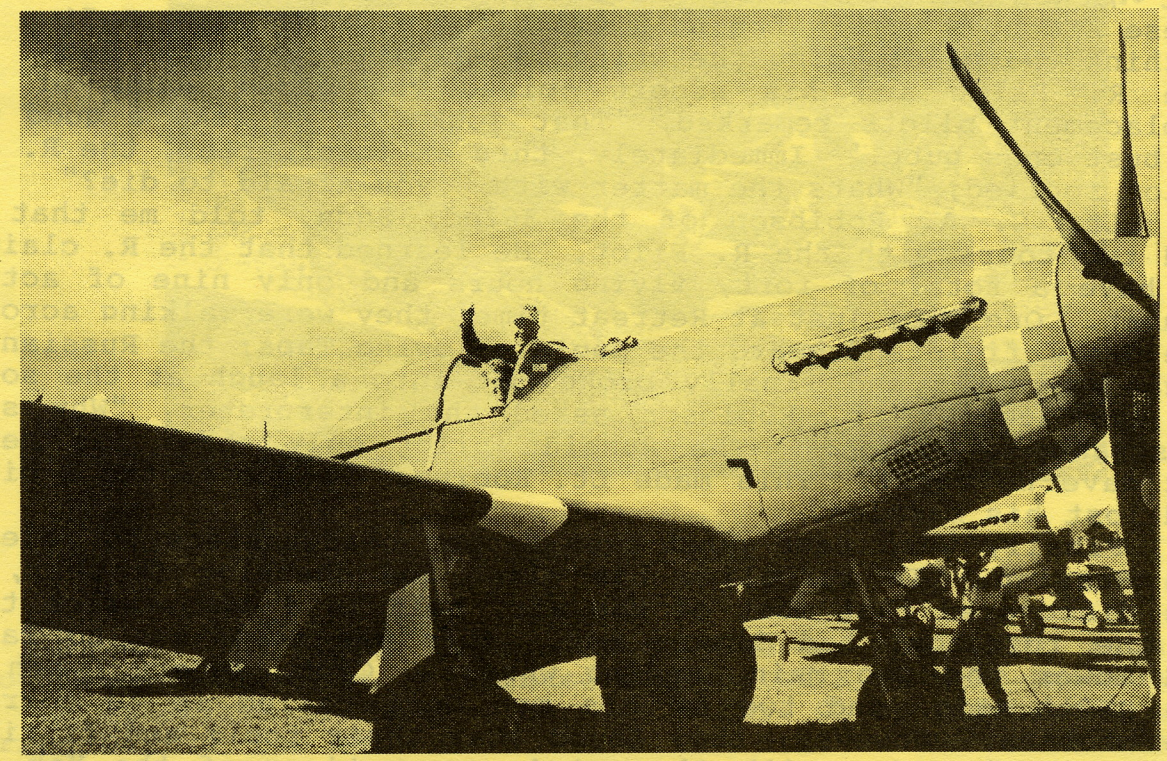
Lt. G. A. Robibson of the 362nd, Sqdn. told me that he had two tours with the R. Pilot. He learned that the R. claimed to have a total of forty flying hours and only nine of actual combat. One time just at Retreat time, they were walking across the drill field and heard the Bugler blowing Taps; the Russian began to smile and finally broke out into a laugh at the sound of the Bugle. Lt. Robinson asked the interpreter, "Why such a strange reaction?" The Russian pilot only shook his head, but gave no reply. This made Lt. Robinson wonder if the R pilot had lost his marbles.

Finally word came down from Higher headquarters to release the Russian. In refueling his plane and checking it over, it was discovered that most of the air, held in a compression tank in the fuselage, had leaked out. This was necessary to raise and lower the two main landing wheels. Capt, Robert Lynch of the 469th.sqdn. and two of his men were called in to correct the problem. However, they found that their tools and fittings would not function with the metric connections of the Yak and no repair could be made.

Lt. Westphal asked me if I was on the flight line when the Russian took-off? I replied that I was away from the base at the time, he said, "You missed a good show, when the Yak left the runway one wheel was dangling and the other was only about three quarters way up. He did a 180 and came back very low and did three rolls very low on the deck. I'm sure I would not attenmt such a trick with one wheel hanging down like that."

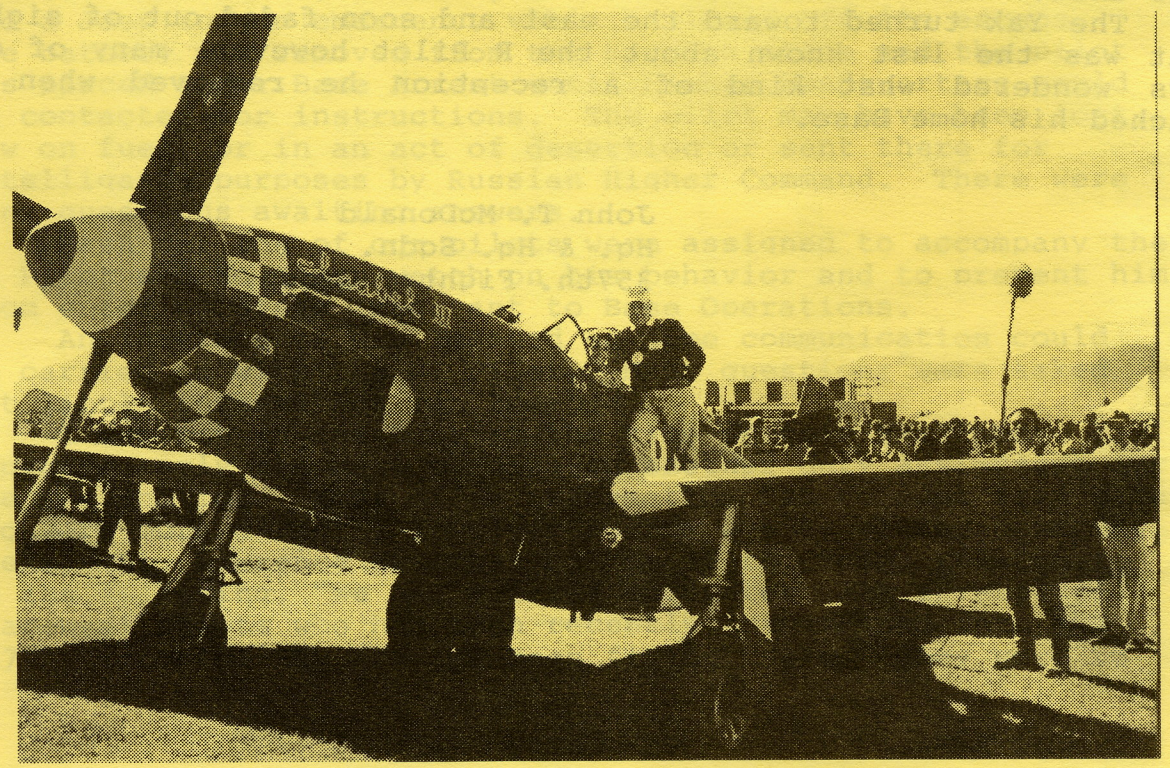
The Yak turned toward the east and soon faded out of sight. That was the last known about the R Pilot however, many of our boys wondered what kind of a reception he received when he reached his home Base.

John T. McDonald
Hq. & Hq. Sqdn.
357th. Fighter Group.



Isabel and Chuck with "Isabel III" a P51 code B6-V as a replica of the aircraft Jack Cleland flew his tour with the 357th Ftr.Grp.

CHUCK YEAGER WAS A GUEST WITH THE CLELAND FAMILY AT THE WANAKA WARBIRDS AIRSHOW AT NEW ZEALAND IN APRIL 1998





Chuck Yeager and Associate Menber Isabel Cleland



Chuck Yeager and the Cleland Family

East Anglian Daily Times, Monday, June 1, 1998 Page 15

Flying veterans pay tribute to comrades

by DAVE LENNARD

A P51 Mustang aircraft flew over a Suffolk town yesterday as local people and veterans gathered to pay tribute to those servicemen and women who lost their lives while serving at the UK's most easterly Second World War airfield.

The flying display over countryside close to Leiston marked the beginning of a moving ceremony which culminated with the dedication of a special memorial to the 357th Fighter Group.

A short service was conducted by the Rev Christine Brooks before the memorial was unveiled by Major General William S Hinton jnr, Commander of the U.S. Third Air Force, Europe.

The United States Air Force also provided a guard of honour while the music was provided by the Leiston Royal British Legion Band.

Among the guests were several veterans who had travelled from the United States to be at the ceremony.

Former Master Sergeant Joe De Shay is secretary of the 357th Fighter Group Association who served at Leiston from December 1943 to July 1945.

"This has been a very special day and it is so nice to see so many people here at the dedication ceremony," he said.



The ceremony marks the culmination of three years' hard work by the Friends of Leiston Airfield under the chairmanship of Peter Saunders, a self-confessed "aircraft nut".

Mr Saunders thanked everyone for making the day possible, including residents of the Cakes and Ale Caravan Park, which is located on part of the old airfield.

Leiston Airfield, or Station 373 as it is more correctly known, had a short but distinguished operational history.

Its construction in 1943 changed the face of the countryside around Leiston and Theberton from a very large tract of woodland hundreds of years old to the arable farmland that exists today.

In 1944 and 1945 it was home to the 357th Fighter Group whose young American pilots flew their P51 Mustangs with skill and valour in support of the daylight bomber offensive.

Such was their effectiveness that they were singled out by the German propaganda machine and were christened "The Yoxford Boys" by Lord Haw Haw. The group counted many aces among their number, including Chuck Jeager who went on, in 1947, to become the first man to fly faster than sound.

LEFT: Former U.S. pilot Don Cocher signs a book for Stephen Clipston, from Cromer

RIGHT: Joe De Shay and Don Cocher, of the 357 Fighter Group, at the Leiston memorial

Photographs: CLIFFORD HICKS



After the close of the Dedication, press photos were taken, autographs signed and the residents took photos of the Yanks. Later everyone retired to the Cakes & Ale where a luncheon was served followed by speeches as indicated on the program. General Hinton gave a good speech that would make you proud.

Joe, Don Kocher and John Roche were presented with a marble like plaque with their name and a Dedication inscription. Pat Buzzeo will receive his later due to last minute plans to attend. After meeting new friends and visiting with others, an EXCEPTIONAL DAY came to an end. The 357th Fighter Group veterans and their spouses who attended the Dedication were treated royally by one and all.

The following week, the Kocher's and the De Shay's vacationed about northeast England with Freda as our driver and Don, the navigator. As the time arrived for departure from England, Peter and Joan Saunders met the four of us at the area of the airbase RAF Mildenhall and transported Joe and Ellen to the Gatwick Airport where we said good-byes.

A MOST ENJOYABLE MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

Joe and Ellen De Shay

AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

Selected Burials

Plot/Row/Gr	Name	Rank	Unit	Cemetery	Date/Death	Ser. No.	Decorations
WOM	BARRETT GEORGE P	1 LT	363 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	14 JUNE45	O-827361	AM/2 OLC
WOM	DELAGER HERMAN H	1 LT	362 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	19 JAN 45	O-826635	AM/5 OLC/
WOM	DORANSKI WARREN J	1 LT	363 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	08 NOV 44	O-812393	AM/2 OLC/ PH
WOM	GALLANT MORRIS E	1 LT	364 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	19 JAN 45	O-826651	AM/4 OLC/
WOM	GRAEFF KENNETH F	1 LT	363 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	15 SEPT44	O-706488	AM PH
WOM	GUTIERREZ SANTIAGO R	2 LT	363 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	29 MAR 44	O-682944	AM PH
G 6 159	HOFFMAN ROBERT R	2 LT	364 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	27 FEB 45	O-810374	
WOM	MC GINLEY WILLIAM R	1 LT	363 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	29 MAR 44	O-743058	AM/OLC/
WOM	NOWLIN LOUIS E	2 LT	363 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	15 SEPT44	O-801895	AM PH
WOM	PERRON DAVIS T	CAPT	362 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	14 OCT 45	O-728720	DFC AM/2 OLC/ PH
WOM	RYDBERG ELMER D	1 LT	362 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	14 OCT 45	O-745519	AM PH
WOM	STRODE JAMES E	1 LT	364 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	27 MAR 44	O-745537	AM PH
B 5 46	THOMPSON WILLIAM B	2 LT	363 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	16 JAN 45	O-719468	PH
WOM	WARREN JACK R	CAPT	364 FTR SQ 357 FTR GP	CAMBRIDGE	02 AUG 45	O-732418	DFC AM/2

The above is a printout of the men of the 357th Fighter Group interned at the Cambridge Cemetery at Madingley, England. Don Kocher requested this on 2 June 1998 as he, his wife Freda and the De Shay's visited the cemetery. Eight days prior on Memorial Day, "Friends" member Fred Church laid the 357th F.G. Wreath during the holiday ceremony. The American Cemetery, the wreaths and the chapel were most impressive.

GATHERING OF EAGLES

You could call it a gathering of eagles
As we pull up our chairs together
We nod and we speak as our old bones creak
And comment on the state of the weather

We are warriors of sorts, every one
Our stories are endless, but true
About our days in the sun, our youth spent in fun
And what happened in World War Two

We have coffee in styrofoam cups
At times, we all talk at once
Some come every day, and a few always stay
Until it's time to go home for lunch

We discuss the state of the nation
And decide what congress should do
About the things we know little about
Except who they should do it to

We refight the battles and drop the bombs
And slog through the mud and the slime
We revisit the hard times of our youth
And solve the problems of welfare and crime

We get around to the state of our health
Before we go home for the day
There is always one who just had a by-pass
We are glad he's back with us to stay

We are thankful for the miracles of medicine
That can patch up our worn out hearts
There always will be a gathering of eagles
As long as we can still find parts

JWF

Hymn:

Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home;

Beneath the shadow of thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her fame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

'High Flight': Reading by Air Training Corps Cadet

Hymn:

God is our strength and refuge,
Our present help in trouble;
And we therefore will not fear,
Though the earth should change!
Though mountains shake and tremble,
Though swirling waters are raging,
God the Lord of Hosts is with us evermore!

There is a flowing river,
Within God's holy city;
God is in the midst of her,
She shall not be moved!
God's help is swiftly given,
Thrones vanish at His presence;
God the Lord of Hosts is with us evermore!

Come, see the works of our Maker,
Learn of his deeds all powerful;
Wars will cease across the world
When He shatters the spear!
Be still and know your creator,
Uplift Him in the nations;
God the Lord of Hosts is with us evermore!

Prayers and Dedication of Memorial;
Major General Hinton to carry out the unveiling.

Wreath Laying Ceremony;
Wreath laid by Major General Hinton and Mr Fred Church.

Silence followed by Taps played by United States Air Force Bugler.

Blessing.

Honor Guard Retires.

3.15 pm (approx) **Cakes & Ale Caravan Park Club House:**

Speeches By:

Mr Tony Errington - Friends of Leiston Airfield.
Major General Hinton - United States Air Force.
Mr Joe De Shay - 357th Fighter Group Association.
Mr Frank Huxley - Chairman of Leiston-Cum-Sizewell Town Council.
Mr Richard White - Chairman of Theberton Parish Council.

3.30 pm (approx) Refreshments whilst Leiston Royal British Legion Band plays.

5 pm Conclusion of the occasion.

Friends of Leiston Airfield

Memorial Dedication & Remembrance Ceremony.

Harrow Lane, Leiston.

2.30 pm.Sunday, 31st May 1998.

Conducted by Rev. Christine Brooks.

Harrow Lane, Leiston.

2 pm	Leiston Royal British Legion Band plays.
2.30 pm	Fly-past & display by a Mustang Aircraft , owned by The Old Flying Machine Company based at Duxford.
2.35 pm (approx)	United States Air Force Honor Guard takes up position on Harrow Lane to the West of Memorial.

National Anthems. United Kingdom then United States of America.

Service of dedication and remembrance.

Hymn:

Fight the good fight with all thy might;
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right,
lay hold on life, and it shall be
thy joy and crown eternally.

Run the straight race through God's good grace,
lift up thine eyes, and seek his face;
life with its way before us lies;
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

Cast care aside, lean on thy guide;
his boundless mercy will provide;
trust, and thy trusting soul shall prove
Christ is its life, and Christ its love.

Faint not nor fear, his arms are near;
he changeth not, and thou art dear;
only believe, and thou shalt see
that Christ is all in all to thee.

Lesson: St. John 15. 9 - 17. Mr Joe De Shay.

Chuck Yeager

Chuck Yeager was born on the 13th February 1923 in West Virginia, USA. As a child he spent most of his time fishing in the river, and shooting wildlife, around his parents farm.

Joining the US 8th Army Air Force in 1941 he was posted after training to the 357th Fighter Squadron - flying the North American P-51D Mustang. During WWII he became famous as a fighter ace, shooting down five aircraft on one mission and in another instance destroying a German Messerschmitt Me-262 jet with the prop driven Mustang.

Becoming a test pilot after the war, Yeager became the first person to fly faster than the speed of sound on 14th October 1947. Flying the Bell X-1 named Glamorous Glenis at a speed of 700mph the flight remained secret for the following two months but finally in late December the news was broken by Aviation News. This was not to be his last record - in 1953 he set a world speed record of 1,650 mph.

During the late 1950's Yeager led a fighter Squadron in Europe before returning to the USA to become Chief Test Pilot on the Lockheed F-104 Starfighter, the first combat fighter to fly at twice the speed of sound.

Chuck Yeager continued as a pilot with the USAF until 1975 when he retired as a Brigadier General.

On the 14th October 1997 history repeated itself when Yeager again broke the sound barrier over Edwards Air Force Base.

On this occasion he was flying a F-15 Eagle - a far cry from the Bell X-1. He continues to fly many types of aircraft, including the Mustang, in his retirement. Chuck Yeager is spending Easter weekend pursuing his main hobby, hunting and fishing, at Lillybank Lodge in South Canterbury.



© Travis Brodie NZFPM



Some highlights of Chuck Yeagers' CAREER

1940s: World War 2 fighter ace; credited with 17 'kills'; one of the few pilots to shoot down a German Me-262 jet fighter.

1947: First person to fly faster than the speed of sound.

1950s: Test pilot work; extended air speed record to mach 2.5; flew defectors Russian Mig (first available to West) for evaluation.

1960s: Commandant astronaut training school; Vietnam war command duties; (including RNZAF Canberra bomber squadron); flew 127 missions; test pilot work.

1970s: Air Force command duties; US defence representative in Pakistan during war with India; retired from active service in 1975, kept on in consultancy role; awarded Congressional medal of honour by President Gerald Ford.

1980s: Continuing consultancy role; served on Challenger space shuttle disaster c ommission of inquiry.

1990s: Continues to fly jets for the US Air Force particularly night work on infra-red systems and stealth technology.

Jack Cleland

The North American P-51D that you will see flying at Warbirds Over Wanaka this Easter is painted in the colour scheme of Flight Lieutenant Jack Cleland - the kiwi who flew with Uncle Sam.

Jack Cleland joined the RNZAF in March 1941 and obtained his flying badge after flying Tiger Moths and Vincents from Harewood and Wood-bourne, in July 1941 and by mid August was qualified as a service pilot - four months from ab initio training to completion of initial training. Posted to the United Kingdom in August 1941, he joined No. 616 Squadron RAF flying Spitfire VI's in June 1942 after being commissioned following a period of advanced training and conversion flying on Miles Masters and Hurricanes.



After nine months with 616 Squadron on channel patrols and forays on escort missions into France, he spent two months in North Africa, a period for which no flying was recorded in his logbook. Returning from Africa by troop ship he met his future wife Isobel, a member of an ENZA group, in Gibraltar. Back in the UK he attended a fighter reconnaissance course at Hawarden in October 1943.

Returning to 616 in December, Jack Cleland was promoted to Flight Lieutenant in March 1944. His experience came to the fore on 12 June 1944 when he attacked two Focke Wulf 190s in his Spitfire VII near Laval, a French airfield being used by the Luftwaffe. His logbook entry reads Destroyed 2 FW 190s. Hit by flak in wing, hood and engine. Baled out 12 miles S/W of Portland Bill. Picked up by A.S.R. launch 15 minutes later.

On the 5th July the New Zealander was attached to a USAAF fighter unit, made his first flight in a 363rd Squadron USAAF Mustang out of Leiston on the 15th and was issued with his "personal" P-51D B6-V on the 21st. In honour to Isobel the aircraft was named Isobel III with two crosses below the cockpit - a reminder of his earlier successes. After a few days escorting B-17s over Germany, he flew an escort mission on 6th August to Danzig before landing at Prryatin in Russia after six hours 45 minutes in the air. On the following day he escorted B-17s from Russia to south east Poland before returning to Prryatin, logging six hours 35 minutes. On the 8th he escorted B-17s from Russia to Ploesti in Rumania before landing at San Severo in Italy after nearly six hours aloft. Two days later he shepherded six Dakotas for five and a half hours flight time to Yugoslavia and return, a flight he noted in his log book as most interesting.

On the 12th August the American fighters escorted more B-17s from Italy to south west France before the Mustangs returned to Leiston after seven and a half hours airborne for the day. The "Russian Shuttle" was complete; six very different days in the life of a New Zealand fighter pilot. A short period of some three weeks followed until early September 1944 on escorts into Germany and sweeps into occupied France strafing trains, trucks, and cars. His last mission with the USAAF unit was a sweep escorting Fortresses to Stuttgart on 5 September.

During Jacks period of flying with the Americans he also met another pilot who was to become the most famous test pilot in the world - Chuck Yeager. Yeager was also attached to the 363rd and the two of them shared missions together.

After a short time back with No. 616, his next posting was an instructional one, to No. 53 OTU at Kirton in Lindsey in October 1944, lasting until mid 1945. He returned to New Zealand in October 1945 with around 250 operational hours logged of 950 hours.

Jack Cleland returned to his pre-war position with MGM, becoming NZ General Manager before leaving in 1953 to set up a Wellington transport company with his wife, today still a family business as Jets Transport. Jack Cleland died in February 1970. We are proud to present Jacks' P-51D to the New Zealand public - the only kiwi fighter pilot known to have flown with the Americans. Attending Warbirds Over Wanaka 1998 is Jacks wife (Isobel) daughter (Allison) and sons (Bruce, Norman and Richard).



© NZ Wings Magazine