

Christchurch P-47 'Razorback' Thunderbolt added to the Heritage Centre models

A new P-47D 'Razorback' model has been added to the aircraft on display, in the Christchurch airfield section, representing the American aircraft based there in the Spring of 1944, in preparation for the D-Day invasion in June 1944. The pilot of this aircraft was Captain Charlie Mohrle, who passed away six years ago, at the age of 92. His aircraft was a P-47D-16-RE, serial number 42-76076, 'Touch of Texas'.



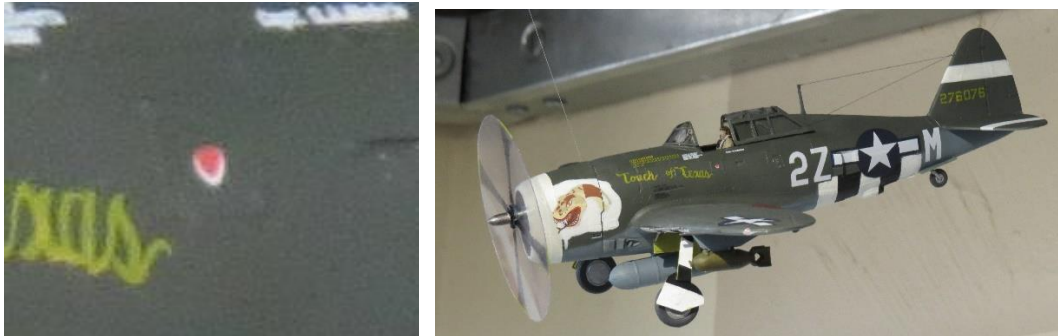
Charlie responded to the attack on Pearl Harbour, aged 21, by volunteering for the US Army Air Corps in February 1942. After completion of basic flight training, he was one of the original pilots assigned to the 510th Fighter Squadron, part of the 405th Fighter Group in South Carolina, which entered combat, based at Christchurch, from March to late June 1944. He completed 97 combat missions flying the P-47 and was a highly decorated pilot, his aircraft being named 'Touch of Texas', after his home State.



Among other recognition, he received the Distinguished Flying Cross and 16 Air Medals. He flew over the beaches of Normandy on D-Day and his Squadron was personally recognised by General George S Patton, for its support of the US Third Army in France.



FONFA member and Poole Vikings Model Club master modeller, Paul Moores, who knew Charlie in his later years, recalls an interesting tale that he told about the little red heart, painted on the port side of his aircraft.



On one occasion, Charlie was strafing a ground target, when his aircraft was hit by small arms fire. The bullet passed through the side of the cockpit and lodged in his parachute backpack, narrowly missing his left arm and hip. The hole was repaired by his ground crew with a small aluminium patch and the red heart painted over the patch.

American pilots were always of officer rank, whereas the RAF had Sergeant pilots as well. As with all his fellow USAAF pilots, his crew chief allowed him to fly the aircraft, always exhorting Charlie to "take good care of my airplane".

In addition to their eight 0.5 inch calibre machine guns, the Christchurch 'Razorback' P-47s were often equipped with two 500 lb bombs and a compressed paper fuel drop tank, as depicted on the model. This enabled them to range far and wide over the Normandy beachhead, in support of the advancing Allied ground troops.

For an interview with Charlie Mohrle and his descriptions of combat experience in 1944, see:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lo_irQ9bjzU&t=110s

Charlie's revelations and personal stories are inspirational, truly humbling, at times humorous, often poignant, but always told in the generous 'matter of fact' style of a true hero. We salute him.