

JAN/FEB

Dakota Territory Air Museum's P-47 Update

by Chuck Cravens









Update

Wing work and fuselage systems installation again took center stage in the restoration effort this month. Much of the fitting of wing parts has been completed and in the coming weeks, the wing will be broken down for internal painting, final riveting, and assembly.

Fuselage Systems

Work on installing various systems in the fuselage continues. A few of the areas worked on in the fuselage were hydraulic lines, tail wheel lock system, and the fuel selector.





























Wings

As wing assembly continues, parts are still being fabricated. Fitting various reinforcement plates related to the gun installation was part of this month's restoration progress. Skin fitting for the leading edge has also been started.



Jacob sands a form for the inner wing trailing edge skin to remove any tooling marks.







Wing Gun Installation Parts



















Here is a closer look at the reinforcement plate. Its purpose is to strengthen the area around the inspection plate openings and the larger circular opening that will hold the landing light assembly (left wing only).

















Southwest Pacific P-47 Combat Tactics

This month I thought it might be interesting to include some pages from an aerial combat tactics manual published by the Fifth Air Force in August of 1945. Margo Prudente, Major Bill Dunham's daughter, generously allowed us to scan this official Army Air Force manual.

The portion of the manual written by Colonel Edwin Doss, Commander of the 35th Fighter Group is reproduced here.

The 35th Fighter Group was the only Fifth Air Force group flying P-47D-23s in combat before very late August/early September according to what is legible in the 5th Air Force squadron history records.

That timeline makes it the most probable group for 42-27609's assignment because



this D-23 arrived in Australia on May 8, 1944 and was taken out of service on September 18, 1944. It is one of the earlier Thunderbolts in the first production run of 800 P-47D-23RAs. The first D-23 is serial number 42-27389, making 42-27609 the 221st P-47D-23RA of that production run.



X



On offensive sweeps the diamond type of squadron formation is flown. A fight always starts in one of two ways, either the squadron goes down to attack, or the squadron is itself attacked, usually from above. The flights should be dispersed to give maximum protection to everyone involved. In the event that there are only a few enemy planes, the squadron leader can dispatch one or two flights to deal with the enemy, the remaining flights taking a position off to one side so that maximum coverage of the fight may be maintained, and too, the flights should be into the sum if possible. In case a large number of enemy planes are sighted a squadron attack should be delivered, provided we have the initial advantage. NEVER start a fight at a disadvantage. After contact is made, a squadron formation is impossible to maintain, whereupon the fighting breaks down into flights, and even further to elements and individual combat. A man fighting alone is at a definite disadvantage and is uncalled for. Every effort should be made to maintain a flight formation at all times.

Flights are many times unavoidably split up, in which case the elements should remain intact, and should attempt to rejoin into a flight formation as soon as possible. The enemy thinks twice before attacking a well formed flight, whereas an individual is always in trouble avoid-



This booklet has been republished (ISBN-10: 1576380645) and also appears to have been used as a source for both Tony Holmes' Twelve to One' V Fighter Command Aces of the Pacific¹ and in the book Fighter Combat Tactics in the Southwest Pacific Area by Ray Merriam².

²Ray Merriam Fighter Combat Tactics in the Southwest Pacific Area, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

ing the energy who invariably "gang up" on the individual fighter. In in-dividual flight combat, full advantage of the airplane must be taken at all times, and combat where the enemy is superior must be avoided. This may seem obvious, but to elucidate, we know that the enemy fighters are much superior in turning, and possess remarkable ability to hang on their props. Our fighters are much superior in high climbs and shallow dives. Below 15,000 feet, the rate of climb at high angle favors the enemy. But our fighters are capable of climbing from 2300 to 3300 ft/min at 200 MPH. For the enemy to maintain the above mentioned rate of climb, his indicated speed must of necessity be in the neighborhood of 150 MPH. Hence we possess a 50 mile speed advantage. In using the speed advantage, and attack is made, the flight pulls away in a high speed climb, then turns about for another attack. It is a great temptation to follow an enemy fighter in a climb, and it is possible to do so for a short distance. Never get below 200 MPH in a climbing combat and in level flight 250 MPH is a good speed which affords a maximum of protection and maneuverability. In combat it is impossible to maintain complete coverage of the area, and usually when a flight or individual gets below 200 MPH, he is setting himself up for some enemy. REMEMBER THAT STEEP ANGLE, LOW SPEED CLIMES ARE NOTHING SHORT OF SHEER SUICIDE. Above 2,000 feet the advantage in climb favors our fighters.

The enemy always attempts to get into circle combat, and this should be avoided. "Fancy" maneuvers, though pretty to watch are invitations to disaster. The enemy does not like to swap head-on passes because of our superior fire-power. Care should be exercised to initiate the breakaway not because of the suicidal intentions of the enemy pilot, but should he be dead, mid-air collisions are likely to result. The breakaway should be effected at high speeds, since the enemy has the ability to whip on to your tail if another attack is attempted before a safe distance out has been reached.

When the flight is attacking the enemy, should he start a severe turn, the lead element will usually break away, thus giving the second element an opportunity to get in a shot, after which it too breaks away, then joins the lead element again. The same is true for wingmen. There are numerous occasions where the wingman can get in the only effective shot. It is a bad policy to press the attack for any length of time, because while being absorbed in making the attack, other enemy fighters may have time to make an attack upon you while you are not looking. It is not considered good policy to sacrifice a great deal of altitude in order to press home an attack, particularly when there are many enemy fighters in the area. There are usually enough enomy fighters on the same flight level to afford plenty of combat. Maintaining altitude is like money in the bank, when you don't have any, you usually wish you did have some. This does not always hold true, but it should be borne in mind.

When the squadron makes an attack, it is desirable if possible, to have one flight hold back for awhile to act as top protection in case hitherto unseen enemy fighters attempt to join in the fight.

When pulling rated power, except in extreme emergencies, the flight leader should allow four inches leeway for the rest of the flight. Experience has shown that to be sufficient for well schooled pilots.

¹ Tony Holmes' Twelve to One' V Fighter Command Aces of the Pacific, Aircraft of the Aces (Book 61), Osprey Publishing; First Edition (April 27, 2004)