



Fall 2025

P-51B SHILLELAGH FALL UPDATE



Dakota Territory Air Museum's P-51 B Mustang

by Chuck Cravens



The fuselage takes shape in the restoration shop.

With many of the internal fuselage surface control systems in place, emphasis turned to the firewall forward section of the fuselage. The wing construction also continued, with more of the skin sections riveted in place permanently. The Merlin engine from Vintage V-12s was uncrated.



www.dakotaterritoryairmuseum.com



Fuselage

The installation of the forward frames that support the cowl, nose ring, and “smile” continued the progress on the firewall forward section of Shillelagh III. Once the framework was in place, fitting of the cowl skins began.



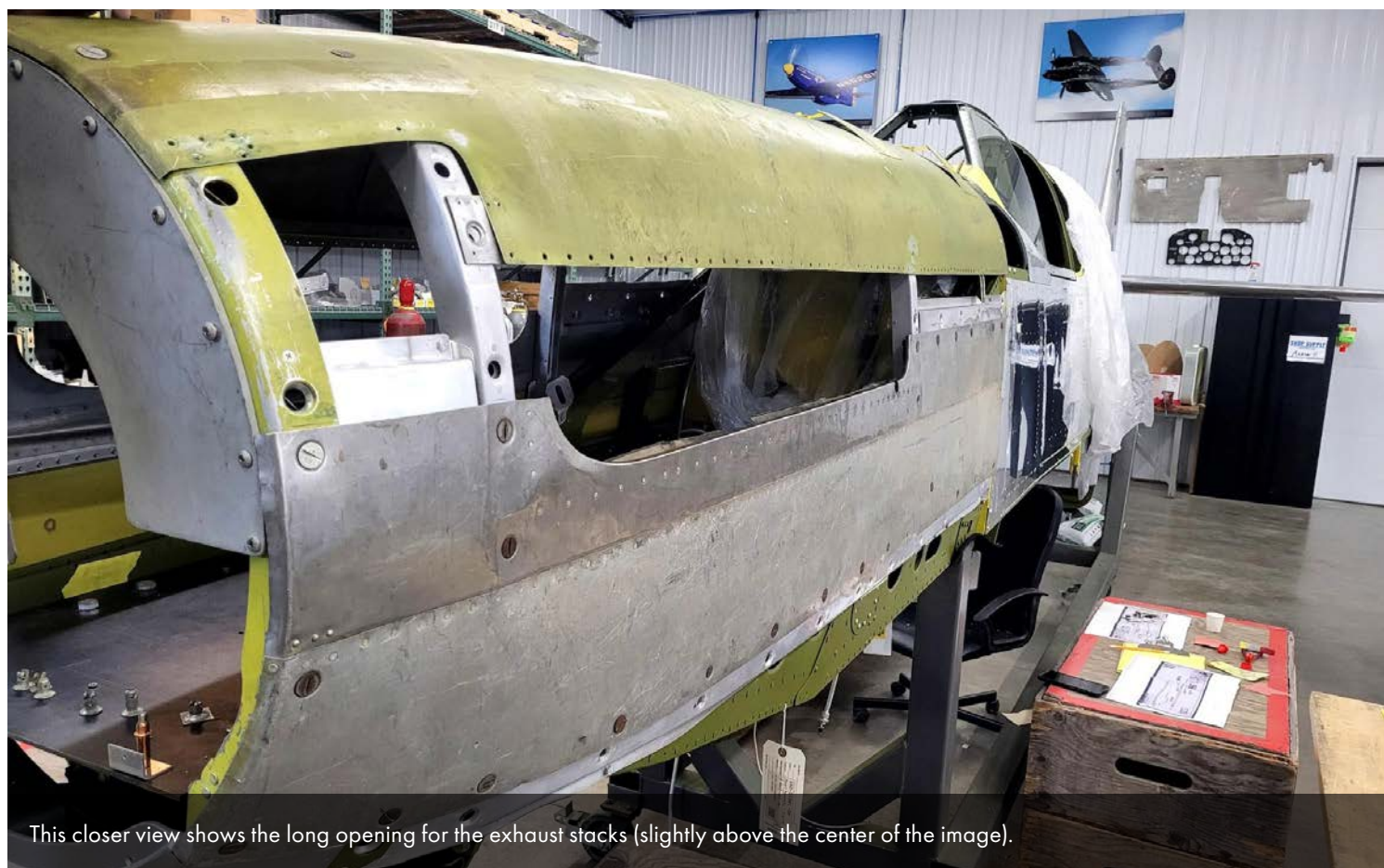
As work began on the firewall forward section, the cowl support formers were installed.



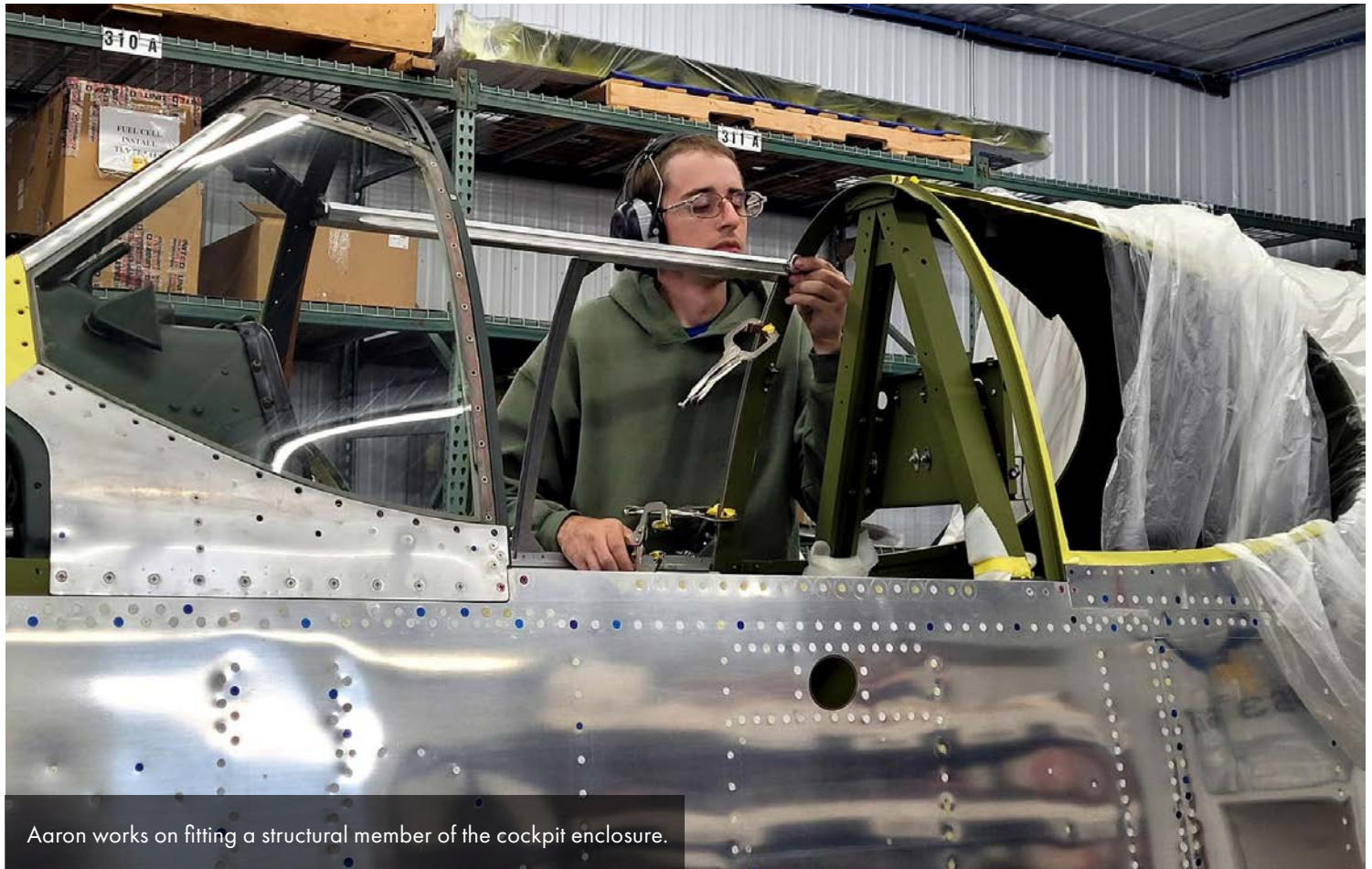
Once the framework was in place, upper cowl skins were fitted.



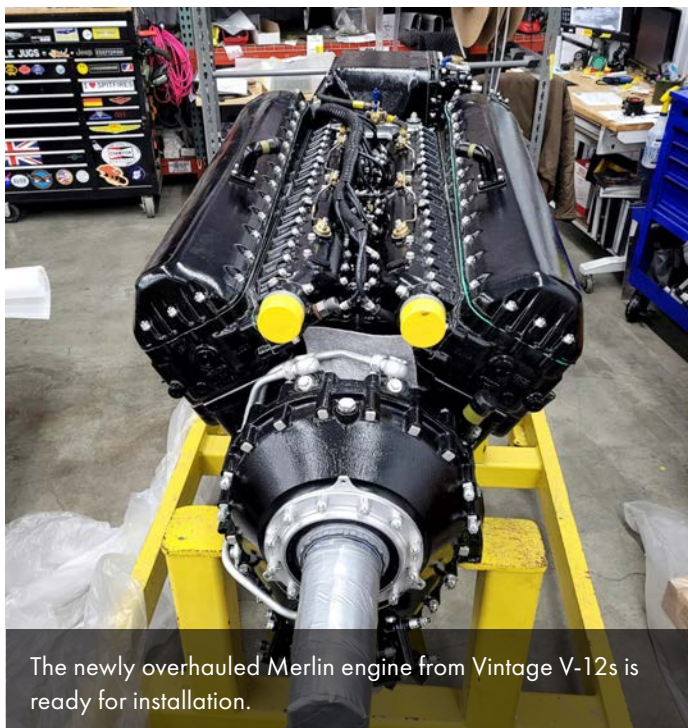
A closer view shows the skin sections, which are serviceable used parts.



This closer view shows the long opening for the exhaust stacks (slightly above the center of the image).



Aaron works on fitting a structural member of the cockpit enclosure.



The newly overhauled Merlin engine from Vintage V-12s is ready for installation.

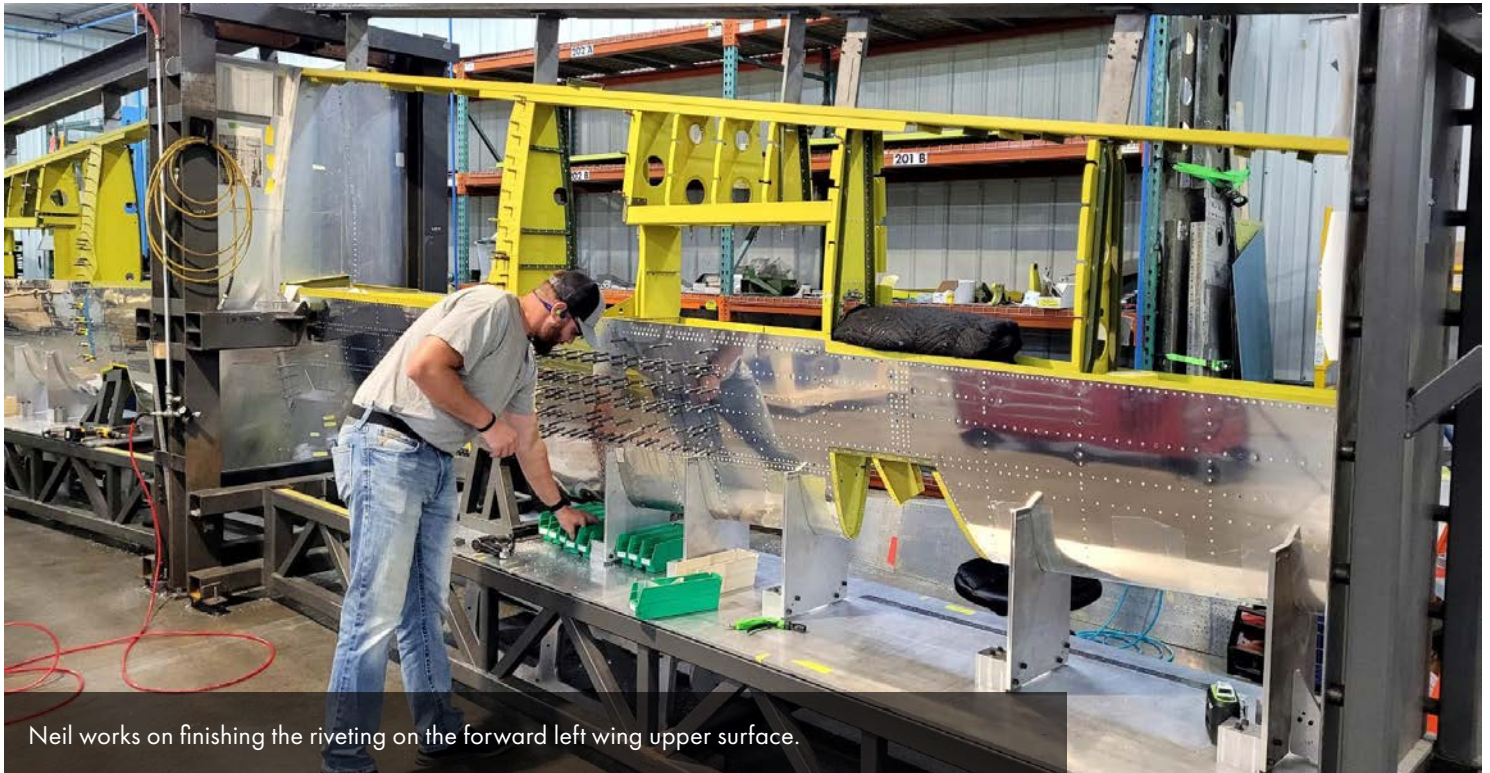


The new engine is a Packard-built Rolls-Royce V-1650-7 Merlin.



Wings

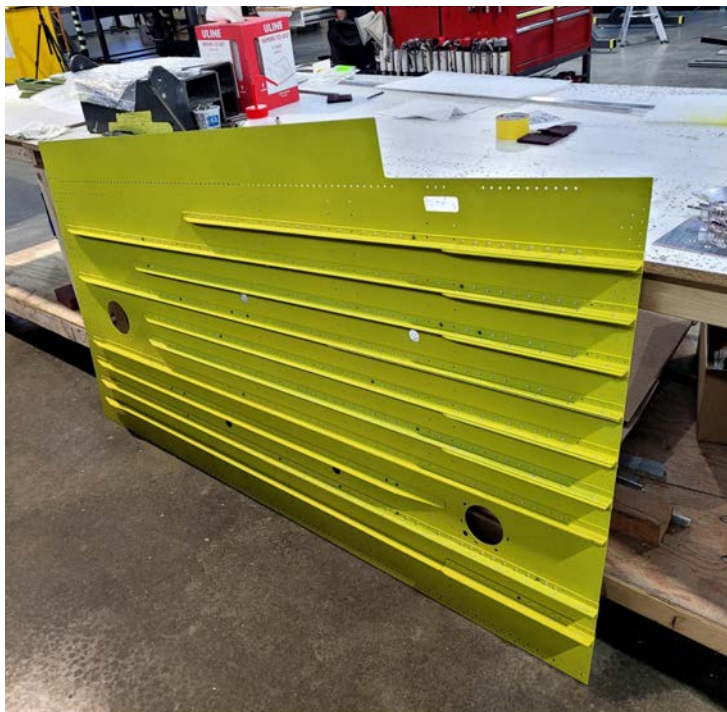
Thousands of rivets secure the skin sections on a P-51 wing. The skins forward of the main spar were permanently riveted in place. The tank cover doors, which are installed under the fuel tanks and provide access, were readied.



Neil works on finishing the riveting on the forward left wing upper surface.



The skin of the right wing from the leading edge back to the forward main spar has been permanently riveted in place.



Both of the tank cover doors are also ready for installation. This is the removable door that allows access to the fuel tanks from the bottom side of the wing.



Jacob is fabricating and forming the leading edge skin with the landing light opening. The P-51A, B, and C Mustangs had this type of landing light in the left wing leading edge. The A-36 Mustang had a slightly wider opening to accommodate two landing lights, and the later D models had retracting landing lights located in the wheel well.



The upper skin over the fuel tanks is permanently riveted in place.



The mechanism shown is the drop tank/bomb release control mechanism. Also visible are fuel lines and control cables that are part of the system.

The growth in contract manufacturing AirCorps performed for the broader aerospace industry allowed the addition of a large scale 3D printer. Those capabilities allow rapid prototyping, verification, and fit checking of complex shapes like the clamshell doors (P/N 73-33301) prior to fabrication. In the photo to the right, the patchwork of printed sections when attached create a full scale landing gear door from our CAD model.



AirCorps is experimenting with 3D printed templates for the clamshell doors.



David O'Hara's & The "Shillelagh" Name

David O'Hara had four different Mustangs assigned to him during WWII, all named Shillelagh, and all spelled differently. The four P-51s all carried the squadron and plane code FT-P; the spellings were variations of the word "shillelagh," - a thick stick of blackthorn or oak used as a weapon in Ireland. The spellings on O'Hara's aircraft were: Shillalah, Shillelaugh, Shillelagh, and The Shillelagh, depending on who painted the name. All four P-51s were lost or damaged while being flown by someone other than David O'Hara.

Shillalah #1:

North American P-51B-5-NA Mustang/43-6388

David O'Hara had four different Mustangs assigned to him during WWII, all named Shillelagh, and all spelled differently. The four P-51s all carried the squadron and plane code FT-P; the spellings were variations of the word "shillelagh," - a thick stick of blackthorn or oak used as a weapon in Ireland. The spellings on O'Hara's aircraft were: Shillalah, Shillelaugh, Shillelagh, and The Shillelagh, depending on who painted the name. All four P-51s were lost or damaged while being flown by someone other than David O'Hara.

- On this Mustang, the name was spelled "Shillalah"
- This was the only O'Hara P-51B that was painted olive drab with gray lower surfaces.
- Model: NA-104
- Construction #: 104-22891
- Delivered to the U.S. Army Air Force on October 1, 1943
- Shipped overseas from Newark, NJ on October 5, 1943
- Assigned to the 354th FG/353rd FS/9th AF.
- Crashed SE of Cambrai, France, due to engine failure on January 14, 1944. (The pilot was believed killed)
- MACR 1810.



Fred Osborne next to David O'Hara's first Shillalah, photo courtesy of Fred's daughter Kathy (Osborne) Brookshire



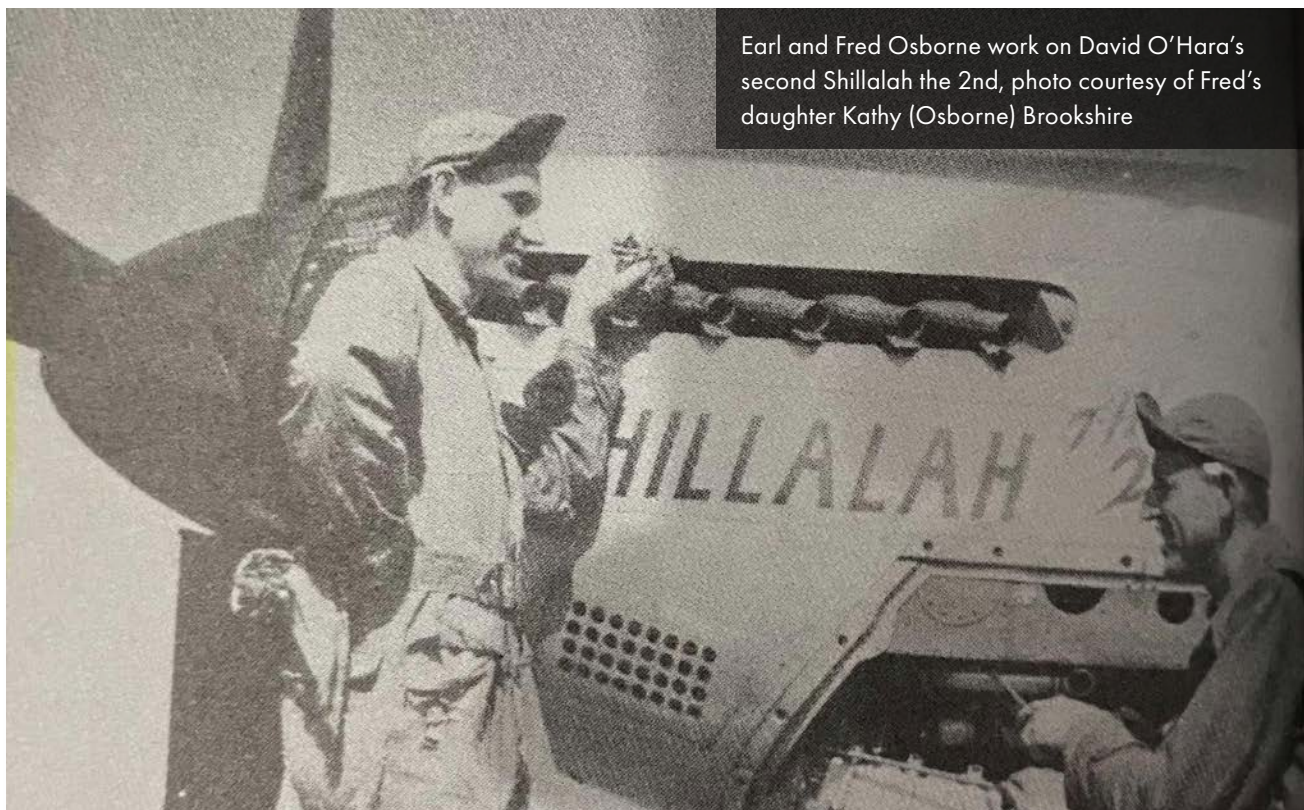
Shillalah #2:

North American P-51B-1-NA Mustang 43-12319

- The name was spelled "Shillalah the 2nd"
- Assigned to the 9Th AF 6-28-1944
- Model: NA-102
- Construction #: 102-24767
- Assigned to the 9Th AF 6-28-1944
- Delivered to the U.S. Army Air Force on July 21, 1943
- Allocated to the Royal Air Force as Mustang III/FX867.
- Returned to USAAF December 28, 1943.
- No RAF service.
- Assigned to 354th FG/353rd FS/9th AF.
- Lost from an unknown cause over Germany on April 11, 1944. (Pilot Brown KIA)
- MACR 3636.



Earl and Fred Osborne work on David O'Hara's second P-51B, Shillalah the 2nd, photo courtesy of Fred's daughter Kathy (Osborne) Brookshire



Earl and Fred Osborne work on David O'Hara's second Shillalah the 2nd, photo courtesy of Fred's daughter Kathy (Osborne) Brookshire



Shillalah #3:

North American P-51B-10NA 42-106602 (The Current Restoration)

Served in 1944 with the 9th AF 354th FG 353rd FS, "Shillelagh" named by Lt. Col. David O'Hara. On 42-106602, the name was first spelled "Shillelaugh" and was later repainted at the depot level as "Shillelagh".

P-51B-10NA 42-106602 FT-P

- (NAA c/n 104-22989; Project Number 90511)
- Accepted at NAA: 31 January 1944
- Delivered to AAF: 23 February 1944
- Arrived at Newark AAF/NJ: 1 March 1944
- Departed US for ETO: 9 March 1944
- Received UK: 22 March 1944
- Assigned to Group: 13 April 1944
- First Combat Mission: 15 April 1944
- Lost: 16 August 1944 with Kenneth H Dahlberg, who bailed out and evaded capture in France. Returned to 354th FG on 27 August 1944. No official Escape & Evasion Report, German J Report, or Missing Air Crew Report filed, meaning that the pilot did report back within 48 hours of being shot down, and most likely was within territory that the Germans would not have undertaken salvage operations.
- The assigned pilot was 1Lt David B O'Hara, O-744743. O'Hara flew a total of 84 combat missions from 20 December 1943 to 8 September 1944, with 48 of those missions being flown in 42-106602, FT-P.
- During O'Hara's combat time in 42-106602, his claims were all for ground strafing on 25 April 1944 and 27 July 1944. Those claims were: 1 destroyed on the ground, and 3 damaged on the ground. Previously, he had a confirmed air-to-air victory over an FW-190 on 8 April 1944, a week before he first flew the third Shillelagh.
- 42-106602 flew its first combat mission on 15 April 1944.
- 19 different pilots in WWII flew "Shillelagh" on 95 missions
- 16 August 1944: piloted by Maj. Ken Dahlberg, when he bailed out after getting hit over France. He was shot down in combat with an estimated 80 Messerschmitt 109s. Dahlberg claimed at least 3 before being hit. Dahlberg bailed out around 10,000 ft.
- 17 August 1944 listed as MIA on the Individual Aircraft Record card
- 42-106602 flew a total of 95 combat missions. During this time period, O'Hara flew a total of 56 combat missions, of which 48 were in 42-106602, FT-P



Bertrand Brown profile of the early paint scheme and nose art for Shillelaugh III



"Shillelagh" in the later paint scheme after early August 1944. Note that this is the color scheme when the aircraft was lost. The markings had been changed, nose art changed, name respelled as Shillelagh, topside invasion stripes removed, nose repainted, and the a/c cleaned up a bit. (photo courtesy of Jack Cook collection)



Bertrand Brown profile of the latter color scheme for Shillelah III after depot-level service and maintenance in the first days of August 1944.



Shillalah #4:

P-51D-5-NA 44-13550

- Named "The Shillelagh"
- Delivered: 23 May 1944
- Departed US: 6 June 1944
- Assigned to 353rd FS, 354th FG, 9th AF in September of 1944
- Landing accident at Orconte airfield A-66 Champagne, Ardenne, France on September 19, 1944. The pilot survived, aircraft was badly damaged.
- Written off charge while still in Europe on May 23, 1946



353rd FS, 354th FG, 9th AF) Damaged in a landing accident at Orconte airfield A-66 Champagne, Ardenne, France, September 19, 1944. Pilot survived, aircraft badly damaged, unknown if repaired.