

# COLORS OF WAR

A FURTHER SELECTION OF RARE WORLD WAR TWO COLOR IMAGES FROM THE CHALLENGE ARCHIVES  
BY MICHAEL O'LEARY



Jack Canary was a field representative for North American and this meant he would be sent to various bases where NAA aircraft were being used in combat. He would assist in the operation of the aircraft and make sure North American would take care of any engineering requirements that the squadrons might need. Jack was also a skilled pilot and photographer. Somehow, he managed to get a supply of Kodachrome film and he took some of the best color photos of the war. NAA F-6C USAAF 42-103506 of the 118th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 23rd Fighter Group, was photographed having its V-1650-3 Merlin run-up before a flight. The photograph was taken at Kweilin, China, during September 1944.

As can be seen, the plane is pretty basic when it comes to markings. The unit's distinctive black lightning markings would not be added until October of that year.



Ready to blast the enemy. NAA P-51C USAAF 43-25185 is parked in a natural revetment prior to its next combat mission. This Jack Canary photo shows the 118th TRS markings prior to advantage. As can be seen, the plane has been fitted with a 1000-pound bomb under each wing. The black lightning bolt was added to the 118th aircraft after they retreated from Kweilin to a rear base area at Chengkung. Carrying the individual aircraft identification number of 586, the Mustang was flown by Lt. Glenn Geyer. On a 20 January 1945 mission, Geyer and 586 were hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire while attacking an airfield. Coolant system damaged, he crash-landed the Mustang and, with the help of Chinese citizens, evaded the enemy for three months and returned to his unit.



Although it would be a while, this photograph shows what was in store for the Luftwaffe. The crew chief of Mustang Mk. I AG550 runs up the Allison V-1710 engine prior to a sweep over the English Channels and the beaches of France. Coded XV\*U, the Mustang was assigned to the Royal Air Force's No. 2 Squadron based at RAF Sawbridgeworth in Hertfordshire. The Mustang was often flown by the squadron's commander, W/Comdr. A.J.W. Geddes. On 26 May 1943, No. 2 Squadron launched ten Mustangs on what was designated Operation *Asphalt*. The weather was very poor as the Mustangs took off from RAF Thrupton for a "Ranger" mission over France. The purpose was an armed reconnaissance and to attack any rail facilities. Over the English countryside, the Mustangs ran into worse weather including a thick bank of sea fog. The aircraft were flying line-abreast and when the leader realized they were going to head into high ground, he yelled for the Mustangs to climb. Throttles went forward and seven Mk. I is pulled out of the fog but three smashed into rising ground. Flying Officer D. Hirst in AG623/XV\*W hit Smedmore Hill in Dorset and the Mustang exploded. Pilot Officer J.B. McLeod in AP210/XV\*Y impacted nearby while F/O N.J. Miller in AG550 crashed and burned a bit further away. The survivors returned to base but a later investigation ruled that the mission should have been cancelled due to the bad weather.