

## **Airwar reenactment of a Zero and the Corsair to be one of the highlights of Fly Iowa Air Show**

**Pacific Airwar reenactment that will be presented during the Fly Iowa Air Show in Clarinda on Sept. 10-11 will have a F4 Corsair and Japanese Zero in a dog fight.**

**By KENT DINNEBIER**

The F4 Corsair Navy Fighter was instrumental in turning the tide in the Pacific Theater for the United States during World War II.

Although 60 years have passed since the Corsair Navy Fighters engaged Japanese Zeros in those historic air battles, the revolutionary American aircraft will be featured in the Pacific Airwar reenactment that will be presented during the Fly Iowa Air Show in Clarinda on Sept. 10-11.

“The Japanese Zeros were extremely effective and very deadly until the Corsair found its way to the Navy Aircraft Carriers and to the jungles of the South Pacific islands. This was the first American fighter to break the 400 mile per hour barrier and was an extremely strong aircraft since it had to withstand the punishment of landing on an aircraft carrier,” Fly Iowa Air Show Coordinator Steve Mowery explained.

During World War II, the Corsair achieved a kill ratio of 11.3 to 1 in the Pacific Theater.

However, the Corsair was originally restricted to land-based marine units, and equipped all United States Marine Corps fighter units in the Pacific in the second half of 1943. The Corsair had been designed as a carrier-based fighter, but initial carrier qualifications had revealed severe problems that prompted the Navy to restrict the aircraft from carrier operations until they could be solved.

The port wing tended to stall before the right when flying a carrier approach, and the stiff landing gear caused a bounce that often flipped the plane over the barriers on the flight deck.

“Quite possibly the hardest thing that any aviator has had to do is land an airplane on the short, moving runway that was the top of our carriers,” Mowery admitted.

But, by the second half of 1944, the problems associated with carrier landings had been solved, and Corsairs were being assigned



to fleet carriers in ever increasing numbers. The F4U had an inverted gull wing, a streamlined fuselage of circular cross-section and a large propeller. The cockpit was set well back, and the restricted view required careful handling by the skilled pilots flying the aircraft.

“It could climb to over 40,000 feet and take on anything the enemy could throw its way. The huge gull wings made it a very distinctive silhouette and likely caused many a Japanese pilot to have sleepless nights anticipating taking on this extraordinary machine in the hands of our highly trained pilots,” Mowery said.

While the vast majority of F4U sorties were flown from land bases, nearly 10,000 sorties were not successfully completed until the Corsair Navy Fighters returned to their aircraft carriers and landed safely.

“After the mission was accomplished, the pilots had to find the carrier, which looked like a postage stamp from altitude, and then try to land on the ship before they ran out of fuel. The carrier would be sailing away from the fighters at a speed of 20 to 30 miles per hour and inevitably the very short deck that was the runway was pitching up and down in the strong ocean waves. Confronting all these obstacles while trying to make it home in a battle damaged plane proves why naval aviators are a special breed,” Mowery said.

As the war continued, the Corsair steadily made the transformation from a fighter to a bomber as there was less and less air opposition from the Japanese. While the Corsair continued to be a very successful air-to-air fighter throughout World War II, an increasingly greater percentage of missions were flown against ground targets during the final year of the war.

Overall there were 12,571 F4U Corsairs built, with Goodyear and

Brewster serving as the primary manufacturers of the aircrafts. The F4 Corsair Navy Fighter that will be on display at the Fly Iowa air show was built in 1947 and was purchased by the Argentina Naval Air Force.

The Commemorative Air Force wing in Galveston, Texas, later purchased and restored the aircraft to perfect condition. The fighter is painted exactly like the Corsair flown by Lt. Guy Bordelon. Lt. Bordelon was the only Ace (five enemy aircraft shot down) the United States had in the Korean War that flew a piston aircraft.

In 1995, the restored F4 Corsair Navy Fighter won Best of Show honors at the national air show in Oshkosh, Wis.