

**MY VERY OWN SPECIAL P-47, 7U-N
BY MORRIS W. MAGNUSON**

Imagine a machine of metal, glass and rubber as something warm, alive, capable to demand, question and complain. A machine demanding the most precise assembly by skilled craftsmen, yet with an unbelievable capacity for punishment-rugged, ever ready and reliable. This was my fighter plane, a P-47 Republic Thunderbolt with the identification numbers 7U-N.

I had been a member of the 23rd Fighter Squadron, a part of the 36th Fighter Group stationed at Ashford, England for six months before I was able to be assigned a plane of my very own, one I could fuss over, polish, and, if I wanted, to paint with my own personal insignia or brand. What a thrill when the squadron commander gave me the word! I immediately dashed out to view this queen of the skies, and ran my eyes lovingly over her length and width. Flashing silver in color, every 41 feet of her wingspan reflected strength and confidence. The fuselage was short and thick signifying great weight, but at the same time radiating a sense of great speed (400 MPH) and climbing ability.

The powerful 2,000 horsepower motor and the huge four-bladed prop gave me the feeling I could point it straight for the noon sun and it would not hesitate one second. I inspected the wide, heavy landing gear and dispelled all worries of dropping her in from 20 feet some dark night. The wheels and shock absorbers were built to take punishment like that. The three bomb carriers—one under each wing and one under the belly—looked business like and efficient as if to say “Watch out, Hitler!”. Protruding slightly out of the leading edge of the wings was the business end of this beauty—the most important part, because, after all, a fighter plane is primarily a gun platform which can be maneuvered to the correct position for destruction. Eight 50 caliber machine guns—four in each wing—looked harmless but had a potential to move a railroad track or riddle a locomotive with but a slight squeeze of the trigger.

I walked around the ship and appraised my ‘office’ (the sleek, bubble canopy) from the front and side. It was a marvel of molded glass, it was half of a streamlined soap bubble blended into the fuselage, and the very latest for an unobstructed view and the ultimate in decreasing drag.

I clambered on a wing and gently slid the canopy back exposing an expanse of instruments and switches. I climb in the cockpit and gratefully wipe off the bullet proof windshield and give the protective steel plate behind the seat a quick inspection ; “glad you are there, my friend!” I unlock the controls and kick the rudders and test the elevators and the ailerons with the stick. The stick is short and sturdy with a molded grip on top with the 50 caliber gun switch and the bomb release button built into it. I slowly climbed down, thinking that the next day I would take a lengthy test hop in it.

As I walk toward the Operations tent some force urged me to turn around and look once more at 7-U N, my plane. I hope I am worthy to be the pilot of this dream of aeronautical engineers!