

FITCH, John C.

B: 4 August 1917 Indianapolis, IN

D: 31 October 2012 Salisbury, CT



"I broke off at a range of about 50 yards and 500 feet of altitude as I was overshooting him. I estimated my speed at 350MPH. As I passed him I noticed a small fire in the left wing root. The E/A crashed and exploded, and the disintegration was so complete that the small pieces burned in a few seconds, leaving only a blackened area on the ground with a ball of black smoke rising from it."

- from John Fitch's combat report of 18 NOV 44, a mission on which he shared in the destruction of an ME-262

Hometown: Riverdale, NY

Rank: Captain

MOS: 1055 - Pilot, single engine fighter

Unit: 335th Fighter Squadron

Aircraft:

P-51D-15-NA 44-15351 WD- *The Phoenix*

4th Service: 10 September 1944 – 20 February 1945

19 DEC 44 Designated Flight Commander B Flight

20 FEB 45 Aircraft struck by flak while strafing a train starting a fire behind the instrument panel. After trying to extinguish the fire for ten minutes he jettisoned the canopy and bailed out at about 2,000 feet. He landed about 50 yard from the wreckage 6 miles SW of Neumarkt.

POW. (MACR 12546)

Victories:

.5 (ME-262 shared w/ Lt. Creamer)

Post 4th Fighter Group:

Discharged from the Air Force upon return to the U.S.

Shortly after the war he embarked upon a long and distinguished career in auto racing. Among his notable achievements are victories at Sebring (the first American to win in an American car), the Grand Prix of Argentina and the Mille Miglia. He was the first captain of the Corvette racing Team and has a Formula 1 victory as well. He retired from racing in 1966.

He also made great contributions to racing (and highway) safety with the invention of the Fitch Barrier - the yellow sand-filled barrels seen protecting highway abutments and guard rails on exit ramps. Fitch himself tested the design.

Decorations

Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal (5 OLC), POW Medal, World War II Victory Medal.