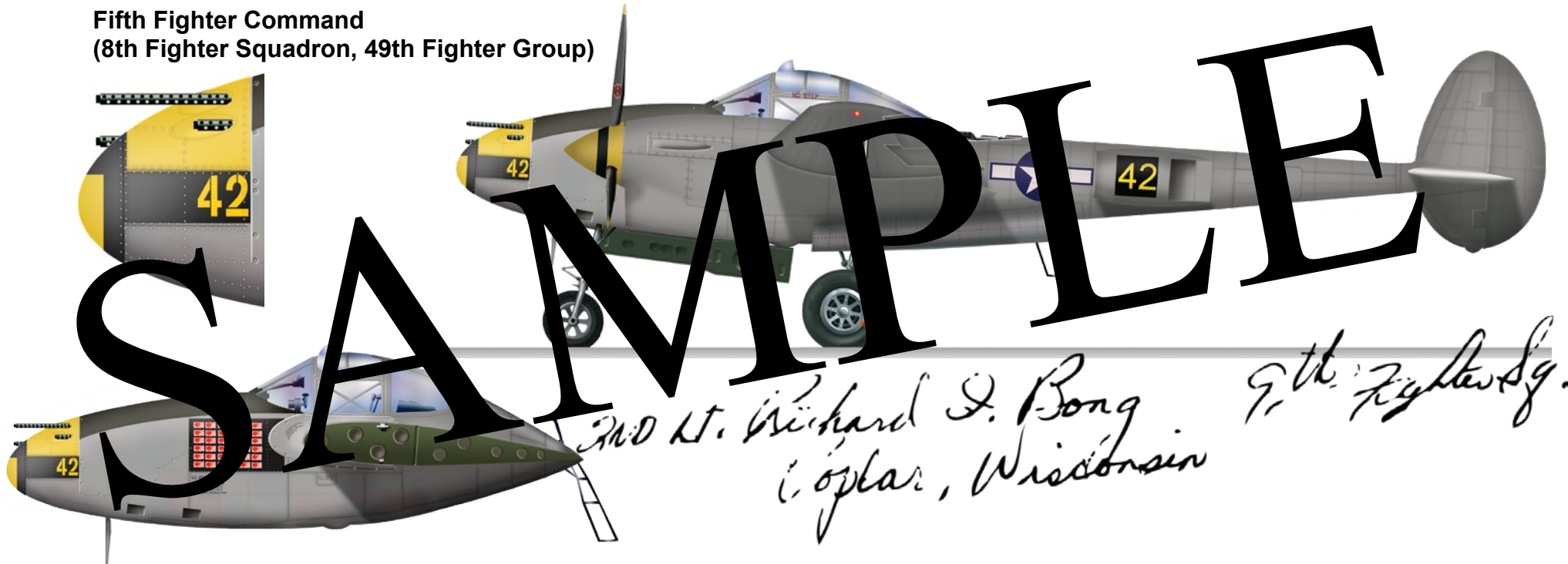


154. P-38L-1-LO serial # 44-23964
Fifth Fighter Command
(8th Fighter Squadron, 49th Fighter Group)



This late-model Lightning was Major Richard Bong's assigned fighter for two months during his attachment to Fifth Fighter Command. Bong returned to the SWPA in late 1944 for a third combat tour, where he was assigned as a gunnery instructor throughout much of the Philippines campaign. The non-combat training role would, in theory, keep him out of harm's way. However, with considerable opportunity to add more kills to his score, Bong asked 49th FG Commanding Officer Lt-Col George Walker to be attached to his old Group, where he had served with the 9th Fighter Squadron.

This Lightning, one of the first L models to be assigned to the Fifth Air Force, was assigned as his personal mount. Bong claimed six kills with this aircraft throughout October/ November 1944, raising his score to 36. The Lightning was destroyed on 28 November 1944 however, under the command of 49th FG Deputy Operations Officer Major John Davis, when it stalled after takeoff from Tacloban. Bong's signature is extracted from the Amberley Officers Mess, where he signed the visitor's log there in 1943, during his first combat tour.