

4. Bell P-39K-1-BE serial # 42-4358
40th Fighter Squadron, 35th Fighter Group



SAMPLE

Only a few K model P-39s served with the Fifth Air Force, the first arriving in December 1942. Assigned to 1/Lt William McDonough, the potent image of fighter Donald Duck appeared only on the starboard nose. McDonough claimed two fighters with this mount on 6 February 1943 during the Battle for Wau, New Guinea, and it is portrayed as it appeared then. This battle arose when the Japanese Army learned that the Okabe Detachment was in desperate circumstances at Wau, and so the Japanese Command decided to bomb the Australians defending the airfield. At 1045 hours, three American C-47As bringing reinforcements entered Wau's circuit area, where they were attacked by Ki-43 Oscars of the 11th Sentai, based out of Malahang, near Lae. Eight 40th FS Airacobras, including McDonough's, and several 40th FG Warhawks engaged 29 Japanese fighters, assigned to escort nine 45th Sentai Ki-48 Lily bombers, then based at Lae. As the Lily's bombs hit Wau's runway, two of the American transports made a quick getaway, and returned to Port Moresby unscathed. However C-47A serial #41-38658, *Early Delivery*, was last seen heading into the mountains. The transport failed to re-appear, presumed shot down, but its wreckage was located 46 years later deep in a blind valley not far from Wau.

The Americans claimed three Lilys and four Oscars from the day's combat, in exchange for one lightly-damaged P-40E. Japanese losses were qualitatively significant, for they included two experienced pilots; 11th Sentai Commanding Officer Major *Katsuji Suguiwa*, and Chutai Commander, Captain *Shigenori Miyabashi*. The other two Japanese pilots lost were *Tomechi Takaga* and *Tetsuo Sato*, whose identity tag was recovered later that afternoon. McDonough's 'Donald Duck' Airacobra was lost in an accident on 1 July 1943, whilst McDonough himself was later killed near Port Moresby on 22 April 1944 during an unsuccessful P-47D bail-out.