



356th Fighter Squadron



P-51 Mustang

Robert Henry Beidleman
Sergeant U.S. Air Force
10 February 1943 – 24 October 1945

Robert was born on 7 November 1923 in Coplay, Pennsylvania. In 1925 his family purchased the Continental Hotel in Macungie, Pennsylvania, where they lived. Robert attended grade school in Macungie, and graduated from Emmaus High school in Emmaus, Pennsylvania, in 1941. He then attended the Joyce Art School of Cosmetology in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and then set up a beauty shop in a room in the hotel which he operated until he was drafted into the Army. He was inducted as a Private on 10 February 1943 in Allentown, and was assigned to the Army Air Force. He underwent training as a Parachute Rigger and Repairman in Chanute, Illinois, after which he was sent to a replacement depot at Hammer Field near Fresno, California, before being assigned to the 356th Fighter Squadron, a unit of the 354th Fighter Group. He later joined his squadron at Portland, Oregon, where they underwent training before relocating to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, a staging area for shipment to the European Theater. They embarked on *H.M.S. Athlone Castle* on 21 October 1943, docked at Liverpool, England, on 3 November 1943, and then deployed to Colchester, England. From there the 354th Fighter Group flew P-51 Mustang aircraft, escorting B-17s on bombing missions over Germany. Four months later, they moved to the small town of Headcorn, southeast of London. Shortly after the Allied invasion of France on 6 June 1944, they began to move to Portsmouth, England, Marshaling Area, where they prepared to cross the English Channel. Robert crossed the Channel in a Landing Ship Tank (LST) to Omaha Beach and immediately moved inland to a steel-mat runway near the town of Criqueville-en-Bassin. Part of his squadron was flown to the airfield runway by C-47 aircraft. The entire squadron assembled there on 3 July 1944. From then on, the Fighter Group followed the Allied push through France into Germany, setting up at new airfields as they advanced. While the Squadron was in the Province of Marne, the Germans conducted a surprise counter-attack in the area between Duren and Trier. Attacks continued daily until the Germans were repulsed. From then on, as soon as a new airfield runway site was selected as the Allies advanced, it would become outdistanced by the rapidly advancing front lines, and a new and closer location would have to be selected. Finally, they moved to Ansbach, Germany, where they remained until the war in Europe ended in early May 1945. Robert did not immediately return home with the squadron, but was assigned to another unit at Camp Lucky Strike at Janville, France, to await shipment to the China-Burma-India Theater in the Pacific. However, the war in the Pacific ended before that occurred, and he returned to the States by ship. He landed at Hampton Roads, Virginia, on 19 October 1945, and proceeded to Fort Meade, Maryland, where he was discharged as a Sergeant on 24 October 1945. He was awarded the Good Conduct Medal, Distinguished Unit Ribbon, and the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal for participation in air offensive operations in the Battles of Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe. Robert returned home to Macungie and, successively, worked there as a Weaver for Macungie Silk Company, and as a Shipper for John Rems & Sons. He later went to work for Air Products, Inc., in Trexlertown, Pennsylvania, as an Inspector for 33 years before retiring. He became a member of the VFW Post 9264 in Macungie. Robert married **Margaret Elizabeth Raedler** (born 14 November 1923) on 16 January 1954 in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. Robert and Margaret made their permanent home Macungie, where they raised their daughter, **Susan Ann**. Robert's parents were **Harry Victor Beidleman Sr.** (12 March 1878 – 12 July 1946) and the former **Gertie Polly Haas** (16 July 1885 – 23 March 1984). Two of Robert's brothers, **Harry Victor Jr.** and **Curtis George**, also served during World War II; Harry in the Army, and Curtis in the Navy.



H.M.S. Athlone Castle