



April 24, 1994 Wyandotte Distinguished Graduate Inductee



John E. Purdy
Class of 1938

John E. Purdy is renowned as one of America's outstanding fighter pilot aces of World War II, who went on to found and operate a multi-million dollar manufacturing corporation in Ohio.

After high school, John began his studies at Wayne State University but was drafted into the Army in 1941. He was accepted into the Army Air Force Cadet Program and graduated from Luke Air Force Base in 1943. Assigned to the Southwest Pacific Theatre, 475th Fighter Group, New Guinea, Captain Purdy flew the Lockheed Lightning P-38. His plane had "Wyandotte, Michigan" and "Lizzie II" inscribed on the nose fuselage.

During his 18 months of service with the 433rd Squadron, 5th Air Force, he flew 184 combat missions. Captain Purdy tallied seven air kills and two probables during his combat service. He survived five crash landings with one behind enemy lines in Cavite Province, Philippine Islands. John spent 16 days with native guerrillas recovering from injuries, before rescue by the air-sea PBY Rescue Team.

Captain John Purdy's military efforts earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters and the Air Medal with 6 Oak Leaf Clusters. Other honors include the Purple Heart, the Unit Citation Ribbon, the Asiatic Pacific Theatre Campaign Ribbon with 4 Bronze Stars, and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with 1 Bronze Star.

In 1947, John founded the Dayton Showcase Company. This multi-million dollar company employs over 250 people and manufactures store fixtures and casework for hospitals, laboratories, schools, universities, and corporate and retail installations. On the 40th anniversary of his Dayton Showcase Company (1987), he turned over the company to his employees on an Employee Stock Ownership Plan.

In addition to his successful career, John served on the Board of Trustees and Board of Nominations for the National Aviation Hall of Fame. He was President of the Board for the American Fighter Aces Association and established the Association's Museum Foundation. In 1993 a completely restored World War II P-38 Fighter Plane, adorned with the historic "Lizzie" and "Wyandotte, Michigan" on the nose fuselage, was preserved in his honor at the Champlin Museum. Historical Images has issued a collector card of American Fighter Aces that highlights Captain Purdy's USAAF military career.