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HOW A MODIFIED MUSTANG WAS USED TO FLY GENERAL DWIGHT EISENHOWER OVER THE D-DAY INVASION AREA

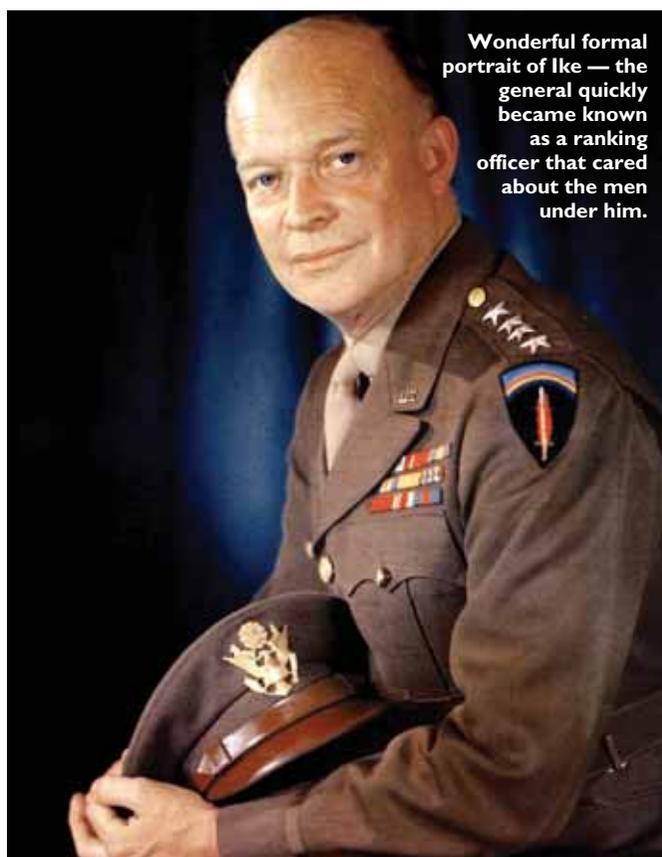
STARS LOOK DOWN

BY STEVE BLAKE

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Late morning, 4 July 1944: The four P-51s taking off from A-2/Criqueville — one of the first Allied airfields established in Normandy after D-Day, a few miles from Omaha Beach — would have attracted little attention if an observer did not know who was in one of them. After all, hundreds of American and British fighters were taking off from such bases in France every day in support of the Allied ground forces liberating that country.

This was, in fact, a very special and unusual mission. It was basically a reconnaissance or, perhaps more accurately, an official sightseeing flight. What *made* it special were the occupants of



Wonderful formal portrait of Ike — the general quickly became known as a ranking officer that cared about the men under him.



Shortly after its 4 July flight 43-6877 was given a new name and paint job. Later that month Capt. Wallace M. "Wally" Emmer, a 353rd Squadron flight leader and one of the 354th Group's top-scoring pilots (on the left), took USAAF photographer Capt. A.R. Madsen on another flight over St. Lô in this plane. On 9 August 1944, the day he assumed command of his squadron, Capt. Emmer's Mustang was shot down by AA fire while he was strafing an airfield in France, and he bailed out and was taken prisoner. By then he had been officially credited with 14 aerial victories. Sadly, he died while in German captivity.

Generals Eisenhower and Quesada are about to begin their 4th of July adventure — a reconnaissance of the lines near St. Lô, France.



one of the Mustangs, a modified two-seat aircraft that was being escorted by the other three — namely two American general officers. The pilot was 40-year-old Major General (two-star) Elwood R. "Pete" Quesada, Commanding Officer of the Ninth Air Force's IX Fighter Command, and his passenger was four-star General Dwight D. "Ike" Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe.

After the Cherbourg peninsula was secured at the end of June, the Allied armies began breaking out of Normandy to the south and east, but soon encountered difficult terrain that heavily favored the defenders, poor weather that hindered their air support, and stiffer than expected German resistance. By 4 July, the offensive had stalled, and Allied military leaders wanted to know why.

General Eisenhower decided to take a closer look at the situation from the air. He specifically wanted to check out the area around St. Lô, where American forces were being held up. The 354th Fighter Group at A-2 was chosen to handle that important assignment. On the 3rd, Maj. Richard E. Turner, CO of the Group's 356th Fighter Squadron and a ten-victory ace, was called to 354th Group headquar-