

THE 4TH FIGHTER GROUP'S COLONEL  
DON BLAKESLEE WAS PERHAPS  
THE GREATEST MUSTANG  
COMMANDER OF THE  
SECOND WORLD WAR

# BLAKESLEEWAFFE

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One of the best-known  
WWII Mustang photos,  
this view captures Col.  
Blakeslee in all his  
steely-eyed  
determination.



Watching for leaks while listening to the Merlin, a crew chief gets ready to wave his 4th FG P-51D off on a long-range mission. Note the paper tanks.

**B**lakesleewaffe — rather a strange name for a group of World War Two American fighter pilots, but when you think about when the term was created, the description really fits. It was early 1944 and for over a year Col. Donald Blakeslee, Commander of the 4th Fighter Group, 8th Air Force, who had flown for the British prior to America's entry into the war with the all-volunteer American Eagle Squadron, was



Pilot Officer Don Blakeslee climbing into a Spitfire Mk. V while serving with No. 401 Canadian Squadron, RAF, during the spring of 1942.

making a name for himself and his pilots. After he and several others had formed the nucleus of the newly created 4th Fighter Group in August 1942, flying Supermarine Spitfires, they gradually began transitioning to American-made aircraft — Republic P-47 Thunderbolts in the spring of 1943 and NAA P-51 Mustangs in the spring of 1944. When these American volunteers



Don Blakeslee in his RAF Eagle Squadron days.

The P-47 Thunderbolt served the 4th well, but it was the Mustang that made them famous. P-47D 42-8619 QP\*O *Man Made Monster* had flown with Lt. George N. Ables of the 351st FS as that pilot's third *Lonesome Polecat*. By the time the photo was taken, it had been declared "WW" — War Weary.

