

#24 Any Landing You Walk Away from is a Good One



The Vought Corsair was just one of the many planes built in Stratford.

To make room for its engine and propeller production in East Hartford, United Aircraft Corp., sent its navy airplane maker down to Stratford in early 1939, to share a factory with its flying boat division. Sikorsky and Chance Vought became Vought-Sikorsky Aircraft. When Chance Vought Aircraft came to Stratford it brought with the production of its first monoplane, the SB2U3-3 scout and dive bomber. The SB2u Vindicator played an important role in turning back the Japanese at Midway in 1942. The OS2U Kingfisher was a sturdy workhorse, rugged and dependable and versatile with use as a scout, anti-submarine and rescue aircraft. The pride of the plant and the town was the Vought Corsair.

The Day after Pearl Harbor, the federal government took over the airport in Stratford. All civilian planes were stored or dismantled. A steady stream of fighter aircraft came and went with residents seeing P-47s, Curtiss P-40s, Lockheed p-38s, Bell P-39s, and occasional B-25s.

The 56th Fighter Group, among the first military units at the airport, arrived on July 7 1942. They began their combat training with P-47s adopting the motto "Beware the Thunderbolt." At year's end the group moved to England for assignment to the 8th Air Force. They entered combat on April 13, 1943, and in the next two years destroyed more enemy aircraft in aerial combat than any other 8th Air Force unit.