
PROFILE

Fisher P-75 Eagle



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by Nico Braas

XP-75A no. 44-32162 was the second of the six improved XP-75A prototypes



This side view of the final P-75A no. 44-44551 clearly shows the differences with the XP-75A.

Being an official U.S. Air Force photograph, this one was most likely also taken by A.A.C. photographer mr. Veselenak.



Don Berlin, chief engineer at Curtiss left this company in the early forties to accept a new job as chief-designer of the recently formed Fisher Body Division of General Motors. The first design of this new company was for a new fast-climbing fighter plane, fitted with the most powerful engine available at that time, the Allison V-3420 of 2600 hp. The new V-3240 engine was in fact a double version of

the already existing V-1710 with a mutual transmission box for the propeller. It was no coincidence that the Allison works were also part of General Motors! What Berlin had in mind was an aircraft that used as many parts as possible from already existing types. For the new fighter, Berlin wanted to use the tail section of the Douglas Dauntless diver bomber, the outside wing panels of the P-51

Mustang and the wing centre section from the Corsair fighter. Later, this was changed to the wing centre section of the P-40. Advantage was, that not only costs could be kept low, but also production time! The new fighter received the type designation P-75. As name, Eagle was selected. The first thing notable for the Eagle were its large dimensions for a fighter. The double Allison engine was placed in the fuselage centre section after the cockpit. With an extension shaft, it drove two contra-rotating three-blade propellers. Just as has been done in the Bell Airacobra, the extra space in the nose was used to house the armament and ammunition. Instead of a large calibre cannon as used in the Airacobra, the Eagle's nose was fitted with four standard 'Point-Fifty' machine guns. An additional six guns of the same type were grouped in three in each wing. In September 1942, the final design was submitted. After inspection of a full scale mock-up, the Army Air Corps placed on 10 October of the same year an order for two prototypes which received

Technical details (XP-75):

Power plant: Allison V-3470-23 24-cylinder liquid-cooled in-line engine of 2600 hp

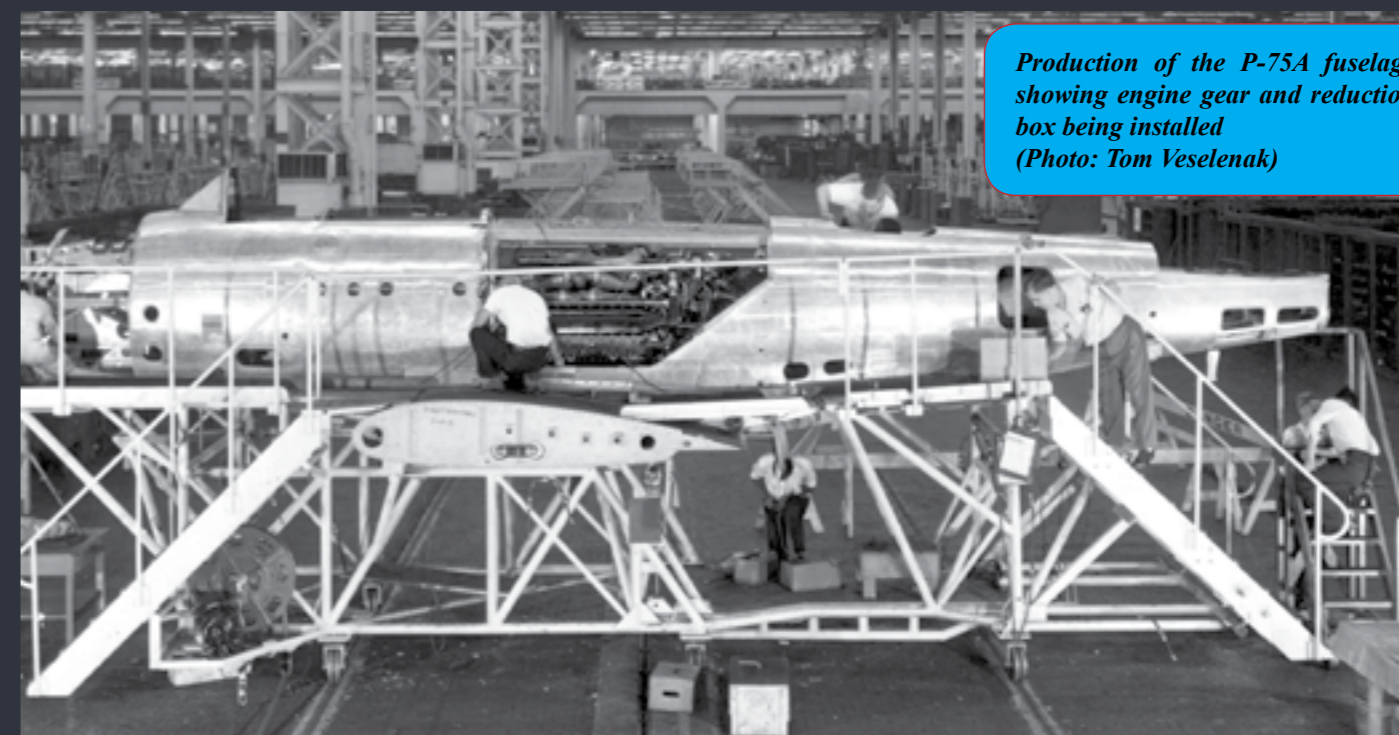
Sizes: wingspan 15.04 m
length 12.32 m
height 4.72 m
wing area 32.24 m²

Weights: empty weight 5214 kg
loaded weight 6263 kg (maximal 8809 kg)

Performances: max. speed 697 km/h at 6069 m
service ceiling 11,095 m
range 3300 km on internal fuel supply

Armament: four 12.7 mm machine guns in the nose and six 12.7 mm machine guns in the wings. Under the wings, there were two hard points for two 227 kg bombs or extra fuel tanks.

Accommodation: pilot only

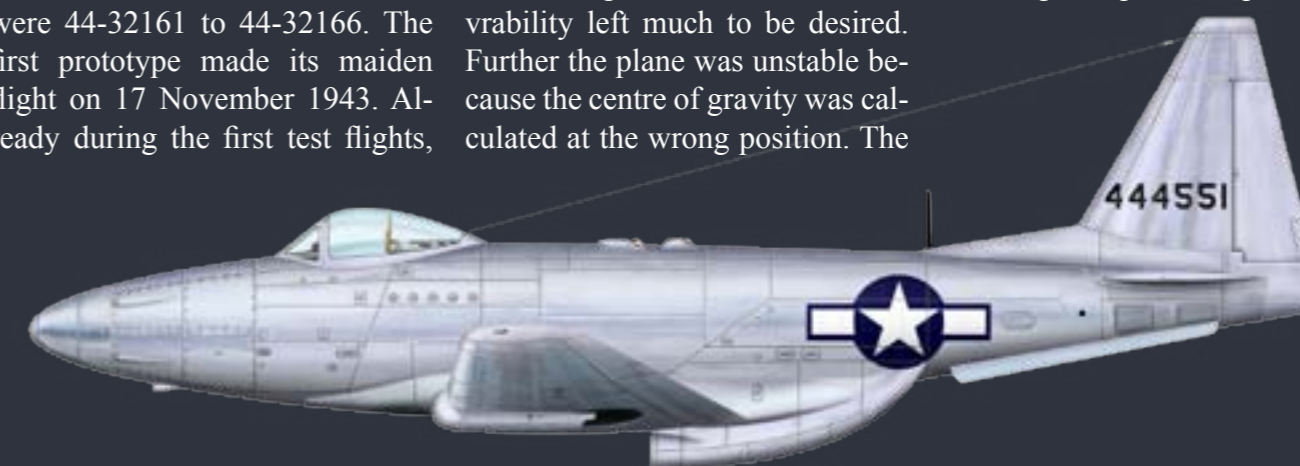


Production of the P-75A fuselage showing engine gear and reduction box being installed (Photo: Tom Veselenak)

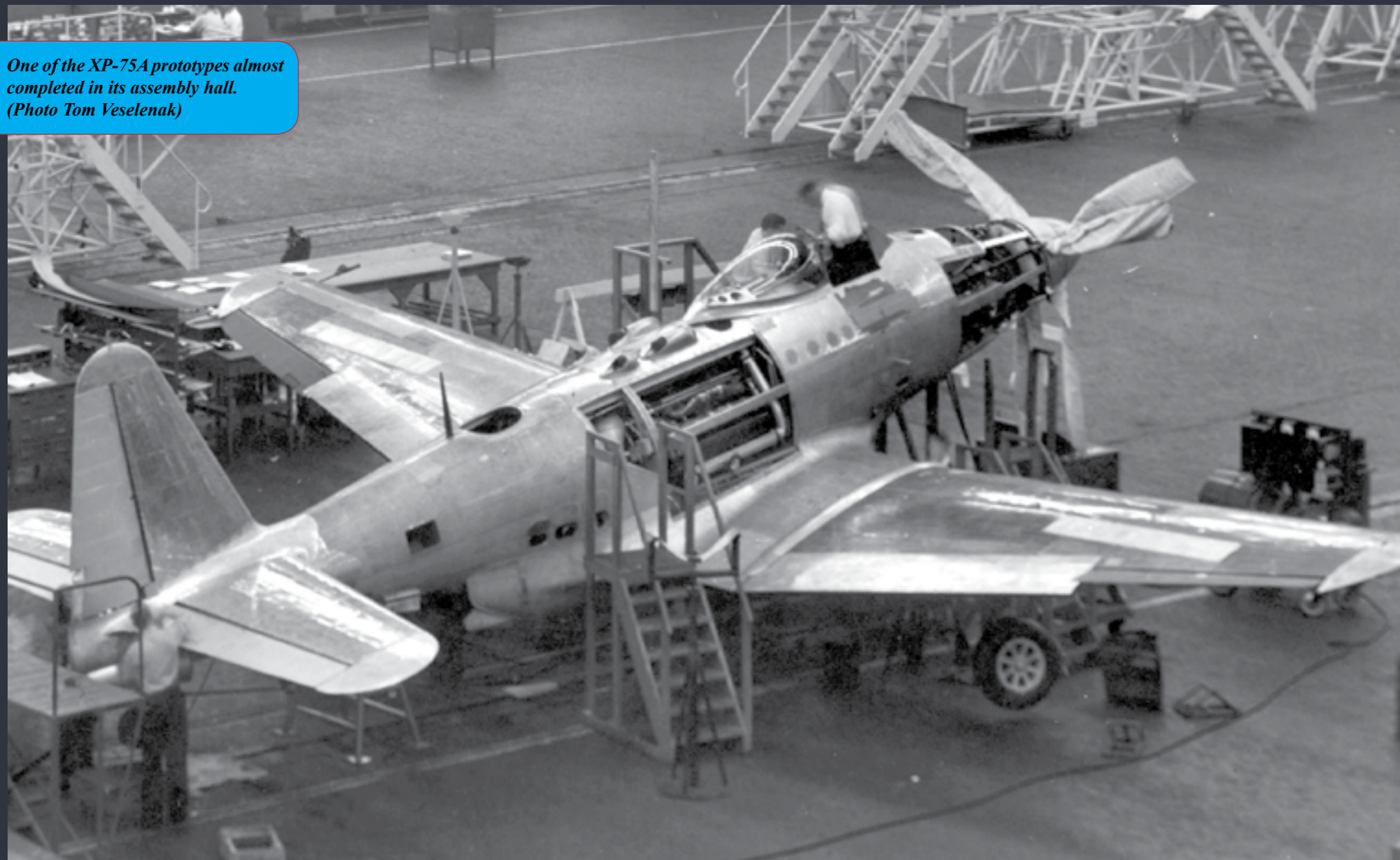
the serial numbers 43-46950 and 43-46951 and an additional six pre-production P-75's for operational evaluation. The assigned serial numbers for these machines were 44-32161 to 44-32166. The first prototype made its maiden flight on 17 November 1943. Already during the first test flights,

it became evident that the calculated performances could not be met, largely caused by cooling and transmission problems with the V-3420 engine. Also the manoeuvrability left much to be desired. Further the plane was unstable because the centre of gravity was calculated at the wrong position. The

team at Fisher worked 24 hours a day to solve all problems. The second prototype, no.43-46951, flew six weeks after the first XP-75. The edge-shaped cockpit canopy



One of the XP-75A prototypes almost completed in its assembly hall. (Photo Tom Veselenak)



of the first XP-75 was found to be unsatisfactory. At the second prototype it was replaced by a normal canopy. However, the Army Air Corps had meanwhile changed the original specifications for an interceptor for those of a long-range escort fighter. This was necessitated since none of the existing fighters was capable to escort U.S. bombers during the whole time of their mission over Germany. This meant for the pre-production P-75 quite a lot of changes for the six machines already ordered and they were redesignated as P-75A. Main visual differences of the P-75A with the earlier prototypes were a drastically enlarged vertical fin and a clear bubble cockpit canopy. When all

problems were more or less solved, this resulted in an initial order of 2500. However, from operational fighter units fighting over Europe, pilots objected against the heavy and cumbersome new fighter. After it was flown by one of them, Col. Mark E. Bradley, they advised to stop the production of the P-75A since it was found to be totally unsuitable to act against the far more agile German fighters in spite of its high top speed. Instead, the fighter groups favoured the latest long-range version of the P-51 Mustang with an additional internal fuel tank behind the cockpit. Finally, the Army Air Corps decided to select the improved version of the Mustang as standard escort fighter and



This is what was left of XP-75A no. 44-32161 after it crashed. This photo was, like the others credited to his name, taken by mr. Veselenak, an official A.A.F. photographer. Tom Veselenak. was so friendly to provide these images taken by his father!



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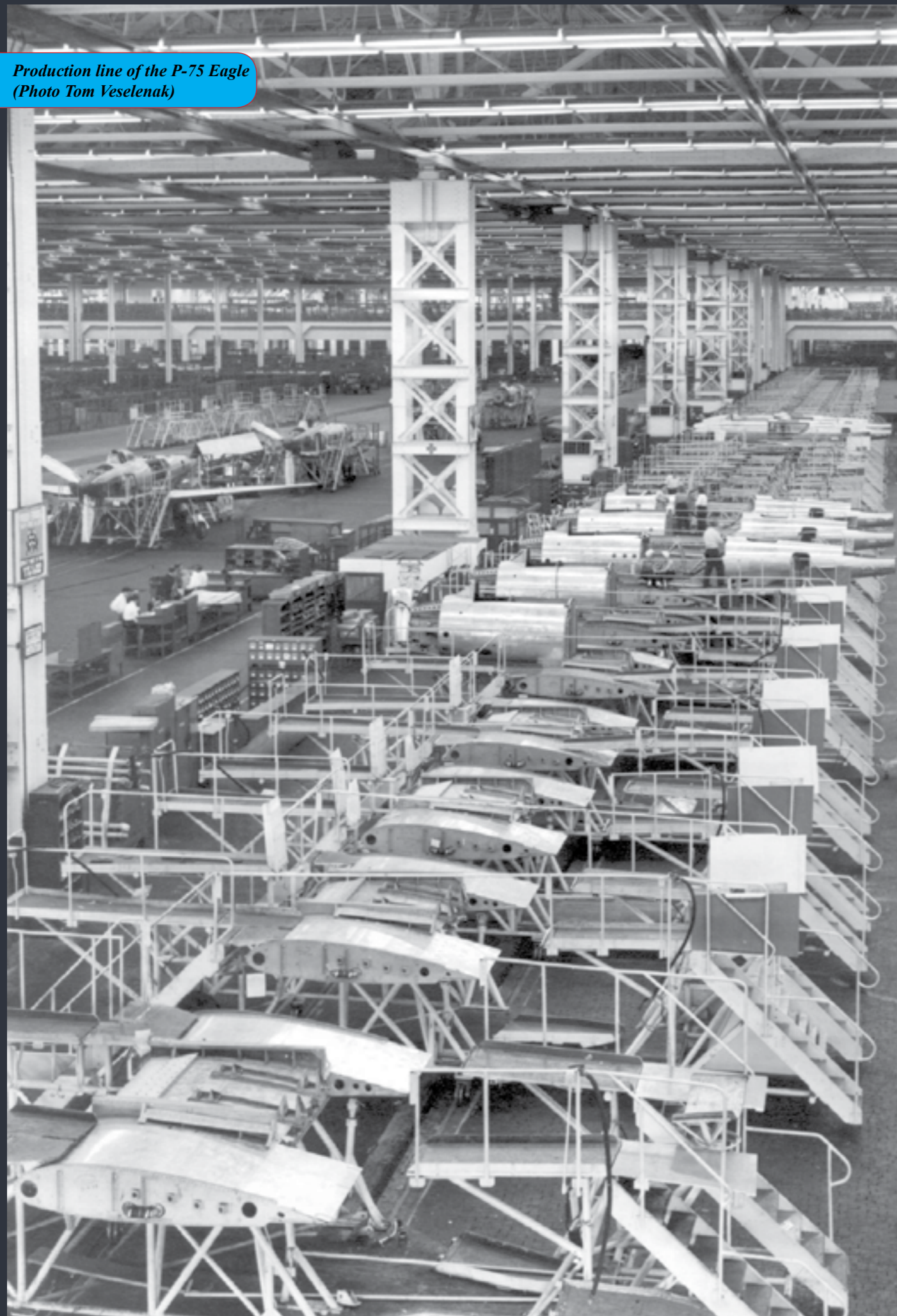
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Production line of the P-75 Eagle
(Photo Tom Veselenak)

In flight shot of the highly polished P-75A production type no. 44-44550. (U.S. Air Force photo)



the big order for the 2500 P-75A's was cancelled. In total, only five P-75A's were completed (with serial numbers 44-44549 to 44-44553). A sixth P-75A with serial number 44-44554 was never completed. The five P-75A's were put to the disposal of the Allison company for further development of their V-3420 engine. Because the P-75 was eventually never produced in large numbers and because the big V-3420 'Double Allison' also failed to gain orders, these aircraft did not log many flight hours.

References:

- William Green, *The Fisher Eagle -They didn't quite no. 4*, Air Pictorial, July 1959
- William Green, *War Planes of the Second World War - Volume 4 Fighters*, Macdonald, U.K., 1961

Remarks:

- The P-75 type number was said to be designated on the explicit request of General Motors where they wanted to have a nice 'round' number for their new fighter. As a result, the P-73 and P-74 numbers were never assigned!
- One of the P-75 pre-production machines, no 44-32161, crashed; most likely because of airframe structural failure.
- During the war much publicity was given around the P-75 Eagle as the new American 'Wonder Fighter'!
- Only one P-75A was preserved,; the last one built that actually flew, no. 44-44553. It is now part of the spare collection of the National Air and Space Museum at Silver Hill.

- drawings **YES**
- color art **YES**
- model builds **YES**

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