

R.A.F. P-38

SOME P-38 ENTHUSIASTS MAY NOT BE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THE LIGHTNING WAS REJECTED BY THE R.A.F. AS UNSUITABLE FOR ITS ORIGINAL ROLE AS A HIGH ALTITUDE FIGHTER. THE THREE PLANES THAT WERE DELIVERED TO THE R.A.F. FOR TESTING PURPOSES IN EARLY 1942 WERE TECHNICALLY LOCKHEED MODEL 322's (BASICALLY P-38 E's WITH MECHANICAL INSTEAD OF TURBO-SUPERCHARGERS). THESE WERE EQUIPPED WITH THE EARLY V-1710-C15 ENGINES WHICH DEVELOPED ONLY 1090 H.P. ALSO THE R.A.F. REMOVED THE COUNTER-ROTATING PROPELLER SYSTEM, AGAINST THE ADVICE OF LOCKHEED, THE MODEL 322's BECAME KNOWN AS THE "CASTRATED LIGHTNING". ONE GOOD THING THAT CAME OUT OF ALL THIS WAS THE R.A.F.'S SELECTION OF THE NAME "LIGHTNING" FROM A LIST SUGGESTED BY LOCKHEED. HAPPILY THE USAAF WAS QUICK TO ADOPT THE NAME ITSELF. THE ORIGINAL NAME INTENDED TO BE USED BY LOCKHEED WAS "ATLANTA" (SORRY ALL YOU GEORGIA MEMBERS). DURING ITS TWO YEARS WITH THE R.A.F. IT PERFORMED VALUABLE SERVICE AND PROVIDED A UNIQUE, THOUGH OBSCURE, CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF THE LOCKHEED "LIGHTNING".

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