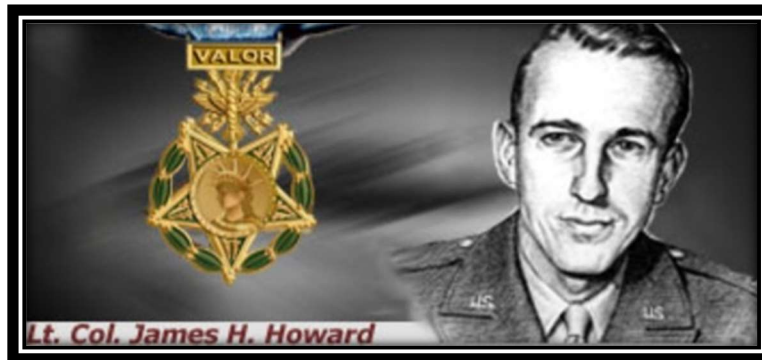


**A LONE UNIDENTIFIED P-51 MUSTANG PILOT HELD OFF
30 NAZI FIGHTERS FROM ATTACKING A SQUADRON OF
B-17'S FOR OVER HALF AN HOUR**

HE WAS THE ONLY FIGHTER PILOT IN THE EUROPEAN OPERATION TO RECEIVE THE MEDAL OF HONOR

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There were a lot of heroes who emerged from World War II: soldiers, pilots, sailors, and more. One of them - James Howard - wasn't even born on American soil, but with his inestimable bravery, he was awarded the Medal of Honor. **He was the only fighter pilot in the European Operation to receive that distinction.**

Howard was born in 1913, in China. He lived there until he was 14 at which point he returned to America to attend school.

In 1938, he joined the Navy and was sent aboard the USS Enterprise as an aviator. He stayed there for three years.



Major James H. Howard

In 1941, he joined the Flying Tigers in Burma, part of the American Volunteer Group (AVG). During his service, he shot down 6 Japanese planes and participated in 56 missions.



The First American Volunteer Group (AVG) of the Chinese Air Force in 1941-1942, nicknamed the Flying Tigers.

So far, it was a career that would make any man proud.



3rd Squadron Hell's Angels, Flying Tigers, over China, photographed in 1942 by AVG pilot Robert T. Smith

But Howard was not just “any man.” When the Flying Tigers disbanded, Howard briefly returned stateside, but soon got restless. He decided to sign up with the U.S. Army.



North American P-51B-5 Mustang (serial 43-6315) Ding Hao, flown by Major James H. Howard (in the cockpit), commander of the 356th Fighter Squadron, March 1944. He would go on to be awarded the Medal of Honor, in June 1944.

Howard was given a new plane to fly, the P-51 Mustang. Because of its advancements, including a larger fuel tank and a more capable engine, the P-51 helped crews increase their odds of getting safely out of the enemy's line of fire. Howard was one of the first fighter pilots to be given the new aircraft.

In January 1943, Howard and other airmen were sent to Germany with the express mission of destroying Oschersleben & Halberstadt, one of the country's most important aircraft manufacturers.

The manufacturer was located about 100 miles southwest of Berlin.

On his way, Howard saw more than two dozen Luftwaffe planes descending on and attacking several Flying Fortress bombers. He was not about just to fly by and leave his comrades to their own devices — if he could help, he would.



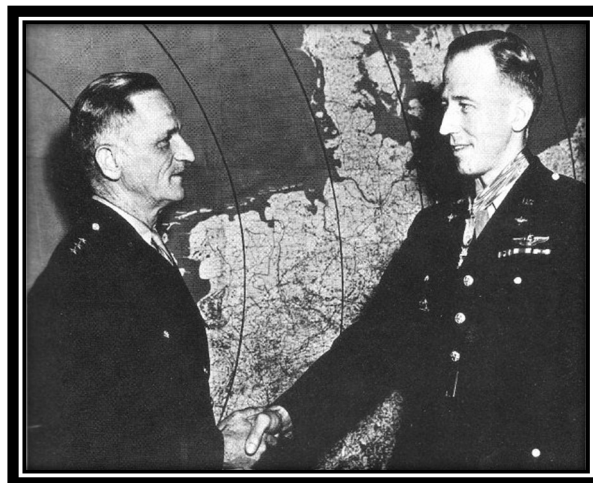
B-17 Flying Fortress Bombers 384th Bomb Group

Though Howard was on his own, he attacked. Over the next 30 minutes, he destroyed six of the fabled German aircraft by himself.

Finally, he ran out of ammunition but continued to fly at the enemy planes. He buzzed around them like some kind of pesky, deadly fly, while the other Allied planes got safely out of range.

When the bombers got back home, they told everyone about the sole fighter pilot in the Mustang P-51 who stubbornly refused to leave their sides.

By the end of Howard's service, he had achieved the rank of Brigadier General and had won many citations and honors. But it was the story behind the Medal of Honor that earned him a place in military lore.



Howard received the Medal of Honor from Lieutenant General Carl Spaatz.

One airman with whom Howard flew that famous day in 1944 described the episode as follows:

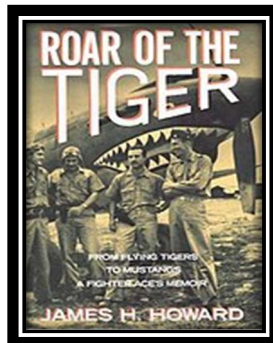
"For sheer determination and guts, it was the greatest exhibition I've ever seen. It was a case of what seemed to be one lone American against the entire Luftwaffe... they can't give that boy a big enough award."

Howard became a media sensation. His profile and war exploits were featured on CBS News and in *The Saturday Evening Post* is among the other prominent publications of the day.



After the war, he had a long and distinguished career, but nothing could match that heroic stunt from 1943 when he decided that his fellow Air Force pilots were not going to die that day. Not if he could do something about it.

In the 1970s, Howard retired to Belleair Bluffs in Pinellas County, Florida. In 1991, he wrote an autobiography, ***Roar of the Tiger***, chiefly devoted to his wartime experiences.



On January 27, 1995, Howard made his last public appearance when he was guest of honor at the annual banquet of the West Central Florida Council of the Boy Scouts of America, in Clearwater, Florida. ***He died six weeks later at the nearby Bay Pines Veterans Hospital and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery, survived by two sisters.***

Howard flew into the midst of that melee in the sky, and in doing so, ensured that he - and all those other airmen - made it safely home to their families.



Grave Stone in Arlington National Cemetery



CITATION

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy near Oschersleben, Germany, on 11 January 1944. On that day Col. Howard was the leader of a group of P51 aircraft providing support for a heavy bomber formation on a long-range mission deep in enemy territory. As Col. Howard's group met the bombers in the target area the bomber force was attacked by numerous enemy fighters. Col. Howard, with his group, and at once engaged the enemy and himself destroyed a German ME. 110.

As a result of this attack Col. Howard lost contact with his group, and at once returned to the level of the bomber formation. He then saw that the bombers were being heavily attacked by enemy airplanes and that no other friendly fighters were at hand. While Col. Howard could have waited to attempt to assemble his group before engaging the enemy, he chose instead to attack single-handed a formation of more than 30 German airplanes. With utter disregard for his own safety, he immediately pressed home-determined attacks for some 30 minutes, during which time he destroyed 3 enemy airplanes and probably destroyed and damaged others.

Toward the end of this engagement, 3 of his guns went out of action and his fuel supply was becoming dangerously low. Despite these handicaps and the almost insuperable odds against him, Col. Howard continued his aggressive action in an attempt to protect the bombers from the numerous fighters. His skill, courage, and intrepidity on this occasion set an example of heroism which will be an inspiration to the U.S. Armed Forces.

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HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM WHAT APPEARS TO BE AUTHENTIC WEBSITES
I CANNOT ENSURE THAT ALL THE DATA IN THIS ARTICLE IS ACCURATE AND CORRECT.