

= Egon Mayer =

Egon Mayer (19 August 1917 ? 2 March 1944) was a German Luftwaffe military aviator during World War II , a fighter ace credited with 102 enemy aircraft shot down in over 353 combat missions . His victories were all claimed over the Western Front and included 26 four @-@ engine bombers , 51 Supermarine Spitfires and 12 P @-@ 47 Thunderbolts . Mayer was the first fighter pilot to score 100 victories entirely on the Western Front .

Born in Konstanz , Mayer , who was a glider pilot in his youth , volunteered for military service in the Luftwaffe of the Third Reich in 1937 . Following flight training he was posted to Jagdgeschwader 2 " Richthofen " (JG 2 ? 2nd Fighter Wing) in 1939 . He fought in the Battle of France and claimed his first aerial victory in that campaign on 13 June 1940 . Mayer was appointed Staffelkapitän (squadron leader) of the 7 . Staffel (7th squadron) of JG 2 " Richthofen " in June 1941 . Two months later , following his 21st aerial victory , he received the Knight 's Cross of the Iron Cross on 1 August 1941 . He claimed 16 further victories and was awarded the German Cross in Gold on 16 July 1942 . In November 1942 , Mayer was appointed Gruppenkommandeur (group commander) of the III . Gruppe (3rd group) of JG 2 " Richthofen " .

Mayer claimed his first victories over United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) four @-@ engine bombers when he shot down two B @-@ 17 Flying Fortresses and a B @-@ 24 Liberator on 23 November 1942 . Together with fellow fighter ace Georg @-@ Peter Eder , Mayer developed the head @-@ on attack as the most effective tactic against the Allied daylight heavy combat box bomber formations . He received the Knight 's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves on 16 April 1943 after 63 victories . On 1 July 1943 , he replaced Walter Oesau as Geschwaderkommodore (wing commander) of JG 2 " Richthofen " . He claimed his 90th victory on 31 December 1943 and on 5 February 1944 became the first pilot on the Channel Front to reach 100 victories . Mayer was killed in action on 2 March 1944 while leading an attack on a USAAF bomber formation ; he was shot down by P @-@ 47 Thunderbolt escort fighters near Montmédy , France . He was posthumously awarded the Knight 's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords that day .

= = Early life and career = =

Mayer , the son of a farmer , was born on 19 August 1917 in Konstanz at the Bodensee . Konstanz at the time was in the Grand Duchy of Baden of the German Empire . Mayer grew up on his parents ' farm named Hauserhof and spent his spare time at the glider airfield at the Bellenberg near Engen . He went to school at the Langemarck @-@ Realgymnasium ? a secondary school built on the mid @-@ level Realschule to achieve the Abitur (university entry qualification) ? in Singen . Today , the Langemarck @-@ Realgymnasium , which had been named after the location of the World War I Battle of Langemarck , is the Hegau @-@ Gymnasium .

Following his graduation , Mayer volunteered for military service in the Luftwaffe on 1 November 1937 . His military training began at the 2nd Air Warfare School (Luftkriegsschule 2) at Gatow , on the southwestern outskirts of Berlin . He was then trained as a fighter pilot and promoted to Leutnant (second lieutenant) on 1 August 1939 .

= = World War II = =

World War II in Europe began on Friday , 1 September 1939 , when German forces invaded Poland . Mayer received the Iron Cross 2nd Class (Eisernes Kreuz 2 . Klasse) on 25 October 1939 and was transferred to Jagdgeschwader 2 " Richthofen " (JG 2 ? 2nd Fighter Wing) , named after the after World War I fighter ace Manfred von Richthofen , on 6 December 1939 . For his entire combat career , with the exception of a brief posting to the fighter pilot school at Werneuchen , Mayer would serve in JG 2 " Richthofen " . He claimed his first aerial victory on 13 June 1940 during the Battle of France , shooting down an Armée de l 'Air (French Air Force) Morane @-@ Saulnier M.S.406.

In the Battle of Britain , Mayer often flew over the English Channel as the wingman of Helmut Wick .

He claimed three further victories in this campaign , all over Royal Air Force (RAF) Supermarine Spitfires , but was himself shot down or forced to land at the French Coast . Once he had to swim in the Channel for an hour before he was rescued . At the end of 1940 Mayer had four victories to his credit and JG 2 " Richthofen " was withdrawn from combat to replenish the heavy losses it had sustained . Following a short tour as fighter pilot instructor at the Jagdfliegerschule (fighter pilot school) in Werneuchen , Mayer was sent back to the Channel Front .

On 10 June 1941 , Oberleutnant (First Lieutenant) Mayer was appointed Staffelführer (squadron leader) of 7 . Staffel (7th squadron) of JG 2 " Richthofen " , based at Saint - Pol - Brias . He claimed his 19th and 20th victory on 23 July 1941 and was awarded the Knight 's Cross of the Iron Cross (Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes) on 1 August 1941 after his 21st aerial victory . He received the award with fellow JG 2 " Richthofen " pilots Oberleutnant Erich Leie and Oberleutnant Rudolf Pflanz on that day . The triple award presentation was recorded by the Deutsche Wochenschau (German Weekly Review) , a newsreel series released in the cinemas . His score had increased to 28 aerial victories by the end of 1941 .

Mayer received the German Cross in Gold (Deutsches Kreuz in Gold) on 16 July 1942 . On 19 August , his 25th birthday , Mayer shot down two Spitfires over Dieppe during Operation Jubilee , his 49th and 50th victory .

== = Group commander == =

Mayer was promoted to Hauptmann (captain) and was appointed Gruppenkommandeur (group commander) of III . Gruppe of JG 2 " Richthofen " in November 1942 . On 23 November , Mayer claimed his first victories over United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) four - engined bombers , when he shot down two B - 17 Flying Fortresses and a B - 24 Liberator . Together with Georg - Peter Eder , Mayer developed the head - on attack as the most effective tactic against the Allied daylight heavy combat box bomber formations . The concept was based on a Kette (chain) , three aircraft flying in a " V " formation , attacking from ahead and to the left . When in range , the attackers opened fire with a deflection burst , aiming in front of the enemy aircraft . Following the attack , the pilots would pull up sharply to the left or right . This gave the attacking fighters the best chance of avoiding the massed firepower of the bombers ' guns .

On 14 February 1943 , Mayer shot down three RAF Hawker Typhoons , claiming his 60th to 62nd victories . Following his 63rd victory he was awarded the Knight 's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves (Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes mit Eichenlaub) on 16 April 1943 , the 232nd officer or soldier of the Wehrmacht so honored . The presentation was made by Adolf Hitler in his office at the Reich Chancellery in Berlin on 11 May 1943 . Mayer was then promoted to Major (major) on 1 June 1943 .

In June 1943 , Mayer encountered Robert S. Johnson , a future ace from the 56th Fighter Group of the US Eighth Air Force . Johnson 's P - 47 Thunderbolt had been badly shot - up by some Focke Wulf Fw 190s during a routine mission . As Johnson limped home , with a canopy that would not open and hydraulic fluid and oil covering his windscreen , Mayer pulled alongside him in his Fw - 190 . Mayer looked the wounded P - 47 over , and then circled to come in from Johnson 's six o 'clock to give it the coup de grâce . The first gun pass failed to knock the heavy American fighter out of the sky . Mayer made two more runs on Johnson , without success . After running out of ammunition , Mayer pulled alongside Johnson , saluted him and headed for home . Johnson landed his plane , and counted more than 200 holes , without even moving around the airplane . He also saw that a 20 mm cannon shell had exploded just behind his headrest , which had made it impossible to open his canopy .

On 22 June 1943 , a flight led by Mayer encountered an RAF Spitfire unit . During the course of the engagement , he claimed one Spitfire shot down and damage to another . He shot down three USAAF P - 47s on 26 June 1943 .

== = Wing commander and death == =

Mayer was appointed Geschwaderkommodore (wing commander) of JG 2 " Richthofen " on 1 July 1943 , thus succeeding Oberst (Colonel) Walter Oesau . Command of III . Gruppe was passed on to the Staffelfkapitän of 8 . Staffel , Hauptmann Bruno Stolle . He claimed three B @-@ 17s shot down within 19 minutes on 6 September . The Eighth Air Force was targeting Stuttgart that day and lost 45 aircraft . On 1 December 1943 , Mayer shot down three P @-@ 47 Thunderbolts . His claimed aerial victories increased to 90 on 30 December 1943 . Mayer was credited with four victories on 7 January 1944 , three B @-@ 24s and one B @-@ 17 shot down in the vicinity of Orléans . On 4 February 1944 he claimed his 100th victory , the first fighter pilot on the Channel Front to achieve this mark .

Mayer 's final score stood at 102 when he was shot down and killed in action by a P @-@ 47 Thunderbolt near Montmédy on 2 March 1944 . Flying Focke @-@ Wulf Fw 190 A @-@ 6 (factory number 470468) , Mayer had led his Stabsschwarm (headquarters unit) and elements of III . Gruppe , 14 Fw 190s in total , in an attack on B @-@ 17s in the area of Sedan , but failed to detect the fighter escort of 29 P @-@ 47s 5 @,@ 000 feet (1 @,@ 500 meters) above . His aircraft was seen taking hits at a range of 400 yards (370 meters) in the nose and cockpit . It made a violent snap roll and went into a vertical dive , crashing within 1 @.@ 5 miles (2 @.@ 4 kilometers) of Montmédy . He was posthumously decorated with the Knight 's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords (Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes mit Eichenlaub und Schwertern) that day .

Recent research by historian Norman Fortier suggests that Mayer was shot down by Lieutenant Walter Gresham of the 358th Fighter Squadron of the 355th Fighter Wing . The claim is based on gun camera footage and recollections of Mayer 's wingman , who was forced to bail out during the action . Mayer was buried at the cemetery of Beaumont @-@ le @-@ Roger , France , and in 1955 re @-@ interred at the German War Cemetery in St. Desiré de Lisieux .

= = Awards = =

Wound Badge in Silver

Front Flying Clasp of the Luftwaffe for Fighter Pilots in Gold with Pennant " 300 "

Combined Pilots @-@ Observation Badge

Iron Cross (1939)

2nd Class (25 October 1939)

1st Class (May 1940)

German Cross in Gold on 16 July 1942 as Oberleutnant in the 7 . / Jagdgeschwader 2 " Richthofen "

Knight 's Cross of the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords

Knight 's Cross on 1 August 1941 as Leutnant of the Reserves and pilot in Jagdgeschwader 2 " Richthofen "

232nd Oak Leaves on 16 April 1943 as Hauptmann and Gruppenkommandeur of the III . / Jagdgeschwader 2 " Richthofen "

51st Swords on 2 March 1944 as Oberstleutnant and Geschwaderkommodore of Jagdgeschwader 2 " Richthofen "