

STRATFORD'S OWN: THE VOUGHT F4U CORSAIR

In May of 2005, the Connecticut State Legislature unanimously named the Corsair as **Connecticut's State Aircraft**.

Here in Stratford during World War II, Stratford employees at the Vought factory worked around the clock, to meet the demand for this much needed combat aircraft.

Some **7,829 Corsairs were built on Main Street Stratford** at what is presently known as "AVCO", or the "Army engine plant". At peak of production in 1944, one Corsair was built every 82 minutes!

In addition, research, development, plus experimental and production test flights all happened in Stratford.



During World War II the Vought F4U Corsair played a major role in achieving victory in the Pacific. America faced an enemy who fought like fanatical savages, and who did not believe in surrender. At the time our Navy, Marines and Army were in a terrible fight, on land, air and sea... above, on and around **Guadalcanal and elsewhere in the Solomon Islands**. The tide of battle was precarious.

The **Japanese Zero** was the enemy's best fighter. It outmatched our aircraft in significant ways; a **replacement for our aging F4F Wildcats**, and our other obsolescent aircraft was desperately needed. The Empire of Japan came ready; **America needed a fighter to take-on the Zero**.

The solution to the problem was Stratford's F4U Corsair.

The Corsair was the first single-engine fighter of the war to **exceed 400 mph** in level flight. It had a range of around 1000 miles. It could carry 4000 lbs of ordnance, and it packed six .50 cal. machine guns. At least one pilot claimed that it could handle battle damage like a Mack-truck. It could take-off and land on dirt fields or

carrier decks. **Japanese pilots called it “whistling death.”** Wind passing through engine vents made a high-pitched noise at high speeds. The other part of the nickname needs no explanation.

The first 24 Stratford Corsairs reached the Marines at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands on February 12, 1943. About an **hour after arrival, the young inexperienced Marine pilots flew their first combat mission.** Most of the pilots were in their 20’s. Many never returned. Month after month more U.S. Marine Corsair squadrons reached the Solomon Islands.

Now in February 2025, the **wrecking ball is hanging over the factory** that produced this historic legend. February 12 would be an appropriate day to reflect upon the history of that property, the men and women of the Greatest Generation who built the Corsair, and especially our courageous pilots who flew them in the Pacific starting **on February 12, 1943.** Failure was not an option.

Sincerely

Joe Koripsky