

## An unusual visitor stops at airport

Written by Chris Lee

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An unusual visitor landed at Holyoke Municipal Airport Friday, Aug. 28. No, it wasn't martians or aliens. It was a 1944 P51 Mustang airplane.

Stopping to refuel for the second time in a week the plane was on its way home from an air show.

Built in the latter half of WWII, the P51 was used for long range missions escorting bombers, according to Phil Biersdorfer. An American airplane, the P51 was used heavily in the European and African Theatres of war, according to Biersdorfer.

The plane was equipped with six 50-caliber machine guns, three on each wing.

The plane landed at the airport while Biersdorfer was taking two members of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) back to their plane. The two CAP members had been in town interviewing Velva Notter about her CAP duty as a cadet during WWII.

It just happened to be a coincidence a plane used around the same time as WWII landed just as two members of CAP were finishing up an interview with someone who had served in WWII.

Biersdorfer said the plane landing in Holyoke had been refurbished not too long ago. After a quick search on the internet, he estimated the plane was valued at around \$1.95 million.

The plane originally was a single seater but the one landing in Holyoke had been converted into a two-seater for training purposes.

The P51 model is used in many air shows and air races around the world today. Its single propeller engine is 12 cylinder and liquid cooled making the plane quicker. Its younger sibling the P47 was not liquid cooled and could fight through heavier gun fire because it was not liquid cooled, Biersdorfer said.

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Out of the thousands built, Biersdorfer estimates there are only a couple hundred in existence today.