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## **RECOGNITION OF HEROES TAKES FLIGHT**



DON BOCHKAY  
Submitted Photo

### **(<http://starbeacon.com/local/x1374702260/RECOGNITION-OF-HEROES-TAKES-FLIGHT>)**

**Fighter Aces such as Ashtabula native Donald Bochkay now eligible for honor**

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ASHTABULA — During World War II, Lt. Col. Donald H. Bochkay was a leading fighter ace of the U.S. Air Force.

Bochkay flew with the 357th fighter group, scoring 15 aerial victories in Europe, thus he became a “triple” Ace in the Mustang. He frequently flew as part of a flight of four pilots. He planned and led a number of successful missions against German jet bases during the closing weeks of World War II.

Today, U.S. Rep. David Joyce, R-14th District, signed onto House Bill 685, which would award a Congressional Gold Medal to American Fighter Aces — those fighter pilots credited with destroying five or more confirmed enemy aircraft in aerial combat.

House Bill 685 first struck Joyce’s interest because his father is a decorated World War II veteran and Purple Heart recipient.

“I’m honored and humbled to be part of the movement to award the American Fighter Aces with the Congressional Gold Award,” Joyce said. “American heroes like Don Bochkay have made sacrifices for the freedom we enjoy every day and this Memorial Day I’d like to thank all the Fighter Aces and members of our Armed Services for their tremendous commitment to our great nation.”

Born Sept. 19, 1916, in Ashtabula, Bochkay’s family moved to California when he was 9 years old and settled in the San Fernando Valley. He graduated from Hollywood High School in 1935 and entered the military as a private in the 7th Inf. Div. at Fort Ord, Calif. in Nov. 1940.

He transferred into Aviation Cadet program and graduated from Luke Field, Ariz. in April 1943 and was assigned to 444th Pursuit Squadron at Hamilton Field, Calif. flying P-39s.

Bochkay was assigned to 363rd Ftr. Sq. 357th Ftr. Grp. at Tonopah, Nev. in May 1943. [REDACTED]  
to England with the Group in November 1943 and became operational in P-51s in Febr [REDACTED]

Lt. Col. Bochkay shot down his first FW-190 on March 5, 1944. The following day was t [REDACTED]  
daylight raid on Berlin. Bochkay downed two Me 110s over Berlin. He finished 1st com [REDACTED]  
returned to the U.S. in August 1944.

He returned as commander of 363rd Ftr. Sq. and ended the war with a total of 15 aerial victories  
and one destroyed on the ground. The last two victories were over German ME 262 jet fighters. He  
had a total of 123 combat missions with 510 combat hours.

Lt. Col. Bochkay left active duty at the end of World War II but returned in 1956. He retired from the  
Air Force in 1970, decorated with the distinguished flying cross w/three OLC, Air Medal with 13  
OLC, Presidential Unit Citation with 2 OLC and the French Croix de Guerre with Palm.

He died unexpectedly in January 1981 in San Anselmo, Calif. He was 64.

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