

'Bobby' Bladt Robert A.J. (RAF n° 1814840)

Belgian Croix de Guerre 1940 with Palm, Evader Cross, 1939-1943 Star, 1939-1945 Star,
Air Crew Europe Star with France and Germany Clasp



(André Bar Collection)

Born on 14 May 1919 at Neder-Overheembeek (Brussels). He enlisted in the Aé Mil before the War and escaped to UK via France and Spain (25 May 1942). Went on training. 5(P) AFU at Ternhill (16 February 1943), and then to 57 OTU Hawarden (21 March 1943). He was posted to 350 Sqn as Sgt on 1 June 1943, and was commissioned P/O on 5 April 1944. Rested and posted to the RAF/Belgian Training School at RAF Snailwell on 31 March 1945, where he stayed until he was posted to N° 7 Flying Instructor School at RAF Upavon, on 30 January 1946. He was discharged from the RAF on 1st October 1946, and enlisted in the Belgian Air Force on its formation as an air force independent of the Belgian Army on 15 October 1946. After a short posting at the Department of Personal and MDN Esc Admin, Bobby joined the E.P.A on 25 April 1947 as flying instructor. 12 September 1949 saw him joining the 1st Fighter Wing where he took command of a Flight of 349 Sqn. Bobby Bladt went on to be the 13th CO of 350 Sqn (25/04/51 - 18/10/52) and also formed the Acrobobs, which flew four Gloster Meteor F.8 fighters from No. 350 Squadron, and their first display was at Gosselies on May 18 1952, and he then went to the fighter school in Koksijde In 1956 During a visit to Rome he met the Pope (Pope Pius XII) before the airshow. Bobby Bladt was also founder and leader of the "Red Devils" aerobatic team from No. 7 Fighter Wing at Chièvres, flying Hawker Hunter jet fighters in standard camouflage. On 12 June 1957 this new, as yet unnamed, team performed their first public display at Valenciennes, France, but they were not named the "Red Devils" until 1960, only three years before they disbanded. Following this he went on to be a Test Pilot and he retired from active duty on 1st July 1969 and stayed in the Belgian Air Force Reserve until 1st July 1973, rested with the honorary rank of Lt-Colonel. He passed away at Woluwé, on 18 February 2014.

(information by Cynrik De Decker and Allan Hillman)