

COLORS OF WAR

MORE INTERESTING MILITARY AIRCRAFT
COLOR SCHEMES FROM THE FILES OF
CHALLENGE PUBLICATIONS
BY MICHAEL O'LEARY

While we are on the subject of yellow, this fine Bill Larkins aerial portrait of North American T-6G 50-1290 was taken near Concord, California, with a San Francisco fog bank in the background. Today, the T-6G is a highly-desirable variant of the famed Texan since these were airframes completely rebuilt by NAA at Downey, California with numerous upgrades. The original serials were dropped and new serials assigned. Operating with the California Air National Guard, this particular Texan was eventually supplied to France as part of the Military Defense Assistance Program. (William T. Larkins)



Painting a Grumman F8F-1 Bearcat overall yellow certainly makes a striking statement in this Bill Larkins photo but it also illustrates the prodigious amount of oil pushed overboard by the Pratt & Whitney R-2800 engine. F8F-1 BuNo 95187 was used as an "adversary" aircraft by the Navy's famed Blue Angels aerobatic team. The Bearcat comprised the display squadron's second aircraft type (the first was the Hellcat) and the small, agile fighters were capable of putting on thrilling shows within the confines of an airfield. So, what does "Beetle Bomb" mean? The answer will probably leave most *Air Classics* readers scratching their heads. We have to go way back to a comedian named Doodles Weaver who had an orchestra play the William Tell Overture on kitchen instruments while he supplied the lyrics that apparently involved a horse race. Around the same time, popular journalist Damon Runyon used slang where "beetle" meant a slow horse and "bomb" meant generally terrible. Make sense? Not really!

Anyway, the Blue Angels started out with an overall yellow SNJ that carried the name along with Japanese markings. It would be shot down by the Hellcats during the show. Once the Bearcats were phased out, it appears they kept one and assigned it the number "0". The aircraft is actually quite attractive and has polished metal leading edges on the wing and tail surfaces. There is a device fixed to the rear tail cone that looks like it might contain a series of lights that were probably used as a reference point during the show. The lettering on the Bearcat (as with the overall paint on the Grumman Panthers in the background) is "Blue Angels Blue" — a special mixture that was utilized just on Blue Angels aircraft. On 24 April 1950, the Bearcat had just taken off for a display when the pilot executed a slow roll. Something went wrong and it crashed into the ground at NAAS Whiting Field, Florida. The Bearcat exploded and the pilot was killed. (William T. Larkins)