

REBEL BOMBER!

WITH THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR, THOUSANDS OF MILITARY AIRCRAFT SUDDENLY BECAME AVAILABLE FOR PRIVATE PURCHASE. IT WAS AS IF A PANDORA'S BOX HAD OPENED FOR LATIN AMERICAN REVOLUTIONAIRES, DICTATORS, AND WOULD-BE DICTATORS

BY NICHOLAS A. VERONICO

Political instability in the Caribbean region as well as Latin and South America was rife during the months and years following the end of World War Two. The vast fields of surplus aircraft dotting the United States could be a source of tactical weapons that had the ability to shift the balance of power within the region and this fact was noticed by a variety of despots and shady characters around the world. Also, with the end of the war thousands of pilots were

suddenly out of work and many were looking for employment — no matter how questionable their new employers might be.

In spite of the desires of various dictators, regimes, and rebel groups to purchase America's surplus fighters and

bombers, the United States government took steps to maintain peace in the region through its various military defense aid programs. These programs provided fighters, typically P-47 Thunderbolts, liaison aircraft, and transports to various Latin and South American nations.

Although the United States remained vigilant when

controlling its inventory of surplus warplanes, a number of aircraft made their way south of the border. One such aircraft, and the subject of this article, that was purchased by a rebel group was Consolidated PB4Y-1 Liberator BuNo 32225 (ex-B-24D-45-CO USAAF 42-100028). This ex-Navy Liberator was sold surplus at Cal-Aero Field (today's Chino Airport) in southern California, and its Sea Blue Navy camouflage stood out amongst the hundreds of aircraft that filled the airfield because most had last seen service with the USAAF.

Navy Liberator Bureau of Aeronautics Number 32225 was offered in the Reconstruction Finance Corporation's 19 August 1947 to 2 September 1947 bid sale for \$2000. Of note, this Cal-Aero Field sale also offered Grumman J2F-6 BuNo 36976, which today is displayed at the EAA AirVenture Museum in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and PB4Y-1 BuNo 38777 (ex-B-24J 44-40389) that received the civil registration N66569 and was intended to sit atop a gas station in Oregon.

Entrepreneur
Art Lacey

Location: WAA Sales Storage Depot Cal-Aero Field, Ontario, California		
J2F-6	32642	\$ 750
J2F-6	36964	750
J2F-6	33536	750
J2F-6	36976	750
J2F-6	32684	750
PB4-Y	38777	2,000
PB4-Y	32225	2,000

The Reconstruction Finance Corporation's 19 August 1947 to 2 September 1947 bid sale offered a number of aircraft including Grumman J2F-6 BuNo 36976 that is now on display at the EAA AirVenture Museum in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. PB4Y-1 BuNo 38777 (ex-B-24J 44-40389) was registered N66569, and later sold to a Bolivian operator and registered CB-589, and then to CB-89. PB4Y-1 32225 was bought with the intent of smuggling the aircraft out of the United States to Cuba, where it was to play a role in the overthrow of the dictator of the Dominican Republic. (Veronico Collection)

beat the Liberator's owners to the punch when he installed a Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress over the pumps of his service station in Milwaukie, Oregon. This Flying Fortress became known as *Lacey's Lady* and her appearance over the gas pumps stole the unique marketing opportunity in the region of having a four-engine bomber to attract customers (EDITOR'S NOTE: This once-amazing

roadside attraction has been long removed from its perch over the gas pumps. The plane was obviously in very poor condition from decades of exposure and numerous parts had been sold over the years. The aircraft is now in a hangar and



One of a number of Navy PB4Y-1 Liberators in storage at the Reconstruction Finance Corp.'s storage yard at Cal-Aero Field, today's Chino Airport. The RFC named its Sales-Storage fields after the nearest large city or town, and in this case, that nearby city was Ontario, California. RFC Ontario was actually at Cal-Aero Field, five miles to the southwest of Ontario, which was also home to an Army Air Field named after the town as well. The PB4Y-1 sold at Cal-Aero Field and surreptitiously intended for the Dominican

Republic rebels was impounded at Ponca City, Oklahoma, in November 1947. Also of note are the completely intact Douglas A-20 Havocs in the background against the trees that had been planted by local farmers as wind breaks. Over the past year, this area has been completely covered with massive "till-up" distribution centers that have destroyed the airfield's former rural atmosphere. (William T. Larkins Collection)