

SWEATER GIRL

A HIGHLY-MODIFIED LOCKEED VENTURA PAVED THE WAY FOR THE COMPANY'S CONSTELLATION AND WRIGHT R-3350 ENGINE

BY FRED ROBERTS

If there were ever a list of two people more ill-suited to sit in a room together, then Howard R. Hughes and Kelly Johnson would have to be right at the top. As they fought over the concept of the aircraft that would become the Constellation, the late-night arguments were apparently a thing of legend at Lockheed. Hughes, tall, urbane, brilliant and witty, was completely the opposite of Johnson's lumpish, midwestern, no-nonsense, but equally brilliant personality. However, they had a common goal in creating what they considered to be the world's finest airliner. Hughes, despite his varying eccentricities, was a perceptive businessman — after all, he owned TWA and orders (or lack thereof) could make or break Lockheed and Johnson well-knew that chief rival



This view of a standard RAF Ventura shows the stock nose, added armament, and Pratt & Whitney R-2800-S1A4-G powerplants of 1850-hp each.



Close-up of Ventura c/n 4005 gives an idea why the plane was nicknamed *Sweater Girl*. Lockheed engineers removed all armament, military equipment, and much of the armor-plating in the aircraft, which was the fifth Ventura built. How the aircraft was taken away from the Royal Air Force contract is not known but apparently there was some sort of monetary exchange. Note how the construction number is carried on the new nose section. The propeller blades are smaller than what would have been installed on the Constellation and this was for ground clearance since the Ventura was a tall-dragger.