



THE WILLIAM T. LARKINS COLLECTION

LARKINS ON THE RAMP

DURING HIS CAREER AS AN AVIATION PHOTOGRAPHER, BILL LARKINS TRAVELED TO MANY DIFFERENT AIRFIELDS AND HIS CAMERAS WERE ALWAYS AT HAND IF ANYTHING UNUSUAL WAS PARKED ON AN AIRPORT RAMP

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Certainly one of the most attractive paint schemes applied to a military Catalina, USAAF 44-33939 was a Canadian Vickers OA-10A built as an air sea rescue aircraft. The distinctive scheme would stand out in the air and on the water. The plane was photographed at Hamilton AFB in San Rafael, California, during 1949.



Pristine Douglas RB-26C USAAF 44-35262 photographed on the ramp at Hayward, California, in California Air National Guard markings complete with state insignia on the nose. Note how the barrels on the upper and lower turrets as well as the two nose guns have been carefully wrapped. Nacelles were painted black to cover oil and soot stains. Sold surplus, the Invader was one of numerous examples purchased by Stahmann Farms of Las Cruces, New Mexico, and many of those Invaders were stored at Hamilton Aircraft located at Tucson Municipal Airport. This aircraft received the civilian registration of N72404 but little is known of its history, with the plane apparently being scrapped during 1970 or soon after. It was reported that one of the Invaders was extensively modified by the family to be utilized as an "escape" vehicle to Peru in the event of a nuclear war with the Russians.



Ag operators used just about any type of available aircraft — as long as they were cheap. One of the more unusual planes to be flown in the ag role was the Curtiss Robin, as can be seen in this photo of N780M. The pioneering general aviation aircraft had its cabin stripped out and a large chemical tank installed. The liquid chemicals were dispensed through an odd atomizer system. Operated by the well-known California firm of Clevenger, the Robin received substantial damage when it went down near Strathmore, California, on 25 July 1966. The pilot, who had only 570 hours of flight time, failed to maintain flying speed while spraying a fruit orchard. The aircraft stalled and crashed in a field. Fortunately, the pilot escaped with minimal injuries.



Ford 5-AT-B Tri-Motor NC9645 had to be the last three-engine aircraft flown out of historic Crissy Field, the Army Air Corps base next to the Golden Gate Bridge. The Tri-Motor had just emerged from a five-year rebuild for Bill Harrah's museum in Reno and carried the appropriate name *City of Reno*.