



KODACHROMES OF EX-MILITARY AIRCRAFT
PRIOR TO TODAY'S MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR RESTORATIONS



The morning marine layer was beginning to disperse over Long Beach Airport in southern California during January 1970 as a B-25 Mitchell was prepared for flight. The aircraft was TB-25N USAAF 44-86777 and it had been sold in the last great B-25 auction at Davis-Monthan AFB during 1959. Registered N9167Z, the aircraft carries the name "Dunn's Seafood" on the nose. Of course, during this time period any rather bedraggled B-25 was viewed as a possible drug runner but that does not seem the case with 67Z. The plane went through a number of owners and in 1987/88 it received the attention of Tom Relly for Ed Stringfellow who flew the plane as *Martha Jean*. In 1993, it became N345BG and in 2011 it was flown to Aero Trader at Chino for a complete restoration as *Georgie's Gal* for the Liberty Aviation Museum.



The Martin B-26 Marauder has been an ill-fated Warbird. Only a few of the thousands built went to civilian owners and perhaps the best-known example was TB-26C USAAF 41-35071. Used as a Stateside trainer, the aircraft was sold by the RFC from Bush Field in Georgia. It seems the original owner was United Airlines and they registered the plane as NL5546N during September 1946. Why United would want a Marauder is unknown but perhaps some consideration was given to using the high-performance bomber as a crew trainer. As we have noted in previous issues, the aircraft then passed Leland Cameron of North Hollywood who entered it in the Cleveland National Air Races as Race 24 *The Valley Turtle*. It was then acquired by Tennessee Gas Transmission Co. and flown to Los Angeles International Airport where it was completely stripped down and converted to a B-26C-T Executive by AirResearch Aviation Services during 1952/1953. With too many modifications to list here (the civil Marauders will be the subject of a comprehensive article in an upcoming *Air Classics*), the plane was utilized as a high-speed executive transport. It was flown by Tennessee Gas for just a few years and then placed for sale with William C. Wold Inc. during September 1959. This company specialized in selling ex-military aircraft that had been converted for civilian

use. The plane briefly went to Bacon Aircraft at Santa Monica Airport and this was the company that created the "Bacon Super 6" — a highly-modified NAA T-6 with tricycle gear. By late 1961, it was in Mexico with the registration XB-LOX. In 1965 it was back in the States as N5546N again with Astro Aero Carpet (one can only guess) but on 29 October of that year the gear collapsed while taxiing at Atlanta, Georgia. After several more owners, it was acquired by the Confederate Air Force in 1967. By this time, the aircraft was in poor shape and in 1969 the gear collapsed during engine runs. Rebuilt, it made its first post-restoration flight on 11 September 1984 but was still a pretty shaky aircraft. On 12 October 1985, the nose gear collapsed causing more damage. Finally, on 28 September 1995 the plane went down in a spin near Odessa, Texas, during a training flight, killing everyone on board including two English aviation enthusiasts being taken for a ride. This photograph was taken Long Beach Airport during August 1966. The plane had apparently been flown to that location for repair after the Atlanta gear collapse. Note that all gear doors are missing. Some of the executive modifications are evident including the stinger tail, fuselage windows, and large airstair door immediately behind the wing trailing edge.