

THE WAY IT WAS

RECALLING WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO GROW UP AT AN AIRPORT DURING THE 1950s

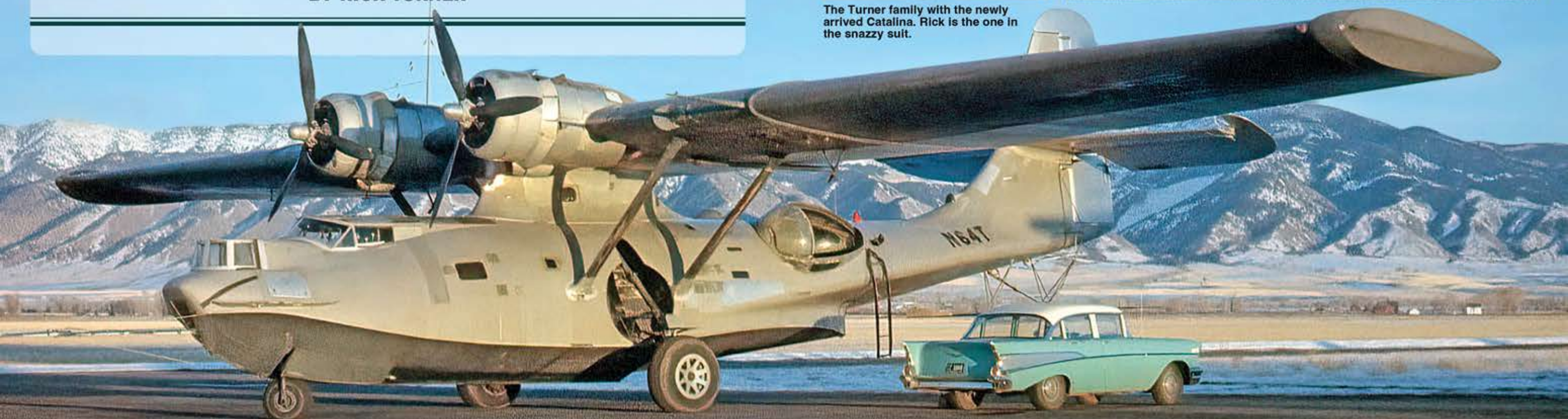
BY RICK TURNER



The Turner family with the newly arrived Catalina. Rick is the one in the snazzy suit.



The PBV-6A was ferried to Hayward from NAF Litchfield Park.



EDITOR'S NOTE: For many years, Rick Turner was a regular contributor to *Air Classics*. He loved to research vintage aircraft and to collect data on his home field — Hayward Airport in the Bay Area. Rick got to grow up at the field and as a child he was able to see a profusion of ex-military aircraft, a number of which were operated by his father. As an adult, Rick joined the local California Air National Guard unit and kept a strong attachment to the airport. A few years ago, while driving the freeway and going to work, Rick suffered a massive heart attack. Passersby attempted to help but could not get the car doors opened and heavy traffic meant that it took the paramedics too long to reach Rick. Prior to his passing, he wrote this story of what it was like to grow up at a friendly airfield that helped form his bond with aviation and I am sure many of us wish we had been so lucky as children.

Hayward Airport was built in 1942 as a satellite field for the USAAF's Hamilton Field. During World War II, it was used mainly as a training field for fighter squadrons before they were shipped overseas. In late 1945, the airport opened for civilian use and the city officially took over in 1947. My father, Glenn "Red" Turner, was in business at Hayward Municipal Airport from 1946 to 1968. Because of this, I virtually grew up at what we called "the field." During the decade of the 1950s, a lot was going on at Hayward and it was a great place for a kid who loved airplanes. I was able to see all sorts of aircraft, including C-82s, C-124s, a PBV, P-51s, Howards, PT-17s, etc. In

the 1950s, Hayward Airport was still pretty wide open. The control tower had not been built yet and none of the shrinkage of airport property that is apparent today had occurred. However, San Lorenzo had expanded to the point that houses had been built off of the departure end of Runway 28.

Probably the most significant event to happen at Hayward during the early 1950s was the arrival of the 194th Fighter Squadron of the California Air National Guard. For the next 25 years, a flying unit of the Air National Guard was based at Hayward. Soon after the 194th, equipped with F-51Ds and T-6s, moved into new facilities at Hayward from Oakland, the 144th Fighter Group

and the Headquarters of the 144th Fighter Wing also arrived.

In the early 1950s, we were not that far removed from the end of WWII and there were still a fair number of war surplus aircraft around. Most were training types such as BT-13s, PT-19s, AT-17s, AT-6s, etc. and some were starting to become derelict. Many that had been wrecked or had become derelict ended up in my father's aircraft junkyard. During the first half of 1950, a red Curtiss P-40N (N1008N) was based at Hayward. It was partly owned by Ray Foster, who was also a member of the

ANG and for \$20 per hour a "would be" fighter pilot could fly the P-40 after "checking out" in the back seat of a BT-13. This had only been going on for a couple of months when the aircraft suffered an engine failure on takeoff in June. A piston connecting rod broke when N1008N was already in the air and the landing gear retraction cycle had started. The P-40 landed on the runway very hard with the right gear partly up and the left landing gear leg was driven up through the wing. Today, the Warhawk would have been quickly repaired, but in 1950 P-40s were not

worth very much. Apparently Foster and his partner had a falling out and one of them took a cutting torch to the wreck. The right wing was cut off just outboard of the landing gear and the tail was cut off just aft of the cockpit. My father obtained the remains and they sat in his junkyard, along with some derelict Twin Cessnas (AT-17s), until around 1957. I had a lot of fun playing "fighter pilot" in the P-40 during that time.

By late 1951, the war in Korea had been going on for over a year and the Air Force needed the 194th's F-51D fighter-bombers. The D model

As a child, Rick Turner spent lots of time inside his father's PBV-6 Catalina. No pampered Warbird, this was a hard-working machine and it is seen in Alaska during 1958. (William T. Larkins)