



SURPLUS EX-MILITARY AIRCRAFT LONG BEFORE THEY BECAME MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR RESTORATIONS

This simple gold and white scheme with black trim highlights the elegant lines of the North American F-51H — the last production variant of the famed Mustang. Built as USAAF 44-64415 and later flown by NACA as #130 out of Moffett Field in northern California, the Mustang was acquired by William Hogan who flew the H in several attractive schemes. In 1978, it was purchased by Bill and Don Whittington of Florida and finished in RAF camouflage as N49WB Race 8 and Race 94. On 16 September 1978, the aircraft was heavily damaged following a crash-landing during the Reno National Air Races. Repaired, the H was seldom flown and it is now in storage following Bill Whittington's death.



The USAF quickly found out that the underpowered North American T-28A Trojan was not for them and buyers soon had their pick of surplus examples. As can be seen, USAF 49-1584 was purchased by Grimes Aircraft Lightning in Urbana, Ohio, placed in the Experimental category (the T-28A was Standard category), and registered N8319H. The Trojan was used as a "flying laboratory" to test the company's lighting products and was photographed in July 1963. Around this time, representatives from North American were scouring the country seeking civilian examples of the T-28A. They were paying \$10,000 no matter the condition (about \$103,000 in 2024). The reason? These aircraft were being converted to fire-breathing T-28Ds for the war in Southeast Asia. It appears that once it became a T-28D, this aircraft went to the Royal Lao Air Force where it may have been flown by CIA pilots. By the 1990s, the T-28D wound up in Australia where it was restored in Lao markings with the interesting registration VH-CIA.



Surplus T-28As often found themselves in bright civilian colors, such as N9106Z USAF 49-1587. However, this was no ordinary A model Trojan. It was a Hamilton T-28R-2 Nomair 200 Executive. That meant the aircraft had gone through a complete rebuild and the original 900-hp engine was replaced with a 1350-hp Wright R-1820-56A radial and a Hamilton Standard three-blade prop. The wing span was increased by seven feet and the interior was modified for a pilot in front and two pairs of seats holding four passengers with a door on the port side. Ten were built, with the first flying during February 1962. At the time, it was advertised as the fastest single-engine Standard category aircraft available in the USA. The plane was eventually reregistered N28DS and it is still active. When photographed in July 1965, the Nomair 200 was being operated by Cincinnati Air Taxi so perhaps it was being used as a high-speed transport.