

LAST GREAT AMERICAN FLYING BOAT

WE GO ALONG FOR THE LAST FLIGHT OF THE MARTIN JRM-3 MARS AND REFLECT ON THE HISTORY OF THIS AMAZING AIRCRAFT

BY MICHAEL O'LEARY

This beautiful tight-in view of the prototype illustrates the fine finish of the aircraft as well as details of the nose turret.

During 1986 I found myself at Canadian Forces Base Comox on scenic Vancouver Island. This was a bureaucratic time period when the historic Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Canadian Navy were merged into the colorless Canadian Forces title and no one on the base liked the name, including me (fortunately, CF would eventually be eliminated and RCAF and RCN restored). I was at Comox to fly with Canadair Silver Stars operated by units of what had been both the air force and navy. I would also be flying with the Navy's Trackers. I was really looking forward to going in the Tracker since Canadian testing had determined that the airframe was good for 100,000 flight hours and this meant an unlimited lifetime. The Trackers were going to receive a number of upgrades including turbine engines. Same with the Silver Stars. These gleaming beauties were going to get all sorts of avionics upgrades and other modifications to ensure a longer life. There was no point getting rid of aircraft when