



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

Sometimes a simple paint scheme is the best. Based at Van Nuys Airport for several years, this immaculate Catalina was owned by the late Robert Franks. Configured as an "air yacht," the aircraft was regularly flown. Registered N69RF, the Cat was originally built as a PBV-1A by Canadian Vickers and operated as RCAF 11074. Sold surplus in 1961, it was modified to airliner configuration and registered as C-FOWE and flew with Ontario Central Airlines and Ilford Riverton Airways. Franks purchased the plane in 1983 as N691RF and used it in the commemorative flight to celebrate the US Navy's crossing the Atlantic with Curtiss NC flying boats. However, arriving at Plymouth, England, it was very heavily damaged in a water loop on 30 May 1986. This led to an extensive rebuild. Today, the plane is with a new owner and star and bar markings have been added to the aircraft.



During the early 1970s, a visitor to MovieLand of the Air at Orange County Airport in southern California could view a wide variety of rare aircraft parked outside. One of them was Lockheed F-5G USAF 44-53015/N9957F. This aircraft was originally sold surplus from the huge storage facility at Kingman, Arizona, for \$1250 with the intent of racing the craft at the newly-revived National Air Races in Cleveland, Ohio. As Race 55 and named the *MacMillan Meteor*, the plane was flown in the cross-country Bendix by Indianapolis 500 race car driver Rex Mays. It was later acquired by Hycon and fitted with a greatly extended nose to house cameras and the equipment operator. By the time it appeared at Orange County, the aircraft was looking definitely tired. At the time, the Lightning had a limited monetary value and civilian Mustangs were selling for more than a P-38, even though the twin-boomed fighter was extremely rare. Collector David Tallichet was beginning his extensive collection and he made a deal to purchase N9957F and after a considerable amount of work to get it into ferry shape, the plane was flown to his facility at Chino Airport. The aircraft was eventually involved in a trade with the USAF and the rare Lightning is now unfortunately mounted on a pylon and rotting in the weather at McGuire AFB.

Too bad there is not one of these beasts flying on today's airshow circuit. The Grumman AF-2 series was designed as a carrier-based "hunter-killer" team to track down early Cold War submarines with one aircraft doing the searching and the other undertaking the attacking. The only reason that we have any surviving examples is that fire-bomber operators thought the type might make a good aerial tanker. Powered by a R-3350, only a few planes made it on to the civil register and one of those was AF-2S BuNo 126792. With Aero Union out of Chico, California, the Guardian carried the civil registration N9995Z and flew as Tanker 21. It was eventually acquired by the late Jimmy Leeward who was putting it back into flying condition when he was killed in the crash of *Gallop Ghost* at the Reno National Air Races. Currently, the project is being offered for sale.

