



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

Amazing sight of a graveyard of Supermarine Stranraer flying boats in Canada during the early 1960s. Originally built to a Royal Air Force specification for an anti-submarine/patrol aircraft, it was decided to license-build the type in Canada and 40 examples were constructed by Canadian Vickers in Montreal for the Royal Canadian Air Force. Many were in service at the start of the Second World War and the type patrolled Canada's long east and west coasts where they performed vital tasks. The Stranraer stayed in RCAF service until 1946 and survivors were placed for surplus sales and the type found a market with Canada's regional airlines operating both passenger and freight service. The Stranraer remained in civil service until 1960 and at least two examples were registered in the United States. As can be seen, Canadian weather was not kind to these stored aircraft, which had last operated with Queen Charlotte Airlines. That company flew five of the flying boats but one was destroyed in a fatal crash. Unfortunately, at the time there was little to no interest in these magnificent biplanes for the just emerging Warbird Movement and the planes were allowed to rot away. However, one example was saved by the Royal Air Force Museum from this graveyard and it is now the last known intact example.



Sitting on the ramp and ready to go at Orange County Airport in southern California. Built as P-51D-30-NA 44-74497, in 1950 it was one of the Mustangs transferred to the Royal Canadian Air Force to become RCAF 9230. While in Canada, the fighter served with No. 420 Squadron before being put into storage during 1958 for surplus sale. As with the majority of RCAF Mustangs, the plane followed the usual route of being obtained by Intercontinental Airways who intended to form several Mustang squadrons that could be hired out for mercenary activities. When that business collapsed after federal intervention, it then went to Aero Enterprises and was offered for sale. It went through several owners as N6320T and on 2 August 1969, the Mustang took off from Orange County Airport with the destination of Red Bluff, California. Climbing out over the Santa Susanna Mountains, the Merlin began to run rough. The engine problems got worse and the pilot headed for Fox Field at Lancaster. It didn't make it. The pilot landed gear down in a field and the plane was substantially damaged but the two aboard were not injured. In 1971, the damaged airframe was obtained by Mike Smith of Johnson, Kansas. A crop-duster by profession, Mike was a real mover and shaker in the Warbird Movement during that time period (sadly, he passed away from ALS in 2023). Mustang parts were still available and, although not plentiful, Mike began acquiring the needed pieces from a wide variety of sources and got the plane back into the air. It briefly went to Warbird Icon Isaac Newton Burchinal — better known as "Junior." By 1975, it was with well-known race car driver Johnny Rutherford and was finished in an attractive post-war USAF scheme. By 1979, it was with Jimmie Hunt and Hess Bomberger. Hess was a real WWII Mustang pilot and the plane was painted in his markings and Hess and Jimmie flew it to many airshows. In 1998, it was obtained by Robert Jepson and converted to a TF-51D at Square One Aviation with the registration N51LW.