



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

Back in the early 1960s, Frank Tallman would take rare aircraft from the Tallmantz collection at Orange County Airport to airshows in southern California. One such aircraft was the veteran film star Fokker D.VII N4729V. Obtained by Paul Mantz, the Fokker was based for several years in the late 1930s at Burbank, California, and could be rented by the hour to qualified pilots.

One of those was regular *Air Classics* contributor B.C. Reed who took the plane up for several flights back when it carried advertising for the new movie *Men With Wings* painted down the sides of the fuselage. Imagine being able to rent and fly an original WWI fighter for just a few dollars today! When Mantz moved his collection to Orange County Airport and merged with Frank Tallman, one of the world's most eclectic gatherings of vintage aircraft could be viewed by the public at the new Movieland of the Air. The original Fokker was one of the stars of the collection but it was rarely flown. Tallmantz could field an amazing array of original Great War aircraft including the D.VII, a Pfalz, Nieuport 28 (now with the American Heritage Museum), SPAD, Standard J-1, Farman, and several non-flying aircraft including the Thomas-Morse S-4C. This unique collection was partially broken up in the auction held after Mantz' death while flying for the film *Flight of the Phoenix*. The D.VII went through several owners and is now beautifully restored and on display the Military Aviation Museum in The Netherlands.



The owner of Fairchild PT-23 N2300M obviously liked his aircraft and lavished a lot of care on the radial-engine trainer. As can be seen, a cowl was added for the Continental R-670 while interesting fairings were placed behind the main landing gear legs. However, all that came to an end on 2 July 1980 near Plano, Texas. The pilot, age 37, had commercial/instrument ratings with a bit over 3000 hours total time and 75 in type when he decided to go flying from Dallas North Airport (a small strip that was, like so many others in the DFW area, bulldozed in the early 1990s for redevelopment). He had not flown the aircraft in over a year and the day was blazing hot with a temperature of 107F. The Fairchild PT series has never been what one could call overpowered but the pilot elected to go aloft in the heat. The takeoff was normal but climb was noted as sluggish. After gaining some altitude, N2300M stalled and then spun. The pilot could not recover before impacting the ground and he died in the crash. The probable cause for the accident was placed squarely on the pilot with the accident report stating that he "failed to obtain/maintain flying speed."

We would certainly like to find this treasure tied-down on our local airport ramp with "For Sale" sprayed on its fuselage pod. We could not initially identify this relic so we turned to Lightning expert Steve Hinton. After examining the photograph Steve commented, "The photo was definitely taken on the ramp at Reno Stead Airport and this means it was the Lightning that had been acquired by the Harrah Collection and flown to Reno from Santa Barbara by Mira Slovak as N505MH in 1967. After Bill Harrah's passing, the aircraft collection was sold and the P-38 project went to Frank Taylor around 1982. It was then acquired by David Tallchiet and restored back to flying condition."

