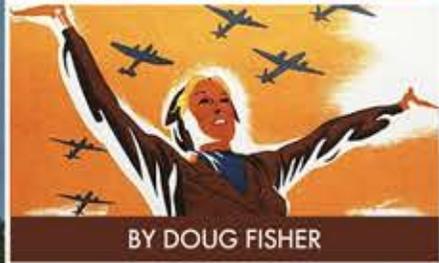


# FRIDAY NIGHT OLDIES



BY DOUG FISHER

SURPLUS MILITARY AIRCRAFT WERE SUBJECTED TO NUMEROUS MODIFICATIONS AND COLOR SCHEMES PRIOR TO BECOMING VALUED — AND EXPENSIVE — COLLECTOR ITEMS. IN THIS SEGMENT, WE PRESENT A VARIETY OF UNSUAL AND INTERESTING AIRCRAFT.

"When I heard that there was a P-51D at Universal Studios, I just did not believe it. That was in the late 1960s so I went to take a look and sure enough, there was a Mustang sitting in the lot," said Ascher Ward. "The studio was looking to get rid of the plane so I made a deal. I traded them a non-flying light aircraft, got some friends with a truck, tied the Mustang to the truck, and away we went at night on a mad tow from the studio to my hangar at Van Nuys Airport." That was in 1970 and Ascher started restoration work on the plane but then he inherited a house. "At that time, the house was worth \$35,000. I knew the guys at Aero Sport at Chino Airport did great work and I asked how much would it cost to get the Mustang flying. The answer was \$35,000 so away went the house." The Mustang was P-51D-25-NA USAAF 44-72739 and the studio had acquired it from the military to use in various films including *Battle Hymn* and *Lady Takes a Flyer*. Ascher flew the plane for several years until he sold it to Elmer Ward (no relation) at Chino Airport and Elmer had the plane finished as *Man O' War*. Today, the Mustang is still owned by the Ward family but is based at the Palm Springs Air Museum. It is available for rides and more information can be found in an advertisement in this issue.

Grumman J2F-6 Duck N1214N was a long-time resident of Long Beach Airport during the 1960s/1970s. Painted a couple times, it seldom, if ever, flew. The aircraft was eventually acquired by Duck enthusiast Kermit Weeks and restored back to flying condition.



The Ryan PT-22 Recruit is quite a small aircraft and many surplus examples were painted in colorful civilian markings including the all-red N52508. Accepted by the USAAF on 7 January 1942, the aircraft was sent to the large training base at Hemet Field in southern California. With the war still a long way from being over, it was purchased by the Hancock College of Aeronautics in Santa Maria, California, on 7 February 1945. It then went through many different owners and today flies in a military scheme.



Parked at the Bill Dempsey farm in Rantoul, Kansas, during 1973, SNJ-4 BuNo 26912/N9522C had been extensively modified as a crop sprayer. Dempsey operated a wide variety of surplus aircraft that he converted as ag planes or fire-bombers.