

**INDIVIDUAL HISTORY**  
**NORTH AMERICAN P-51D 44-74409/RCAF 9235**  
**MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER X003-2318**

- 11 Mar 44      Ordered under contract AC-2378 as one of a batch of 800 P51D-30NA aircraft as United States Army Air Force (USAAF) 44-74409A.
- 1945            Built at Inglewood, California, constructor's number 122-40949.
- 1945            To a 3<sup>rd</sup> Air Force unit of USAAF Air Training Command
- Mid 1950       Struck off USAF charge and assigned to the Military Aid Programme.
- 1950            Assigned to Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) as 9235, part of a batch of 100 aircraft delivered August 1950 – January 1951.

The RCAF Auxiliary Fighter Squadrons began operating the P-51D from 1947, agreements having been made with the US Government to purchase via the US Foreign Liquidation Office 130 in all, the first 30 being delivered from April 1947, with the final 43 of the second batch of 100 delivered early in 1951. Serial numbers were allocated in two blocks, 9221-9300 inclusive having Packard Merlin V-1650-3 engines (including 9235) and 9551-9600 having Packard Merlin V-1650-7 engines. The RCAF referred to the aircraft as the 'Tactical Fighter Mk.IV' (the P-51D being known as the Mustang IV in the wartime RAF) and the Mustangs served until withdrawn from the Auxiliary Units by the end of 1956.

- 6 Dec 50       Brought on RCAF charge ex Pacific Automotive Corp, Burbank, California.

Assigned to No. 417 Squadron (Central Air Command Composite Flight, Trenton, Ontario – a Tactical Fighter training unit, unit codes CB)

Later assigned to No. 403 City of Calgary Squadron at Calgary (unit code AD, later PR). All this tactical fighter unit's aircraft bore white rudders, wing-tips, elevators, and spinners apart from their natural aluminium finish. On both sides of the fuselage just aft of the firewall position a 'demon' emblem was placed, consisting of a red circle enclosing the head, which was also in red, on a white background.

- 23 Nov 53      Reassigned to No. 402 'City of Winnipeg' (FB) Squadron (Auxiliary) at Stevenson Field, Winnipeg, Manitoba, also a tactical fighter unit with the code AC on the rear fuselage.

402 Squadron was part of 17 Wing of the Edmonton-headquartered Tactical Air Group, tasked with the aerial defence of Canada, and equipped with Nos. 402/3 Squadrons with P-51 fighter-bombers and Nos. 406/418 Squadrons with B-25 Mitchell light bombers. Exercises included a number of summer camps and war games with air-to-ground target practice with 500lb bombs and rockets, as well as air-air gunnery for the interceptor role.

The unit's distinctive markings included yellow and blue horizontal stripes on the rudders and spinners, and the inscription 'City of Winnipeg Squadron' in yellow on both sides of the upper cowling black anti-glare panel. Many also carried a growling grizzly bear head on the fuselage sides, reflecting the Squadron's nickname 'Winnipeg Bears'

- 31 Sep 54 Placed in storage at Lincoln Park, Calgary.
- 26 Sep 56 To APDAL (Aircraft Pending Disposal) at Lincoln Park, as final withdrawal of the P-51 from RCAF service approached.
- 30 Dec 58 Struck off RCAF charge.
- Dec 58-60 Registered as N6319T to James H Defuria and Fred J Ritts of Intercontinental Airways, Canastota, New York. Defuria and partners purchased 71 of the 87 surplus RCAF P-51s bought by civilians from the Crown Assets Disposal Corporation c.1958-1961; the RCAF retained two others for display purposes, one of which is now at the IWM, London.
- 20 Oct 60 Transferred to Aero Enterprises, Elkhart, Indiana. Last owner Bob Tullius suggests the aircraft was flown direct to Elkhart from Winnipeg.
- Jun 61 Aircraft overhauled; rudder re-covered and FAA approved navigation lights fitted for night flying.
- 14 Jul 61 To James H Cunningham, Lexington, North Carolina.
- 19 Aug 62 Sold to Dean J Ortner, Wakeman, Ohio by Cunningham's widow Catherine Cunningham (to whom the aircraft was registered 2 August 1962) as Cunningham had died about a month after purchasing the aircraft. Ortner was an air show performer who used the aircraft for aerobatic routines in the North-East USA.
- Jul 63 Lake Aircraft Company of Michigan City, Indiana removed the rear fuselage fuel tank and installed a rear 'buddy' seat in the aircraft.
- 15 May 68 Sold to aircraft broker (dealer) Joe Bruce Jr, Palm Springs, California.

- 3 Jun 68 Sold to Trans Florida Aviation, later the Cavalier Aircraft Corporation, Sarasota, Florida; they may have customised/soundproofed the cockpit area, but did no structural work to the aircraft. Bob Tullius reports that Cavalier actually began to prepare the aircraft for sale to a South American air force and had already painted it in a camouflage scheme, this being confirmed by Richard Black, who also mentions the jump seat and mirror polished prop as fitted when delivered from Cavalier.
- 11 Apr 69 Foreign sale did not go ahead; instead sold to Clint R Hackney, Friendswood, Texas.
- 4 Jul 70 Inadvertently landed gear up by pilot Darrel J. Ward during a 'Confederate Air Force' air show at Galveston, Texas Scholes Field. The aircraft was repaired at Galveston, the prop and scoop being the only areas damaged.
- 6 Aug 70 Repair work carried out on the belly scoop by Arco Sheet Metal, Houston, Texas. Later flown back to base at Houston Hobby Airport and rarely flown after that.
- 2 Nov 71 To Frank D Strickler of Fox 51 Ltd, Denton, Texas.
- 6 Jun 72 Strickler began a restoration programme, removing various navigation lights and beacons, installing a high-pressure oxygen system and removing all armament control circuits and wiring and installing a new rear seat. Named 'Forget Hell'.
- 30 Dec 77 Re-registered as N4409 by Frank D Strickler, now of Grapevine, Texas.
- 1981 Sold to Peter Bottome, Caracas, Venezuela.
- Strickler flew the aircraft to Gordon Plaskett's King City facility for some maintenance and detailing before the aircraft was ferried to South America.  
The engine was overhauled and civil Merlin 500 series cylinder heads and banks installed. The aircraft was finished in stock aluminium paint and had an original radio mast, cuffed propeller, gun ports and military cockpit fitted.
- Jan 81 Re-registered N555BM to Gordon W Plaskett, King City, California and rebuilt at King City.
- From King City it was flown by George Roberts to Mike Bradshaw's Golden Horn Aviation, Fort Pierce, Florida for preparation for repaint to Peter Bottome's specification. Painted as *Barbara M IV* and coded PE-E of 328<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 352<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group, the individual aircraft of Lt Col John C Edwards.

- 1982 Re-registered YV-508-CP to Peter Bottome, Caracas, Venezuela; ferried to Caracas on internal fuel tanks by George Roberts.
- Dec 90 Returned to US in its Venezuelan markings, ferried by Jack Shaver of Classic Air service, Cape May, New Jersey, and renovated by his company, having flown only 75 hours in the previous decade, with only 1,200 hours total time on the airframe since new.
- Mar 91 To racing driver Robert C Tullius, Winchester, Virginia.
- 9 Apr 91 Re-registered N51RT to Robert C Tullius/Group 44 inc, Winchester, Virginia:  
 Flown in the markings of the Debden based 336<sup>th</sup> FS, 4<sup>th</sup> FG aircraft '413317' of Capt Donald R. Emerson. See Aeroplane August 2003 p.56-58. Capt Emerson, originally from a farm in North Dakota, was killed by ground fire on Christmas Day 1944 while flying over Belgium, having amassed 89 missions and claimed 4 ½ aerial victories plus 3 ½ ground 'kills'. He is buried in Margratten, Holland.
- Repainted in these markings, including the port-side only Walt Disney 'Donald Duck' in a fighting stance personal marking of Capt. Emerson, by Sky Harbour aircraft refinishing facility at Goderich, Ontario, Canada: 'Donald' designed by the artist of the artwork on the original aircraft, Master Sgt Crew Chief Don Allen. Photos – Mustang Survivors (Coggan 2003) p.139; Aeroplane August 2003 p.56-58.
- Flown in over 140 Air Shows in both the USA and Canada over the next 11 years.
- 19 Apr 99 Transferred to Robert C Tullius Trustee, Sebring, Florida.
- Oct 2002 Aircraft stripped to bare metal and again repainted in Capt. Emerson's markings by the team at Sky Harbour. Kept at Stallion 51 hangar, Kissimmee, Florida. Photos; Flypast March 2003 pp.14-15; Flypast May 2003 p.6.
- 2003 Aircraft donated to RAF Museum by Robert Tullius following the end of the 2003 air show season.
- 2 Sep 03 Final flight, flown by Bob Tullius. Photos – Flypast November 2003 p.96.
- Sep 03 Dismantled for shipping to UK by Stallion 51 at Kissimmee, Florida. Photo – Flypast November 2003 p.5.

18 Nov 03      By road from docking point on Isle of Grain to RAF Museum Hendon.  
Photo during unloading; Flypast Airshow Guide 2004 p.25. Photos on  
display in new Milestones of Flight Building; Wingspan International 20  
p.61; Flypast February 2004 p.6; Wrecks and Relics 20<sup>th</sup> Edition; Mustang  
– American Idol. Supplement to Flypast March 2010, pp.36 – 39; Wrecks  
and relics 22<sup>nd</sup> Edition.

**TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON**

**ROYAL AIR FORCE MUSEUM 2012**