

**FOR
MANY WARBIRD
ENTHUSIASTS,
THE HAWKER SEA
FURY KNOWN AS
232 IS PROBABLY
THE MOST FAMOUS
EXAMPLE OF THE
BREED. WE
PRESENT AN
EXTREMELY
DETAILED
HISTORY OF
THIS CLASSIC
AIRCRAFT**

**PART ONE
BY DOUG
FISHER**

PART ONE

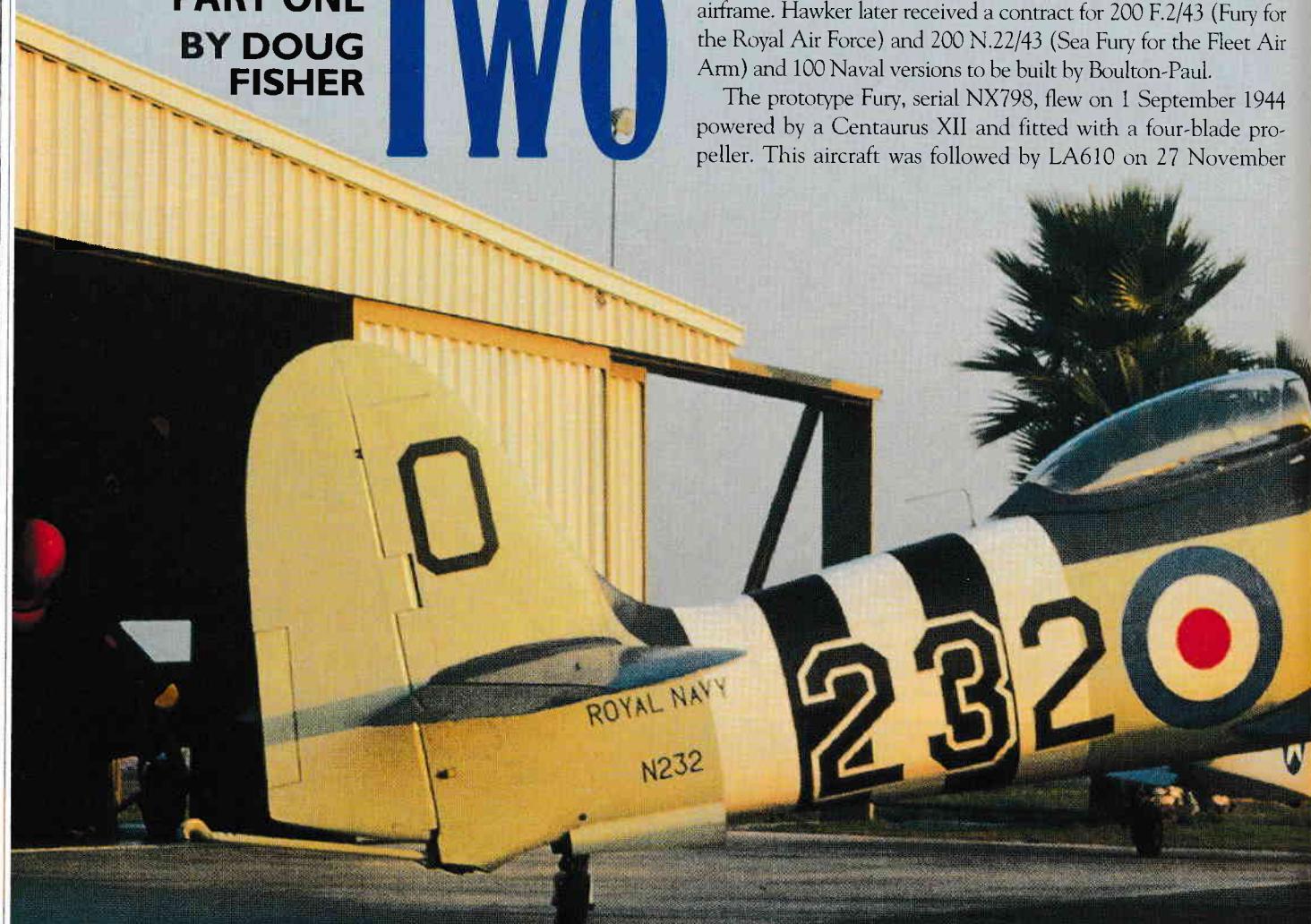
BY DOUG FISHER

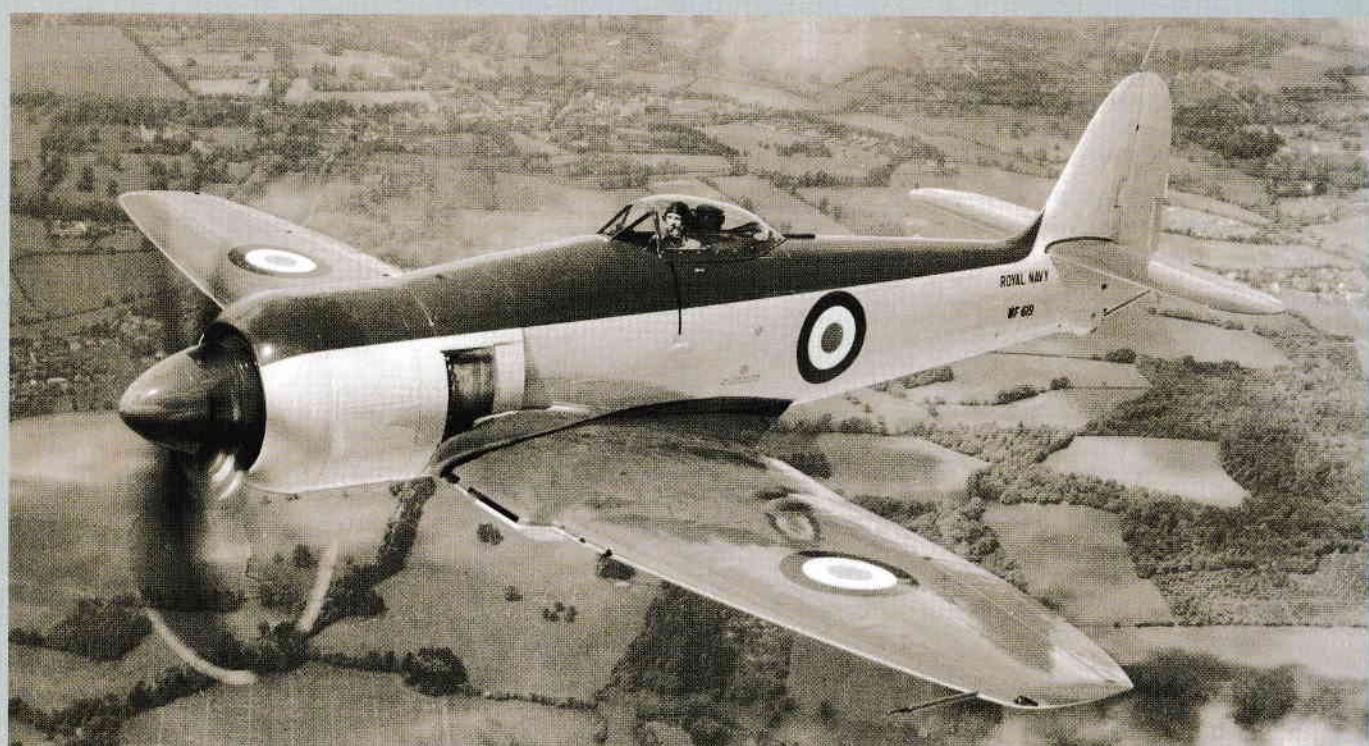
To some, the numbers "232" have no special meaning, but to fans of the Hawker Sea Fury they do. Whether it was an early Warbird memory of Frank Sanders doing aerobatics in a beautifully finished Sea Fury marked 232 on the Warbird/air racing circuit or recent memories of Mike Brown's Reno success, 232 is one of the most well-known Sea Furies still flying.

For many aviation enthusiasts, the Hawker Aircraft Ltd. Sea Fury represents the ultimate piston-engine fighter. History of the Sea Fury can be traced back to earlier Hawker fighters such as the Typhoon and Tempest, which established the company's pattern for big, high-performance aircraft. Early in 1943, Hawker built a fighter powered by a Bristol Centaurus sleeve-valve radial to Specification F.6/42. The design became known as the Tempest Light Fighter. A Naval version was designed to Specification N.7/43 by April of that year and designers suggested using the Centaurus XII on both — with Hawker building the land-based fighter and Boulton-Paul Aircraft Ltd. being responsible for the Naval variant.

The Ministry of Defense ordered six F.2/43 prototypes with various powerplants — two powered by Rolls-Royce Griffons, two with Centaurus XXIIs, one with a Centaurus XII, and one as a test airframe. Hawker later received a contract for 200 F.2/43 (Fury for the Royal Air Force) and 200 N.22/43 (Sea Fury for the Fleet Air Arm) and 100 Naval versions to be built by Boulton-Paul.

The prototype Fury, serial NX798, flew on 1 September 1944 powered by a Centaurus XII and fitted with a four-blade propeller. This aircraft was followed by LA610 on 27 November





Magnificent view of a factory-fresh Hawker Sea Fury FB. Mk. II WF619 (during this time frame, the British dispensed with Roman numeral designations in favor of Arabic numerals) up on a test flight. At a time when the world's major air forces were committed to the design and mass production of jet warplanes, the Royal Navy went to war in Korea with propeller-driven Sea Furies and Fairey Fireflies. However, it is rather remarkable that even though land-based MiG 15s outperformed the Sea Fury, the type performed its assigned duties with spectacular success. When tangling with the enemy jets, Sea Fury pilots managed to score several victories courtesy of their aircraft's maneuverability and firepower. (Mike Stroud Collection)

The way many of us remember 232 —
of the Sanders Chino hangar after an
evening flight.
(M. O'Leary)

parked in front
The aircraft was pictured during October 1977.

powered by a Griffon 85 with a six-blade Rotol contra-rotating prop (LA610 was later equipped with a Napier Sabre VII engine and reached a top speed of 485 mph). The name Fury I was chosen for the land-based fighter and Sea Fury X for the Naval version. With the end of the war nearing, Boulton-Paul was removed from the program and the company's incomplete Naval prototype, VR857, was transferred to Hawker.

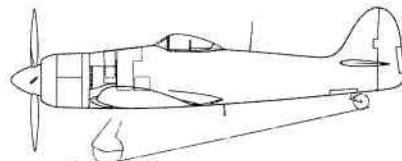
Hawker completed two Sea Fury prototypes: SR661 using a Centaurus XII with four-blade prop, fixed wings, and an arrester hook; and SR666 with a Centaurus XV engine, five-blade Rotol prop and folding wings.

With the war now over, the RAF land-based version was cancelled but work continued on the Naval variant. The first of 50 Sea Fury F. Mk. 10s flew during

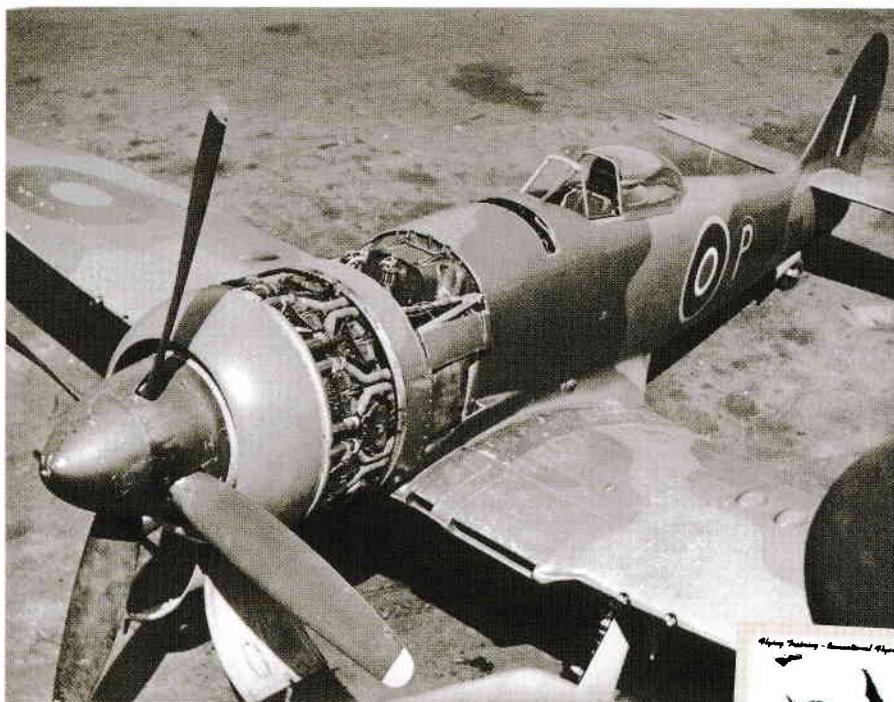
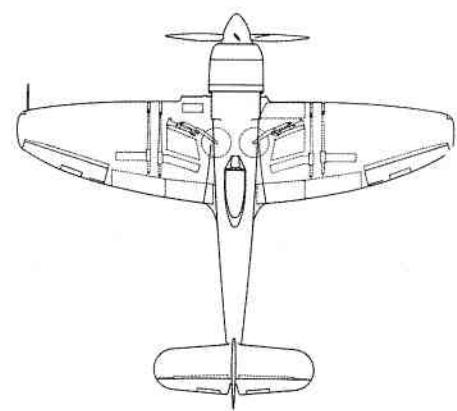
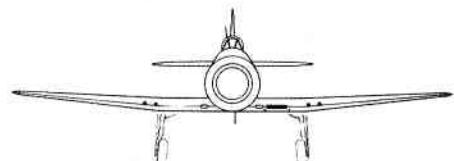


WARBIRDS INTERNATIONAL Profile

September of 1946, with trials aboard HMS Victorious starting in the winter of 1946-47. Early production aircraft featured the four-blade prop, but after successful testing of the five-blade unit on SR666 and a production aircraft, all subsequent production aircraft featured the distinctive Rotol propeller.



Factory drawing of Fury Mk. I Specification F.2/43 fitted with a Bristol Centaurus XV engine. (Mike Stroud Collection)



The first F2/43 Fury prototype was NX798, here displaying its Centaurus engine and four-blade prop. Note the circled P behind the roundel, which signified the aircraft's prototype status. This aircraft was later painted in a civil scheme with the registration G-AKRY and was used as a demonstrator before being sold to Egypt. As a point of interest, Hawker's civil scheme was utilized by Frank Sanders for *Dreadnought*. (Mike Stroud Collection)

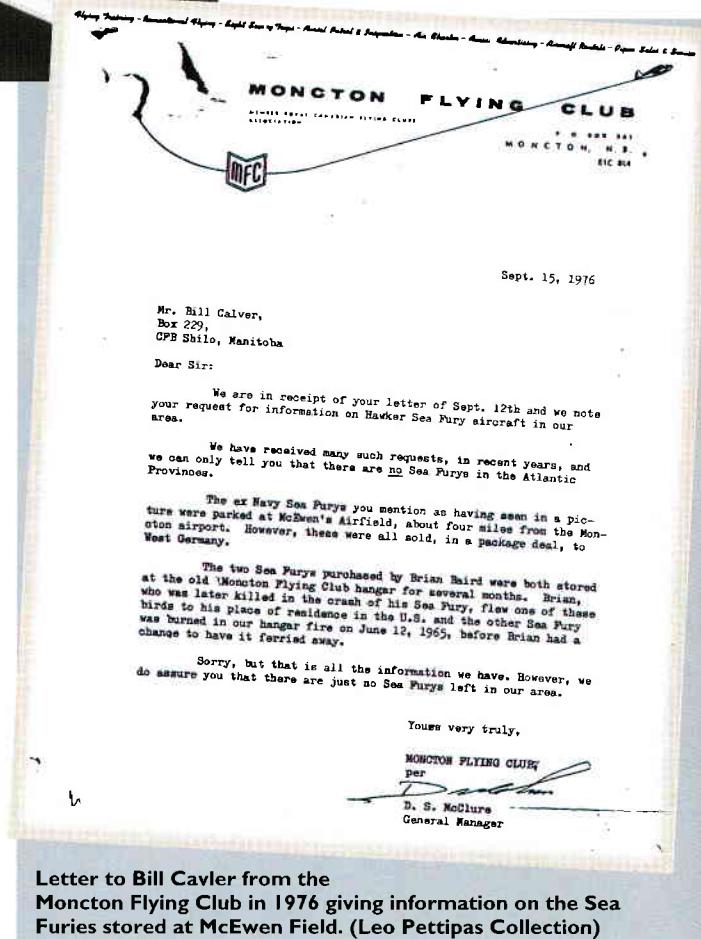
Sea Fury testing was later carried out with external stores including high explosive bombs, smoke floats, rockets, drop tanks, and napalm tanks. This testing resulted in the fighter-bomber Sea Fury FB.11, which became the most commonly produced Sea Fury.

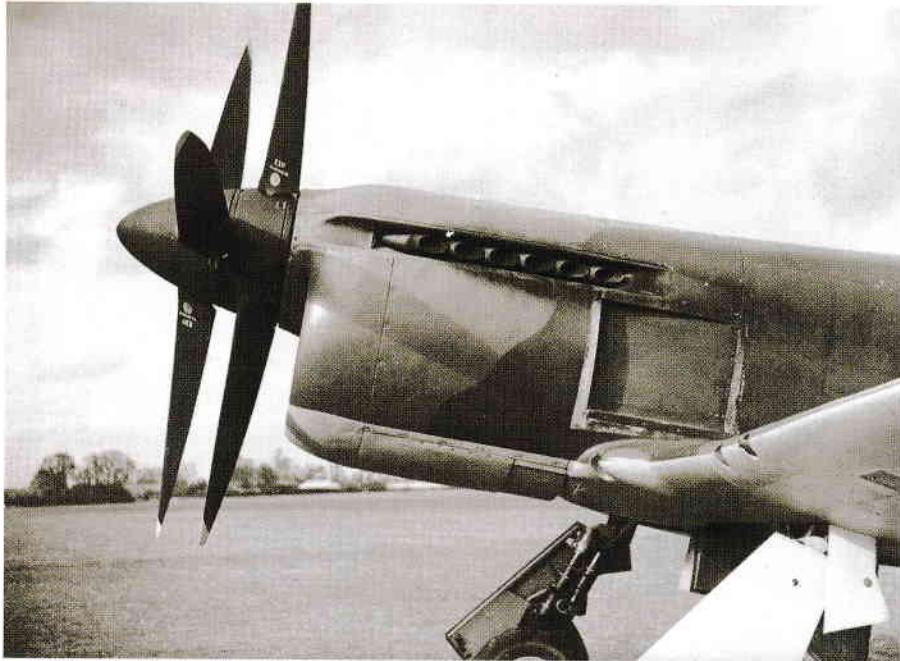
Sea Fury production totaled 949 aircraft — a respectable number considering massive post-war cancellations and the introduction of the jet warplane. Of that number, Hawker built some 924 while Fokker in The Netherlands manufactured 25 under license. After the seven prototypes were produced, production consisted of: 50 F.10s, 617 FB.11s, 61 T.20s, 22 FB.50s, 55 Baghdad Furies, three Baghdad Fury Ts, 92 Mk. 60s, five T.61s, and twelve Egyptian Sea Furies.

Sea Furies were used by numerous forces including: Royal Navy, Royal Australian Navy, Royal Canadian Navy, Burma, Cuba's Batista regime and Castro's Revolutionary Air Force, Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, The Netherlands, and in Germany as target tugs with Deutsche Luftfahrt Beratungsdienst.

ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) selected the Sea Fury to replace its fleet of Supermarine Seafires — an aircraft that never really adapted well to the rigors of carrier use. The Canadian government purchased 74 Sea Furies in six groups. The first group consisted of 27 airframes serials TF992-TF999, TG113-TG129 and VR918-919. The entire group was





taken on strength on 24/25 May 1948.

Number 803 Squadron would be the first to receive the Sea Fury as they had passed their Seafires onto No. 883 Squadron. After conversion training at RNAS Gannet, No. 803 Squadron hoisted the Sea Furies aboard HMCS

Magnificent and set sail for Canada on 25 May. Quickly disposing of their Seafires, No.883 Squadron converted to the Sea Fury in November 1948.

The second group of Sea Furies was made up of ten aircraft accepted on 14-16 February 1949 and included: TF985,

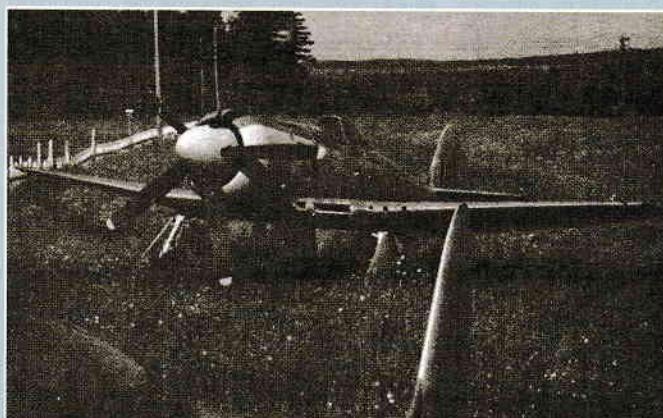
Certainly the least attractive Fury/Sea Fury engine configuration was when LA610 was fitted with a Rolls-Royce Griffon 85 with six-blade Rotol contra-rotating propellers. First flying on 27 November 1944, at this point design F.2/43 was given the name Fury I. The aircraft would be later fitted with a Centaurus and then a Sabre. (Mike Stroud Collection)

VW225, VW227, VW230, VW231, VW239, VW552, VW563, VW571, and VW584. Ten aircraft was the normal complement of fighters carried aboard HMCS Magnificent.

On 11 October 1950, RCN pilots picked up the third group of fighters during a 14-week cruise. The Sea Furies comprised: VX675, VX682, VX686, VX688, VX690, VX692, and VX695.

While operating in the Mediterranean in 1951, the fourth group of fighters was flown from the UK to meet the Magnificent. The eleven aircraft were: WG564 and WG566-WG575. The missing 12th aircraft (WG565) had a mechanical issue prior to delivery and was picked up by the carrier on its return trip.

The fifth group, consisting of nine aircraft was picked up following anoth-

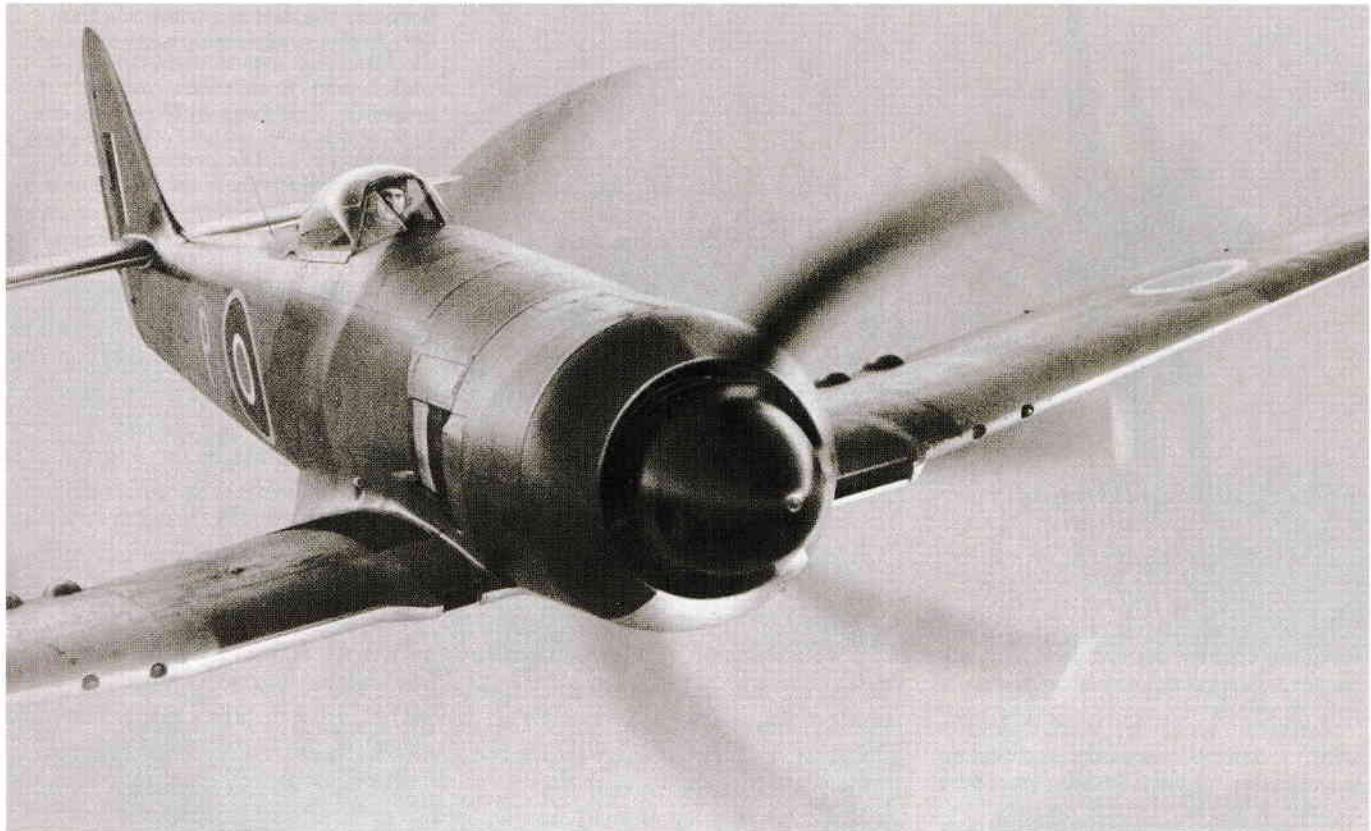


The Sea Furies had been left to the mercies of the elements.

"Actually, the aircraft were not in particularly bad condition," recalled Brian Baird. "I had come from flying RCAF Sabres, but I wanted a piston-engine aircraft from the WWII era. Although the Sea Fury did not exactly fit the time period, I could not argue with the \$500 price tag." (Sanders Family)



"I had to perform all the work in the open," recalled Brian Baird. "Finances were extremely limited and I took to living in a tent by the Sea Furies." (Sanders Family)



Test pilot of NX798 drives the aircraft right up to the camera aircraft. Note the cannon ports and wing bulges for the feed mechanism.
(Mike Stroud Collection)

er cruise during December 1952 and consisted of: WJ300, WJ301, and WM472-WM478. The last group was picked up in Glasgow in November 1953 and comprised WZ633-WZ641.

No. 803 Squadron, which became

No. 870, and No. 883 Squadron, which became No. 871, operated the Sea Fury. Prefixes were added in November 1952 with the adoption of the US Navy type letter prefixes to squadron numerical designators — done in order

to compete in joint exercises with the American fleet. The RCN squadrons became VF-870 and VF-871.

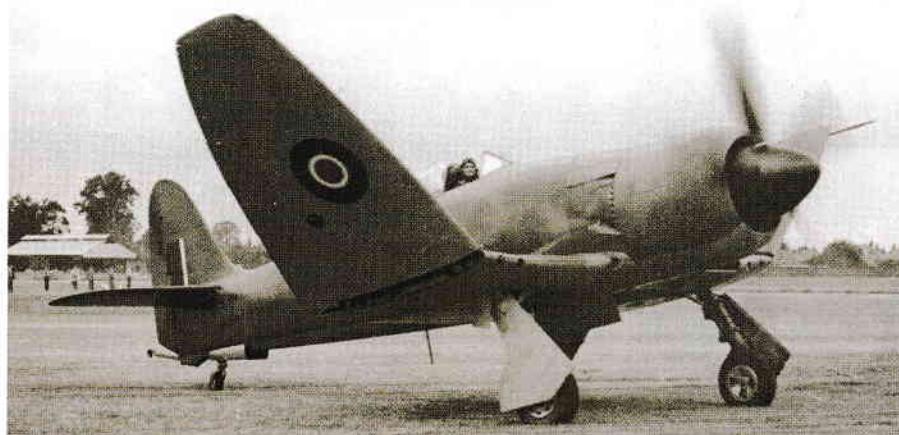
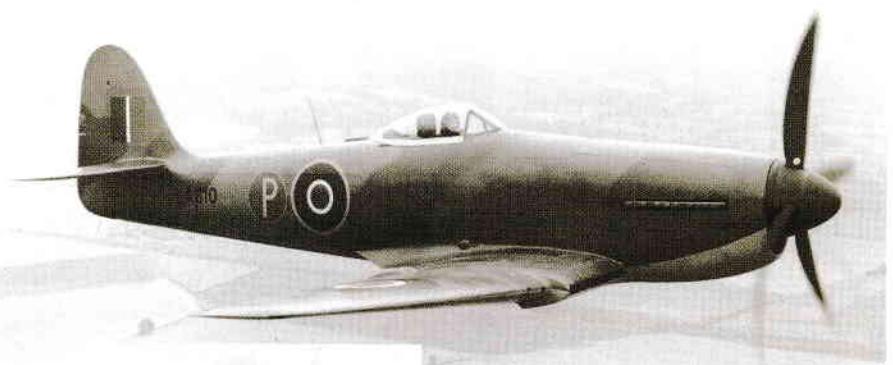
The RCN Sea Fury fleet began to be phased out of operation in March 1954 when VF-870 gave up its aircraft in antic-



Brian's luck with the Sea Furies could best be described as "hard." This sad photo illustrates TG114/CF-OYE after Bill Fornoff wrecked it during an unauthorized flight. Given the time period, the aircraft could have been scrapped but it was saved and would fly again (albeit in various forms!). (Brian Baird)

ipation of being re-equipped with McDonnell Banshees. A training squadron, VT-40, was formed in May 1954 to train Sea Fury pilots to keep VF-871 fully staffed since they were still scheduled to be deployed until December 1955. This also shows how rapidly the jets were overtaking piston-engine fighters.

The last carrier qualifications were carried out on 19 June 1956 and a test



Unfolding the wings, test pilot Bill Humble taxis SR666 for takeoff at the June 1946 Farnborough Air Show. SR666 was the first fully Navalized Sea Fury prototype. At this point, the aircraft still retains the four-blade propeller but this would soon be changed to the five-blade Rotol unit. (Mike Stroud Collection)

unit, VX-10, flew the Sea Fury until August 1956. VF-871 began to phase out their fighter-bombers in August 1956 and ferried the planes to a storage facility at Scoudouc, New Brunswick.



Frank taking Dennis (left) and Brian for their first ride in family P-51D N117E. This was on the same day the Mustang was sold (\$14,000!) to David Webster. (Sanders Family)

Fuselage center sections of TG114 (nearest camera) and VR919. (Sanders Family)

Perhaps the most elegant of the Fury/Sea Fury series was Fury LA610 fitted with the massive Sabre VII. It was also the fastest — hitting a top speed of 485-mph. (Mike Stroud Collection)

The last Sea Fury was retired from VF-871 on 31 August 1956 after it participated in a four-plane formation at the Halifax Navy Day Celebrations while the last "official flight" was on 3 April 1957. Sea Fury WG565 was donated to the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and ferried there on 18 April 1957, and it is still on display at the Naval Museum of Alberta.



The start of it all. The remains of TG114, VR918, and VR 919 on the Sanders family ranch in Chandler, Arizona, during 1969. Left to right: Uncle George Sanders, Joe Yancy, Vearl Parson, "Mystery Guy," and Dennis Sanders. (Sanders Family)



SURPLUS RCN SEA FURIES

Three of the RCN's surplus Sea Furies play a role in the rest of our story: TG114, VR918, and VR919. First, let's examine their RCN careers.

TG114 was an FB.11 delivered to the Fleet Air Arm in December 1947. The aircraft was flown to RNAS Gannet, Eglinton, Northern Ireland, and used for conversion training for RCN No. 803 Squadron pilots, being taken on strength by the RCN on 24 May 1948. It departed for Canada aboard HMCS Magnificent with the squadron code BC*L. In service,



it was used by both Nos. 803 and 883 Squadrons and wore the BC*C code as well as BC*L. The Sea Fury had a minor incident when it ran off the runway in

Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, hitting a light and damaging the prop on 30 November 1948 while being flown by Lt. J.G. Wright. On 15 December 1949, L/Cmdr.

**Royal Canadian Navy Sea Fury
TG114/BC*F taxiing with wings folded at
Mount Hope Airport, Ontario, on 9 June
1952. Note rocket stubs. (Jack McNulty)**

Number 803 Squadron Sea Furies aboard HMCS *Magnificent*, Colon, Panama, on 15 March 1949. Both TG114 and VR918 are in the photograph. (James Ward/DND/National Archives of Canada)

R.A Creery set a speed record with the plane, flying from Malton, Ontario, to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, in 1-hr 45-min. By July 1951, the plane was coded BC*F with No. 870 Squadron. Its color scheme was the RCN light gray/dark gray camouflage. Stuck off strength on 2 October 1956, the Sea Fury was placed in storage at Scoudouc, NB. Scoudouc was a WWII RCAF base located 10-mi

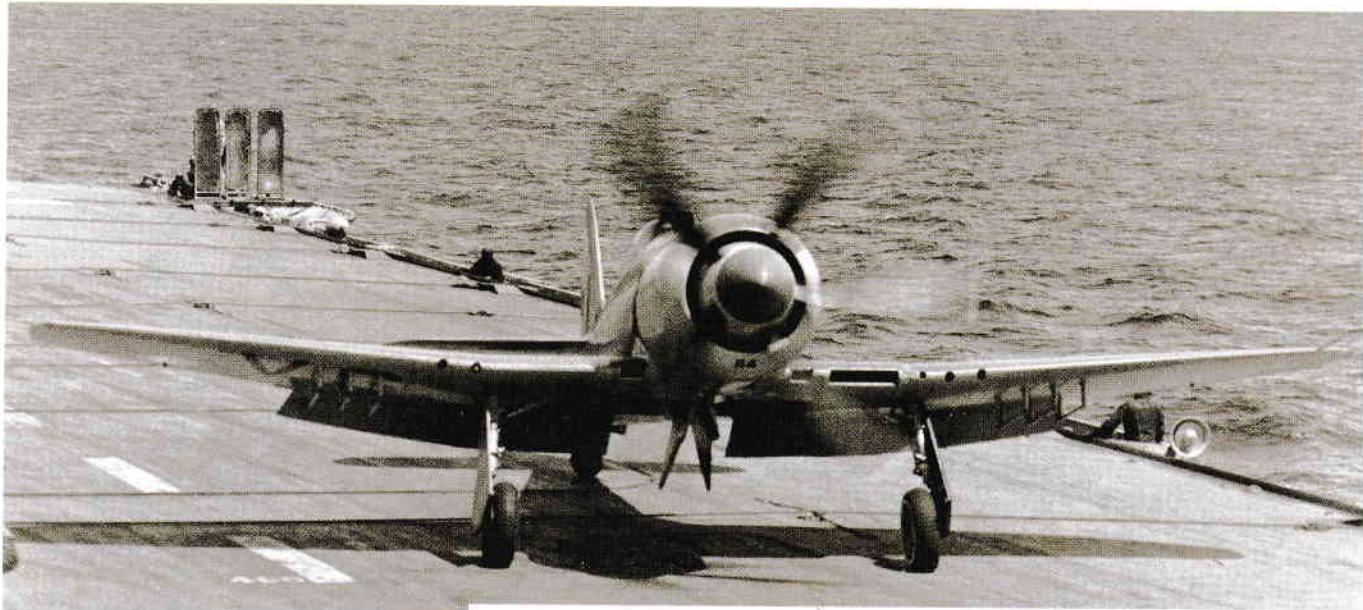


**Rear fuselage of VR919 that Frank used in the rebuild of 232.
(Sanders Family)**



Frank Sanders loading TG114's fuselage center section and powerplant on Darryl Greenamyer's truck. This section would eventually be utilized in the rebuilding of N19SF *Dreadnought*. (Sanders Family)

Wings from TG114 and VR918. (Sanders Family)



TG114 in position for takeoff from HMCS Magnificent on 14 May 1952. (R.C. Duiven/DND/NAoC)

northeast of Moncton, NB, that became the RCN's remote storage facility. After disposal from Crown Assets, TG114 was moved to McEwen Airfield near Moncton, after being purchased by McEwen Construction.

VR918 was delivered to the FAA in February 1948 and also used by the RCN for conversion training at RNAS Gannet. Taken on strength on 24 May 1948, it accompanied TG114 aboard HMCS Magnificent and at some point It also wore

(continued on page 38)



Sea Fury TG114 at Patricia Bay Airport, British Columbia. (P. Young/DND/NAoC)



Frank with various Sea Fury components on Darryl's truck. (Sanders Family)



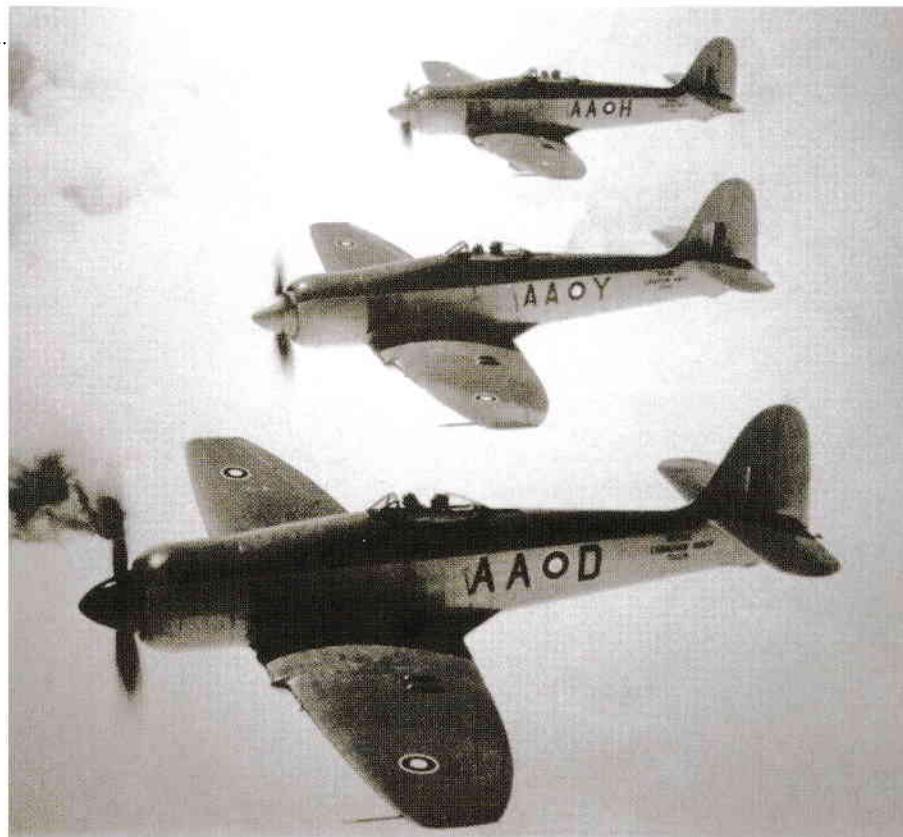
Vern Parsons loading TG114's wing sections on Greenamyer's well-used truck. (Sanders Family)

TWO THREE TWO

(continued from page 29)

the BC*L code with No. 803 Squadron. The Sea Fury had a few incidents in its career. On 19 March 1949, it floated over wires into the No. 2 barrier aboard HMCS Magnificent while being flown by Lt. J.G. Wright who was definitely having his problems with the type (see above). On 11 June 1949, Lt. K.S. Nicholson had a forced landing in it at Dartmouth after encountering engine vibrations and a power loss. The Hawker was belly landed on 3 May 1951 at Dartmouth. Along the way it wore codes AA*Y, AA*S, and NAVY*115. The Sea Fury was struck off strength at Scoudouc on 2 October 1956 and later stored by McEwen Construction of Moncton until 1963 where it was broken up for spares.

VR919 was also part of the first group of Sea Furies acquired by the RCN and taken on strength on 24 May 1948, accompanying TG114 and VR918 onboard HMCS Magnificent. It suffered a



Three-ship formation of No. 871 Squadron Sea Furies on 26 May 1952. VR918/AA*Y is in the middle. (D. Quirt/DND/NAoC)

few incidents while in service. On 4 January 1949 it was being flown by Lt. V.J. Wilgress when it was struck by a seagull that damaged the prop, cowling, and starboard wing. On 26 May 1949, the landing gear would not lower for Lt. J.C. Runciman and it was



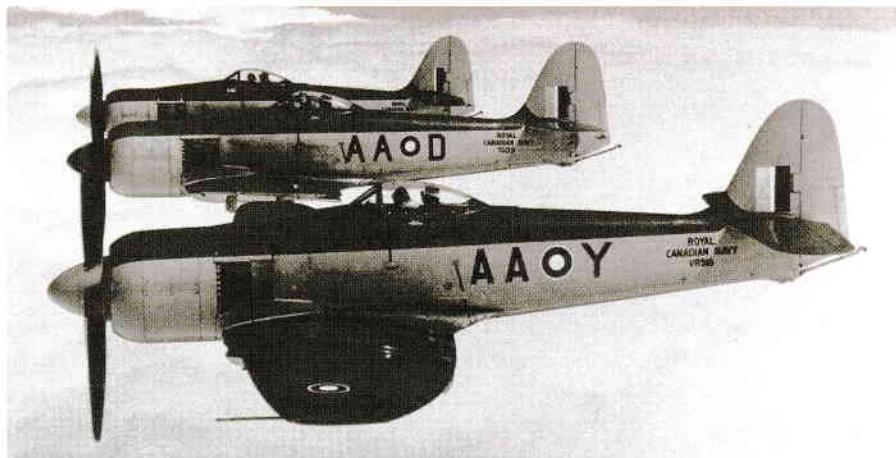
Wonder if the Highway Patrol approved this load? (Sanders Family)



Ready to roll. Left to right: Dennis Sanders, Mystery Guy, Vern Parsons, and Uncle George. (Sanders Family)



Loading TG114's fuselage onto the center section before storing the aircraft in the garage at the Sanders' home in Tustin, California. Bruce Cook, Frank Sanders, and Leroy Penhall help put the jigsaw together. (Sanders Family)



VR918/AA*Y takes the lead. (D. Quirt/DND/NAoC)

landed gear up. The only known squadron code was AA*L. The plane was struck off strength on 2 October 1956, at Scoudouc, NB, and placed in storage. Acquired by McEwen Construction, it was also broken up for spares.

BRINGING 232 BACK TO LIFE

The story of Sea Fury 232 began in 1962 when Brian Baird (ex-RCAF Sabre fighter pilot) came across nine ex-RCN Sea Furies in a meadow in New Brunswick, Canada (McEwen Field).

The airplanes were 11-mi from the nearest airport. Baird bought two for \$500 each. The Sea Furies were towed to Moncton Airport and readied for flight. Baird spent most of his money getting them airworthy and ferried one (TG114 registered CF-OYF) to Ottawa and left the other (VX686 CF-PRN) in a hangar in Moncton. A gentleman from the US offered Baird a job ferrying P-51s and in return promised to get the Sea Fury in condition for racing. Unfortunately, the job did not pan out but work was completed on the Sea Fury but it soon

became apparent to Baird that the gentleman was trying to take the aircraft away from him. Instead of risking the loss of the Sea Fury in a legal battle, Baird flew it out to a small airport in Louisiana. However, the plane (now on the US registry as N54M) was badly damaged at Houma, Louisiana, in a landing accident.

"I first met Brian when I was in high school," recalled Michael O'Leary. "At the time, I was very interested in ex-WWII aircraft and Van Nuys was home to about eight Mustangs — not one in military markings — and a variety of other interesting aircraft. I was introduced to Brian by Ralph Payne who worked on a number of the ex-military planes at the field. Ralph said something like, 'You and Brian have a lot in common.' We did. When Brian got out of the RCAF, he took a number of jobs including that of a crop duster. He was deeply interested in WWII aircraft and was astounded when he came across the Sea Furies. One must remember that this was at a time when there was almost no interest in such aircraft. Bad luck dogged Brian with the aircraft and he ran into a number of unscrupulous people — including the folks in Indiana that want-



It barely fits — TG114 is stuffed into the garage. (Sanders Family)

Some work on TG114 gets underway. (Sanders Family)



Transporting the rebuilt Sea Fury parts to Long Beach Airport for reassembly. (Sanders Family)



Fuselage center section of VR919, which was used in the rebuild of 232. (Sanders Family)



Damage done to VR919 when it was broken up for spares. (Sanders Family)





VR919 following its accident at HMCS Shearwater on 26 May 1949. (R.W. Blakeley/DND/NAoC)

Sea Furies at HMCS Shearwater prior to departure with the 31st Support Air Group (SAG) for weapons training at CJATC Rivers during November 1951.

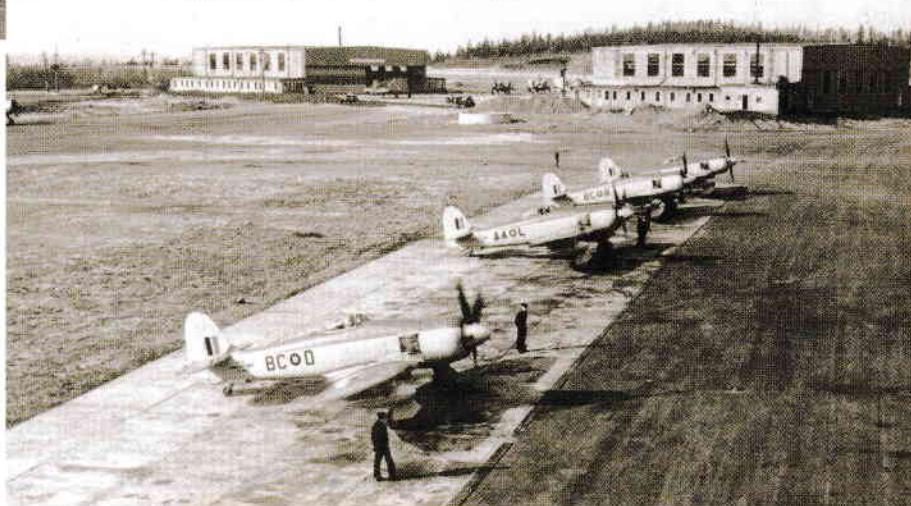
VR919/AA*L (second from left) is a 30th Carrier Air Group aircraft (871 Squadron) loaned to the SAG for the occasion.

(DND/NAoC)

ed him to ferry surplus RCAF P-51Ds. They obviously had their eyes on the surviving Sea Fury. At that time, there was an attempt to supply Cuba with ex-RCAF Mustangs and since the Cubans had Sea Furies, tossing in one of these aircraft probably sweetened the deal.

"He thought getting the flying aircraft to Louisiana would save the plane until he got a more regular job that would supply the funding he needed to rebuild the Sea Fury. However, he had not escaped the problems that seemed to be following his Sea Furies."

In Louisiana, Brian related that Bill Fornof made an unauthorized flight in



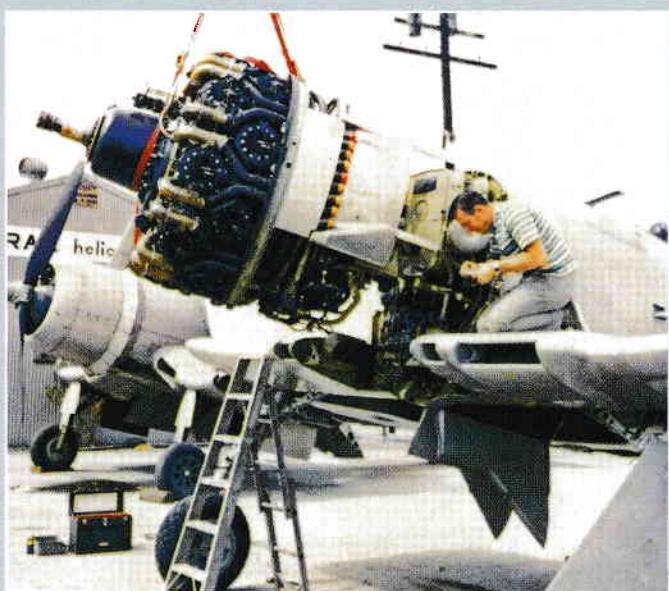
the Sea Fury while Brian was not present and immediately turned the big aircraft on its back, causing extensive damage. "All these events certainly had damped Brian's enthusiasm for his fellow Warbird enthusiasts, but he preserved. Fortunately, Brian was able to obtain a job with TWA as a flight engineer — the first step into working his way into the captain's seat. At this time, he also met fellow TWA employee Mike Dillon

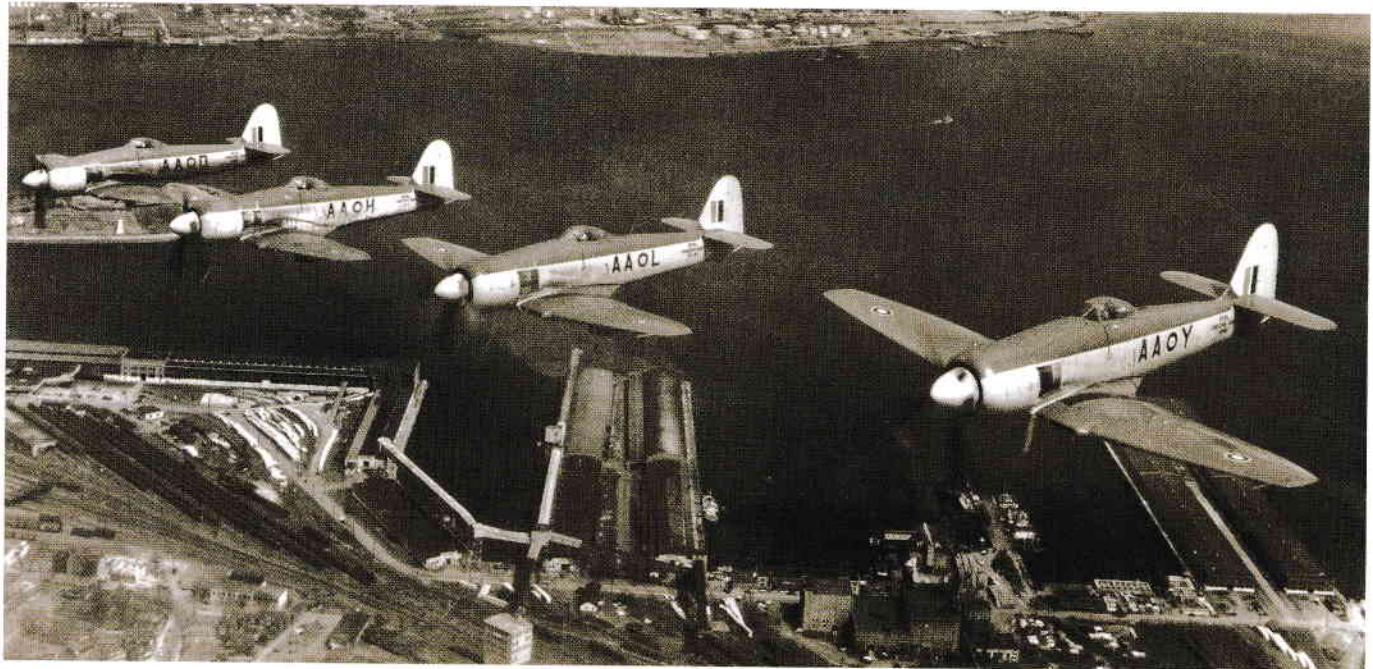
who shared a similar interest and would become one of the pioneers of the Warbird movement when he bought and restored a derelict Curtiss P-40. Traveling as much as he did, Brian visited airports across the country and recorded complete and damaged airframes of WWII aircraft. It was amazing what he discovered.”

Baird bought a spare fuselage, tail section, and wings from VR918 and



Mating the Centaurus to 232. (Sanders Family)





Sea Furies from No. 871 Squadron over Halifax Harbor on 26 May 1952. VR919/AA*L is second from right. (D. Quirt/DND/NAoC)

VR919 to help rebuild the wreck of TG114 because his other Sea Fury (VX686) was lost in a hangar fire in Moncton at this time. Baird hauled the wreckage and parts to Arizona when he

moved there to work for TWA. He stored the remains on the farm of the Sanders family in Queen Creek, Arizona. During this time period he also brought a surplus ex-RCAF Sabre

and had plans on getting both aircraft back into flying condition. Brian continued making contacts in the emerging Warbird world and began flying a variety of surplus WWII aircraft (giving the

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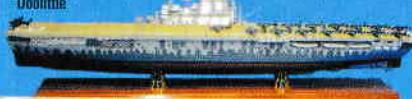


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Editor his first Mustang ride in the process). Tragically on 7 August 1969, Baird was killed after striking a cable strung across the Frazier River while ferrying a NAA T-28 from Alaska to San Francisco. Baird's widow Pauline then put the Sea Fury up for sale.

FRANK SANDERS

Frank Sanders was well known in the drag racing industry as a speed equipment supplier. Sanders' S&S Headers based in Phoenix, Arizona, was one of the earliest creators of performance tube headers,



Sea Fury VR919 at the Scoudouc Airfield remote storage facility during the late 1950s/early 1960s. (DND)



**Sea Fury WG565 of No. 871 Squadron
after hitting the barrier aboard HMCS
Magnificent. (DND)**

supplying them to many of the top racers. Prior to retiring from National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) racing, Frank won

the Super Stock Limited Production class at the 1963 NHRA Winter Nationals in Pomona, California.

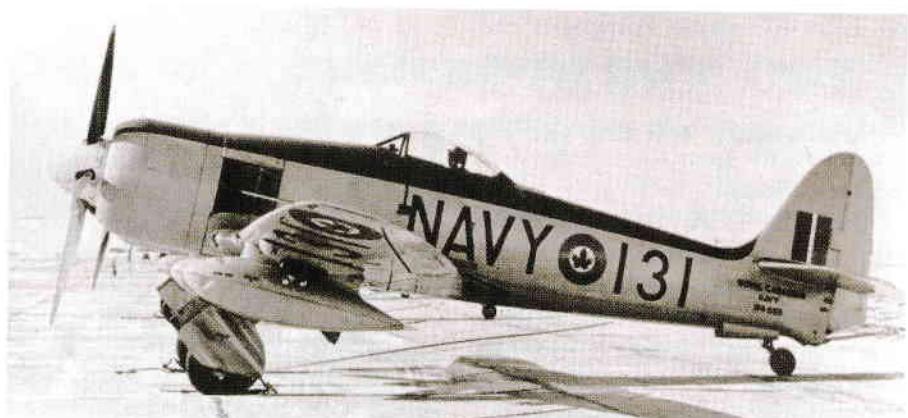
In the early 1960s Frank purchased a T-6 from Whiteman Airpark in southern California. He flew this for a while but was looking for something a little more exotic so he traded it and some cash to Mike Coutches (see last issue of *Warbirds International*) for P-51D N117E. While operating his P-51D out of Sky Harbor Airport in Phoenix, Frank met a TWA pilot named Mike Dillon. Through Dillon, Sanders was



Finally complete! Some people thought it would never be done, but N232 basks in the Long Beach sunshine. (Doug Fisher Collection)

introduced to Baird, and the three of them became good friends. During this time, Dave Zeuschel was also phasing out of drag racing and began building Merlin engines. Because of their similar interests, the men bonded together in searching out vintage aircraft and engines. Dave used Brian's notes on a cross-country journey that recovered four Mustangs, engines, and many components. Sanders sold his P-51D in 1966 and afterwards built a Midget Mustang. When Baird's widow offered the Sea Fury for sale, Frank bought it thinking he would fix it up and keep it for about a year.

Sanders moved his family — wife Ruth and sons Dennis and Brian — to Santa Ana, California, in 1969. He also moved the Sea Fury and stuffed his prize, gear up, into his garage and started the rebuild. On the side, he opened up a shop at Long Beach Airport and worked on a T-33 for Leroy Penhall and on Cliff Cummins' Mustang NX79111 (Cummins had bellied the Mustang in at the Reno races following engine failure and it required repair). This led to the start of Sanders Aircraft. One of the early projects completed was the restoration of a



WG565 at CJATC River in early 1953. (Western Canada Aviation Museum)

P-40 for Sue Parish and the Air Zoo in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where the P-40 is still on display.

The Sea Fury was a complex rebuild with Sanders having to mate the center and rear sections of the spare fuselage (VR919) back together after discovering that the original fuselage center section (TG114) had been compressed over an inch in its accident. Besides using the fuselage from VR919, the rebuild of TG114 also incorporated one wing off of VR918. The spare fuselage required a lot of work — all the hydraulic lines, electrical wires, and control cables had been

cut with bolt cutters. All parts of value, such as instruments, etc, had been removed and to get at some parts like the pneumatic brake differential control valve, holes had been hacked in the fuselage. It took Frank months to get the fuselage finished.

The wing bolts also posed a challenge for Sanders. A strange three-piece bolt with expanding sleeve devices created a problem when Frank could only find two of the three pieces during assembly. Guessing what the spec would be for the bolt, Frank had John Sandberg (who was also starting



Freshly painted N232 in front of Vern Barker's hangar — soon to become Pylon Air. (Doug Fisher Collection)

Greenamyer prepares to take 232 up for its first post-restoration test flight. Leroy Penhall's P-51D in the background would serve as chase. (Doug Fisher Collection)

to make his name known in the Warbird world) make him some new ones and also wrote to Hawker for drawings. The drawings and the bolts arrived on the same day — they had guessed correctly!

Frank dug in with both hands and started disassembling the Bristol Centaurus engine for rebuild and was impressed with the sleeve valve setup saying it was beautifully executed and really efficient. With a prop located and overhauled it was time to assemble the big fighter, now registered N232 with the FAA. The parts were loaded on trucks and driven to Vern Barker's hangar at Long Beach Airport. Here Frank, Don Lott, and Jerry Hombyrd took ten-days to clean, mask, and paint the Sea Fury in ten different colors to represent a Sea Fury from No. 802 Squadron, Royal Navy — thus becoming one of the first accurately painted ex-military aircraft in the new Warbird movement.

Frank believed he should have a professional test pilot fly his airplane so he got Darryl Greenamyer to do the hon-



Sea Fury WG567 aboard HMCS Magnificent on 30 September 1953. This aircraft would become N878M. (T.C. Galley/DND/NAoC)

ors. When Darryl wanted his exhaust system modified on his newly acquired F8F-2 Bearcat, registered N1111L, he came to Frank, so now Frank was coming to Darryl to do the test flight. Greenamyer took N232 up for its first post-restoration flight from Long Beach with Leroy Penhall flying chase in his P-51D. Greenamyer flew the Sea Fury

over to Chino after the successful flight. Once he had landed, Frank was anxious to take the Sea Fury up for his first flight and he asked Greenamyer for some pointers and Darryl said, "It flies just like a Bearcat!" Frank thought, that's great but he had never flown a Bearcat either. He wasted no time trying N232 out for himself. It

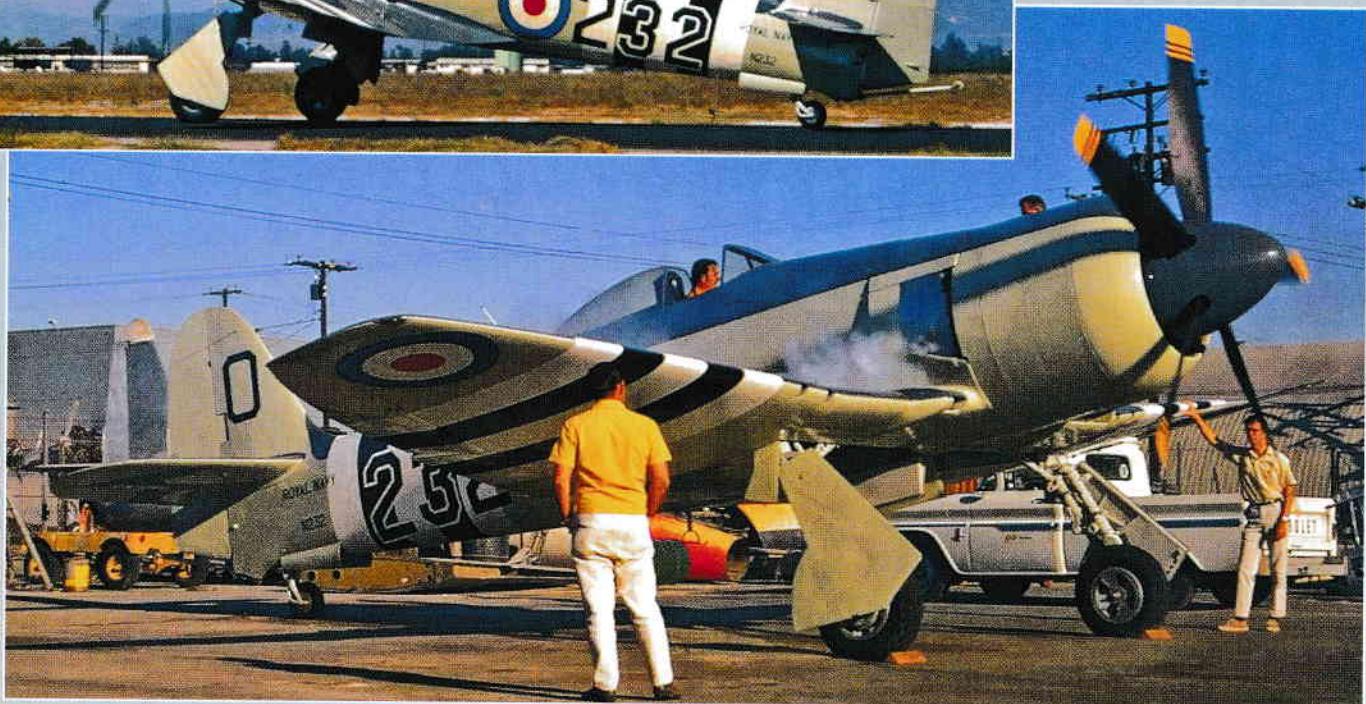
had only taken twelve-months to rebuild the crumpled Sea Fury!

(To Be Continued)

WI



Frank Sanders prepares to go aloft for his first flight in 232 at Chino. (Doug Fisher Collection)



TWO THREE TWO

**FOR MANY WARBIRD
ENTHUSIASTS, THE
HAWKER SEA FURY
KNOWN AS 232 IS**



**PROBABLY THE MOST
FAMOUS EXAMPLE OF THE
BREED. WE PRESENT AN
EXTREMELY DETAILED
HISTORY OF THIS CLASSIC
AIRCRAFT / PART TWO**

BY DOUG FISHER

**WARBIRDS
INTERNATIONAL
Profile**

AIRSHOWS, RACING, AND SMOKE GENERATORS

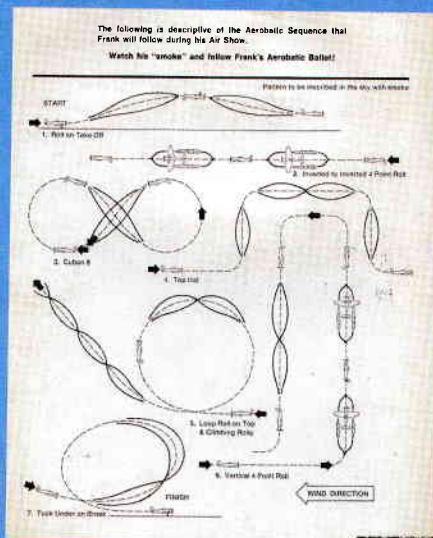
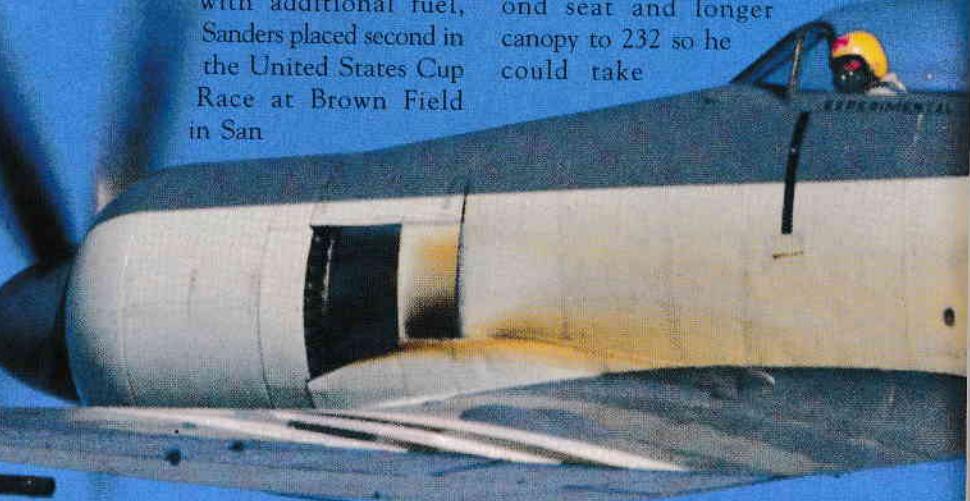
Within two-months of the first flight, Frank Sanders set out to find a pilot to fly the Sea Fury in the upcoming September 1970 California 1000 Race at Mojave, California, as he did not have the required commercial license at the time. Bob Metcalfe flew the first half of the race with Lyle Shelton taking over for the second half. They finished fourth in a field of 20. Sherm Cooper won the race in his Sea Fury Miss Merced, which had been modified to carry extra fuel. This allowed Sherm to fly the race non-stop and finish five laps ahead of everyone else.

In July 1971, after increasing 232's range by wetting the wings with additional fuel, Sanders placed second in the United States Cup Race at Brown Field in San

Diego, California, and in November 1971 won the second California 1000 with an average speed of 346.55 mph. Sanders did not race 232 again until 1975 when he finished 6th in the California National Air Races.

Frank never raced the Sea Fury at Reno as he was blind in his right eye and was concerned about the effect that might have on Reno's counter-clockwise racecourse. On the counter-clockwise course with left turns and passing being completed on the right, Frank thought that his lack of peripheral vision to the right could cause a safety concern. Both the Mojave and San Diego courses were clockwise, so passing would be completed on the left therefore not posing a problem.

In 1972, Frank added a second seat and longer canopy to 232 so he could take



Frank had this card printed up for airshow spectators so they could follow his Sea Fury aerobatic routine. The other side had a photo of 232. (Doug Fisher Collection)

Ruth for flights. The Sanders canopy has become a common modification on current single-seat Sea Furies.

During the 1970s, Frank became well known for his aerobatic routine accented with smoke generators he developed in 1972. With his smoke system on, "Frank's Aerobic Ballet" consisted of:

- 1) Roll on takeoff
- 2) Inverted to inverted four-point roll
- 3) Cuban 8
- 4) Top hat
- 5) Loop with a roll on top, followed by climbing rolls
- 6) Vertical four-point roll
- 7) Tuck under on break

Frank's smoke generators were so suc-



With 232 up and flying and the first of the Sanders Smokewinders operational, Frank surprised the airshow world with a dynamic new act that accentuated the performance of the Sea Fury — the entire routine being sketched out with the Smokewinders. The Smokewinders were so effective that they were soon in demand by NASA and other companies wanting to study aerodynamics in a most illuminating manner. (Doug Fisher Collection)



cessful that it led NASA to approach him to develop a smoke generating system for wake vortex studies. Sanders Smoke Technologies Inc. has refined this system into the Smokewinder and SCSG series smoke generating systems they manufacture today at their lone facility.

MOVING ON

By 1980, Frank had decided to sell N232. The plane was sold to Bill Sims who had it registered N232J and painted in RCN colors. When Frank owned N232 the FAA had wanted him to change the registration as another aircraft also carried the same registration. Frank had held out and not changed the reg, but upon the change of ownership the J was added to the registration.

Sims had Sanders reinstall all the plumbing for drop tanks so he could carry extra fuel to attempt a speed

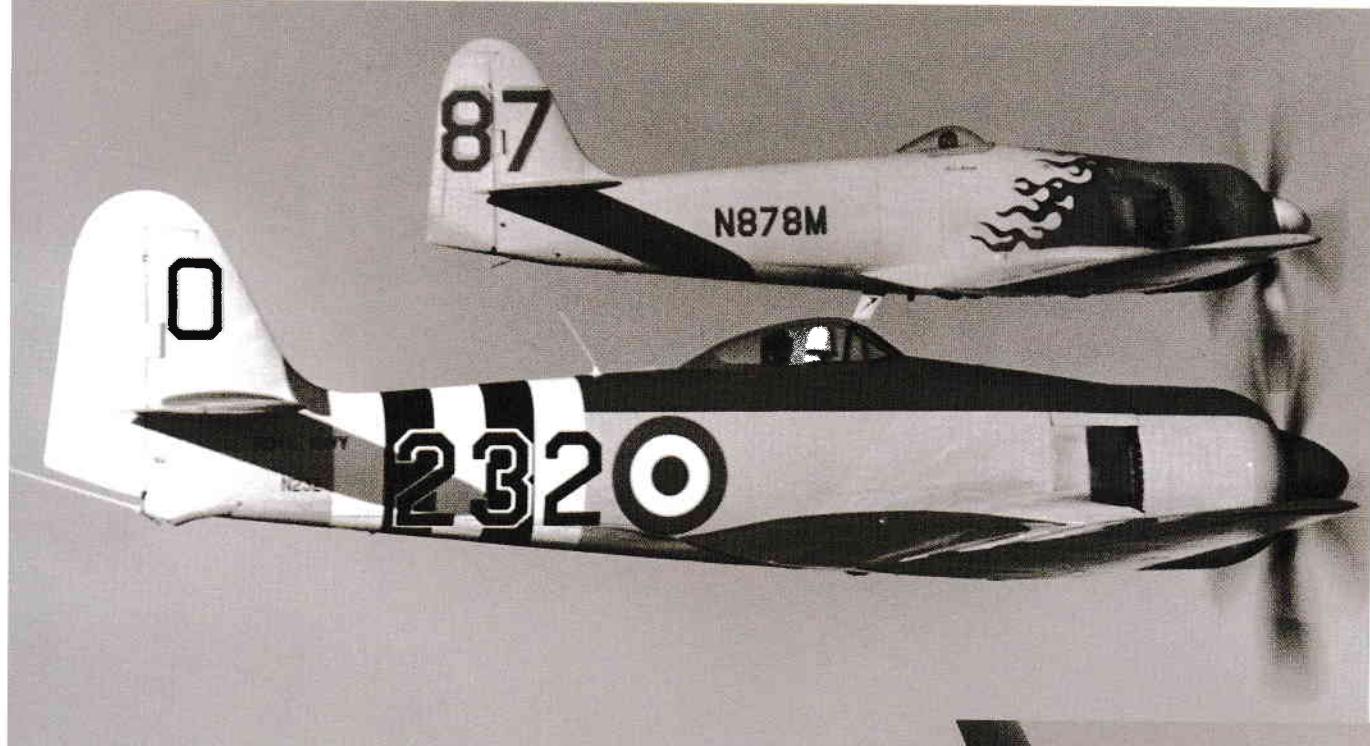
record flying from Los Angeles to Washington, DC. When Frank was doing long-distance racing at San Diego and Mojave he had wetted the wings of 232 to give him more endurance and had also removed all the plumbing for the drop tanks to reduce weight. The wetted outboard wing panels allowed 232 to carry an extra 125-gal on each side. Along with the 220-gal it carried internally and drop tanks of 110-gal each, the Sea Fury now had a fuel load of 690-gal!

On 25 May 1972, Howie Keefe set a speed record from LA to Washington in his P-51D Miss America to coincide with the opening of TRANSPO '72. Keefe completed the trip in 6-hr 21-min, stopping for fuel in Wichita. With Sims added fuel capacity, he was able to fly non-stop in 5-hr 50-min, setting a new record.

Today, very little information remains regarding this flight. I recently

interviewed Howie Keefe for this article, and he provided the following information: "You raise an interesting point. As I recall, he [Sims] did break my record because of the wet wing. Sims waited for strong westerly high-altitude winds in the 30-day period the FAI allows pilots after we state the window we would like. In my case, I had to do it on the date of TRANSPO '72. The event was opening at Dulles Airport on 25 May 1972. This type of record is called *Pour l'Event*, which means the day of an event such as the opening of Oshkosh — and you have to deal with the weather of that particular day. I had headwinds for part of my flight."

"When I heard that Sims was going to make the attempt, I contacted him



Along with airshow work, Frank started competing in various air races. This extremely rare photograph shows 232 in company with Race 87 — another ex-RCN Sea Fury. (Sanders Family)

to offer my congratulations. He refused to meet with me. My read was he did not want to be embarrassed if he did not make it.

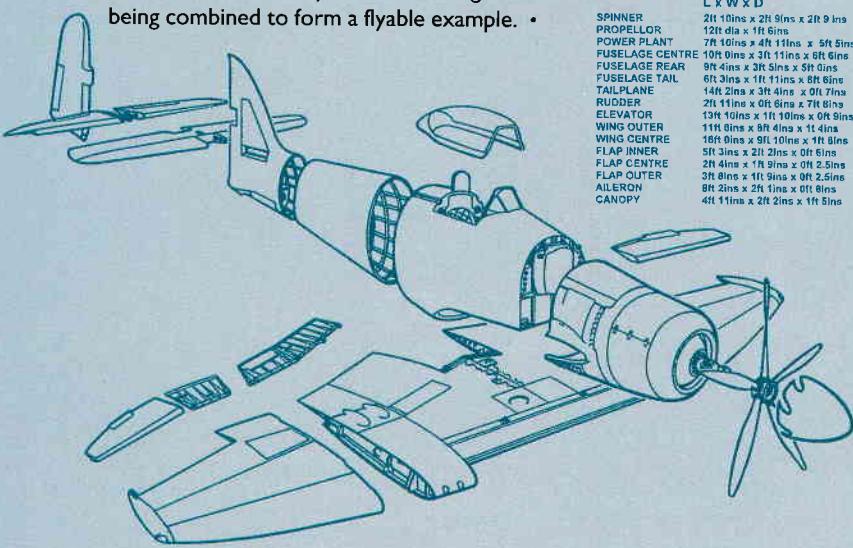
"A further point in your not being able to find the record is because a snotty kid by the name of Art Greenfield, who is still the contests and

SEA FURY DESIGN

Hawker had designed the Sea Fury fuselage in three sections (center, rear and tail) that were bolted together at transport joints. Attached to the front was the powerplant section. Beneath the center fuselage was the wing center section and the hinged outer wing panels.

This ingenious design, much like a giant Airfix model kit, allowed the Sea Fury to be repaired quickly by using replacement assemblies. This has

also led to the various parts of surviving aircraft being combined to form a flyable example. •



DIMENSION DATA TABLE	
	L x W x D
SPINNER	21' 11ins x 21' 6ins x 21' 9ins
PROPELLOR	12' 6ins dia x 16' 6ins
POWER PLANT	7' 10ins x 4ft 11ins x 5ft 8ins
FUSELAGE CENTRE	10' 5ins x 31' 11ins x 6' 8ins
FUSELAGE REAR	9ft 4ins x 3ft 11ins x 5ft 6ins
FUSELAGE TAIL	6ft 3ins x 1ft 11ins x 8ft 8ins
TAILPLANE	14' 6ins x 3ft 4ins x 0ft 7ins
RUDDER	2ft 11ins x 0ft 6ins x 7ft 8ins
ELEVATOR	13' 10ins x 1ft 10ins x 0ft 6ins
WING CENTER	9ft 8ins x 6ft 4ins x 11' 4ins
FLAP INNER	5ft 3ins x 2ft 11ins x 0ft 6ins
FLAP CENTRE	2ft 4ins x 1ft 11ins x 0ft 2.5ins
FLAP OUTER	3ft 8ins x 1ft 10ins x 0ft 2.5ins
AILERON	8ft 2ins x 2ft 10ins x 0ft 1ins
CANOPY	4ft 11ins x 2ft 20ins x 1ft 10ins



With his business up and running in an impressive new hangar at Chino, Frank soon became known as "Mr. Sea Fury." If you needed anything Sea Fury, Frank was your "go to" man. (Sanders Family)

records head of the US arm of the FAI that governs such records [National Aeronautical Association] had the records digitalized and, in doing so, omitted the entire category of 'City-to-City of one million plus population,' which is the category for an LA to DC record. In my challenging him on the



232 and Race 87 get airborne at the United States Cup Race at Brown Field, San Diego, California. (Doug Fisher Collection)



Frank Sanders demonstrates the Smokewinders over an already smoggy Chino. (M. O'Leary)

omission, he denies that it ever existed!

"Such records are either between cities of one million population or more or between capitals and countries. That entire category no longer exists the last time I checked. If you can find a PRINTED version of the records before, say, 1980, it will show that category. I even sent him a copy of the certificate of my record."

In 1988, 232 was sold to R.M. Runyan of Springdale, Ohio, who shortly thereafter sold it to Englishman Robs Lamplough. Lamplough raced it at Reno in 1988 as Race 232 before ferrying the plane to the UK in 1990. In the

UK it was registered to Aces High as G-BVOE. The plane remained in the UK until ownership transferred to Gallant Corp. of Dover, Delaware, once again as N232J. The UK registration was cancelled and it was shipped to the US, arriving on 16 January 1996. By March 1996, the plane was registered to Mike Brown as N232MB and was ready to start its most successful period as a highly modified Reno air racer.

SEPTEMBER FURY

Mike Brown had been a spectator at the Reno Air Races and being a pilot himself decided he should join in on

the action. His first racer was a two-seat Sea Fury T.20 registered N233MB/Race 911. The aircraft was completed by Sanders Aeronautics at Ione with a Wright R-3350 and named September Pops. Brown's father, a B-24 pilot in WWII, had used the name on his Liberator.

When Brown acquired 232, he had Sanders do extensive work on the aircraft. The Bristol Centaurus was replaced by a fuel injected Wright R-3350-93 engine. A custom engine mount was built to handle the increased horsepower of the new engine and Pete Law designed a boil-

off heat exchange system for the engine oil, which was placed in the aft fuselage behind the cockpit. The induction system was modified and the wing inlets on the left side were sealed. Extensive reskinning of the aft fuselage, left forward cockpit, and gear doors was also required. Sanders also installed new oil and fuel lines as well as instruments and wiring.

Since Brown was to use the Sea Fury as a racer, he decided to remove the tail hook and its supporting struc-

ture. The Sanders did not want to chop up the stock tail on 232 so it was removed at the rear transport joint and replaced with one they rebuilt from the wreckage of Sea Fury T.20 N20SF (VZ350) that had crashed in 1978.

Brown debuted the appropriately named *September Fury* at Reno 2000, but had the engine fail at the start of Friday's Gold race. The racer was trucked back to the Sanders' shop. Once in line, the Sanders installed a newly rebuilt R-3350 as well as modify-

ing the airframe. One of Sanders employees, Peter Gross, built a racing canopy, while Joe Marine fabricated new carbon fiber panels. A new ram induction inlet was installed and the aircraft's skin filled and smoothed.

Reno 2001 was cancelled due to the terrorist attacks so the aircraft received further refinements at Sanders before returning to Reno in 2002. Brown set the fastest speed for a Sea Fury at Reno during qualifications: 468.266-mph. Race 232 finished second in Sunday's



232 takes a breather at Mojave on 21 April 1974. (Gerald Liang)



Frank and 232 in the number three position on 21 April 1974 during practice for the Mojave races. (Gerald Liang)



When Frank sold N232, it became N232J with Bill Sims who had the aircraft repainted in a RCN scheme. (Doug Fisher)



After its transatlantic ferry flight, N232J was registered G-BVOE with Aces High in England. (Doug Fisher Collection)

Gold final, with an average speed of 455.965-mph.

After the 2002 races, Brown had the Sea Fury finished in its distinctive red paint scheme with flames down the side of the fuselage. Rene Quintal and Carlos Lopez of Power Pac completed the painting.

Race 232 showed much promise for 2003, but Brown once again suffered an engine failure during qualifying and then completed a spectacular dead stick

landing on Runway 14. Race 232 was placed on the truck after the races and taken back to Ione (see "Moving Time" in V31/N1 of Warbirds International).

Brown finished third in 2004 and did not get to Reno for 2005 after once again suffering from engine issues.

UNLIMITED GOLD CHAMPIONSHIP AND CHANGES

For the 2006 races, renowned Reno

race crew chief Bill Kerchenfaut joined the September Fury team. The team showed up and promptly posted a stunning 478.512-mph qualifying speed (some "experts" were of the opinion that an aircraft the size of the Sea Fury could not achieve such a high speed) and went on to take the Unlimited Gold championship with a blistering 481.619-mph average speed. All of the hard work and hard luck along the way had finally paid off.



In a quest for more speed Brown decided to install the clipped wings that were once on ex-RCN Sea Fury WG567 Miss Merced. When Jim Mott rebuilt the wreck of Miss Merced he put

Mike Carroll turned N878M into a fire-breathing racer — one of the first highly modified Unlimiteds. The aircraft was a capable pylon and long-distance racer. (Doug Fisher Collection)



After its crash, N878M was subject to an extensive rebuild and was eventually acquired by Jim Michaels and Steve Bolander who returned the aircraft to its original flamboyant paint scheme. Jim was photographed flying the racer at Reno 2000. (M. O'Leary)



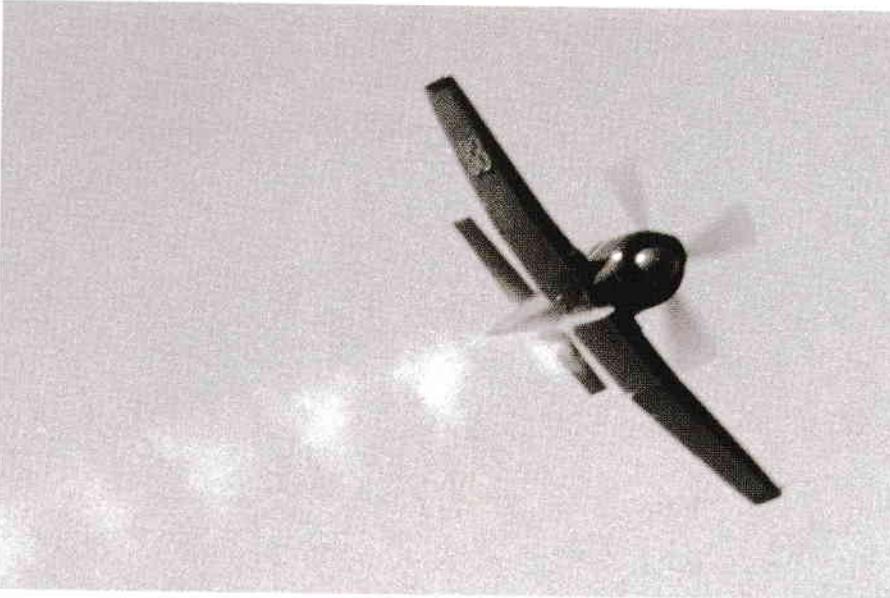
Just to show the complex history of these aircraft, the clipped wings of N878M went to *Blind Man's Bluff Race 88* which was photographed at Reno 1987. (M. O'Leary)

stock wings back on the center section. The story of the wing trade is an adventure itself!

When the Sanders purchased Dreadnought (Hawker Sea Fury T. 20

VZ368), it arrived in its crate from Burma accompanied with an extra wing. The wing was off of a Supermarine Seafire, a type also operated by the Burmese Air Force. Well-

known English collector Doug Arnold happened to visit the Sanders along with Dave Zeuschel and noticed the Seafire wing. He had to have it! Frank said the wing was not for sale as he knew Arnold had many spare Sea Fury wings and Jim Mott was looking for a set for his rebuild of Miss Merced. Sanders traded the Seafire wing to Mott for the clipped wings and Mott traded the Seafire wing to Arnold for a



While operated as *Blind Man's Bluff*, the racer's only claim to fame was destroying a prodigious number of R-3350s — one of which is seen coming apart in this photograph. Sold to Tom Dwelle, the plane operated as *Critical Mass* and is currently being rebuilt as a stock T. 20 by the Sanders. (Jim Larsen)

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set of stock Sea Fury wings — everybody was happy.

The story does not end here as Sanders then traded the clipped wings to Eric Lorentzen when he was building

up his racer *Blind Man's Bluff* (Sea Fury T. 20 WE820) in return for his stock wings which went on *Argonaut*. Brown then decided to clip the wings on 232, but Sanders remembered the Miss

Merced wings were still with *Blind Man's Bluff* (now named *Critical Mass*). Instead of clipping his stock wings (the outer wing panels, while never common, had become increasingly scarce



Skip Holm flying Tom Dwelle's *Critical Mass* (the former *Blind Man's Bluff*) at Reno 1997. (M. O'Leary)

OTHER RCN SURVIVORS

There are only three other known surviving RCN Hawker Sea Furies. They are:

FB. 11 WG567

Mike Carroll purchased the ex-RCN Sea Fury in 1965, registered CF-VAN in Canada. In the US, the aircraft became

N878M. He had it modified by Vern Barker's Pylon Air facility in Long Beach. They removed all the military equipment, increased fuel capacity to 588-gal (standard FB. 11 was 240-gal) and clipped the wings by 6.5-ft overall. A small Formula style canopy was then added.

Named the *Signal Sea Fury* after the trucking service Carroll was President of, the plane became Race 87. Raced with some

success, the Sea Fury was sold after Carroll was killed in the crash of his P-39Q *Cobra III*.

Dr. Sherman Cooper purchased the Sea Fury and named it *Miss Merced* after the town of Merced, California, where he practiced dentistry. In 1971, while being flown by Cooper at the Mojave air races, *Miss Merced* suffered an engine failure and received heavy damage in the ensuing crash landing. Cooper survived the crash, but was killed a few months later in the crash of his Pitts Special.

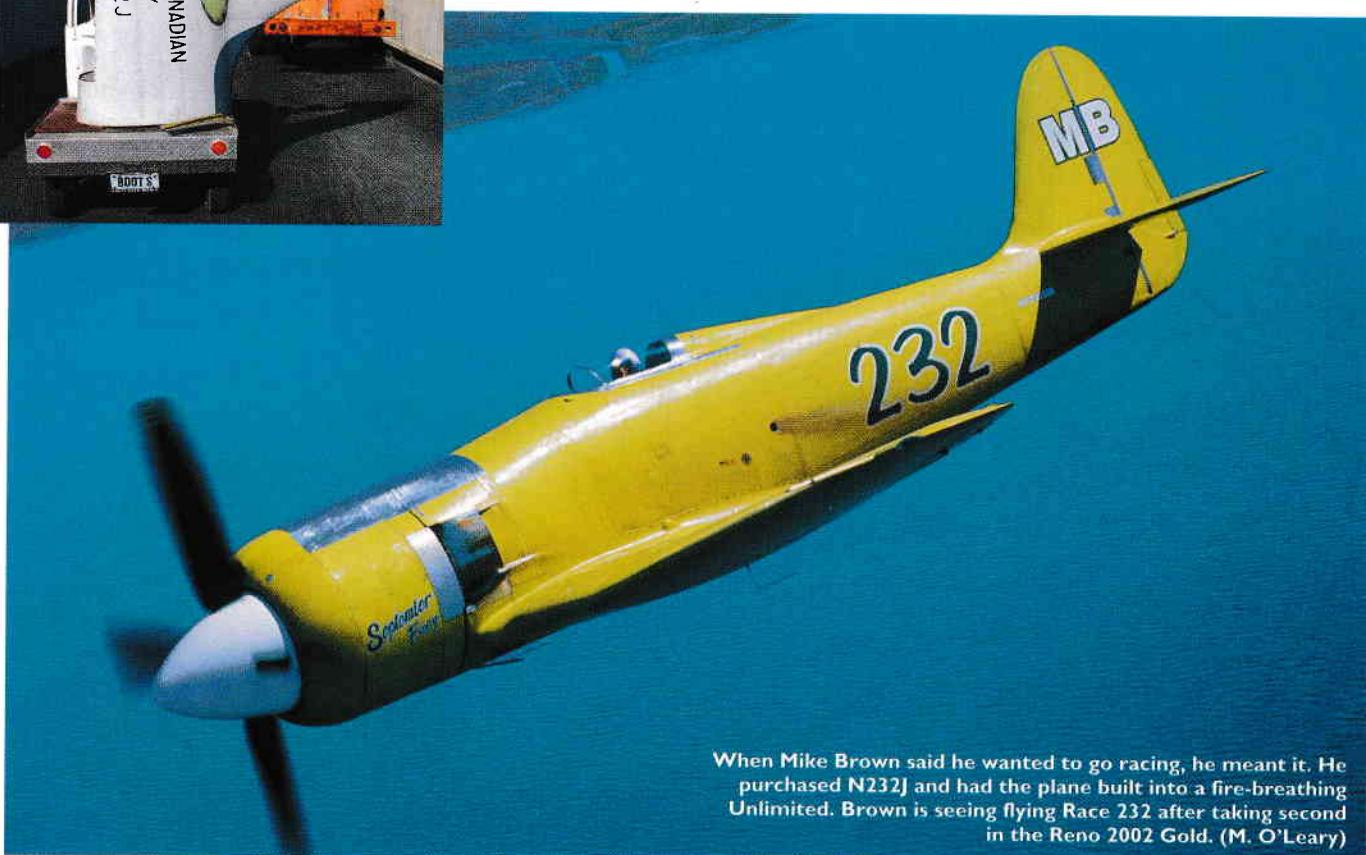
Frank Sanders purchased the remains of WG567 and later sold them to Jim Mott. Mott rebuilt the Sea Fury back to stock condition, but powered it with a Centaurus 175 out of a Blackburn Beverley transport, which swung a four-blade propeller. He named the Sea Fury *Super Chief*.

The plane was later sold to Steve Bolander and Jim Michaels who had the Centaurus removed and a Wright R-3350



Royal Canadian Navy survivor WG567 on static display at the Naval Museum of Alberta, Calgary. (Doug Fisher)

Stock tail section of TG114 removed from N232J during its conversion to a racer for Mike Brown. The serial TG114 can be clearly seen stamped on the structure. The unit is now being used in a new Sea Fury rebuild at Sanders that will be painted in RCN colors. (Mark Watt)



When Mike Brown said he wanted to go racing, he meant it. He purchased N232J and had the plane built into a fire-breathing Unlimited. Brown is seeing flying Race 232 after taking second in the Reno 2002 Gold. (M. O'Leary)

installed by the Sanders. It was again repainted as *Miss Merced*. The plane is currently owned by Eric Woelbing of Wisconsin but rarely seen.

FB. 11 TG119

Like TG114, this Sea Fury was delivered to the FAA and later used by the RCN for conversion training at RNAS Gannet. While in service, it flew as AA*B, NAVY*110 and NAVY*109. After being struck off strength, it ended up at McEwen Field before being donated to the Canadian Aeronautical Collection in 1963. Now renamed the Canadian Aviation and Space Museum, the Sea Fury is currently on display.

FB. 11 WG565

WG565 was part of the fourth group of twelve Sea Furies to be picked up by the RCN. Unfortunately, it suffered a mechanical issue so was not taken aboard HMCS

Surviving RCN Sea Fury TG119 on display at the Canadian Aviation and Space Museum in Ottawa, Ontario. (Jim Buckel)

Magnificent until its return voyage. In service it flew as AA*A and NAVY*131. The plane performed the last official flight by a RCN Sea Fury on 3 April 1957. It was later flown

and pricey by this point in time), he traded a set of stock wings he acquired from Lloyd Hamilton to the Dwelle family who owned Critical Mass and put the old Miss Merced wings on 232!

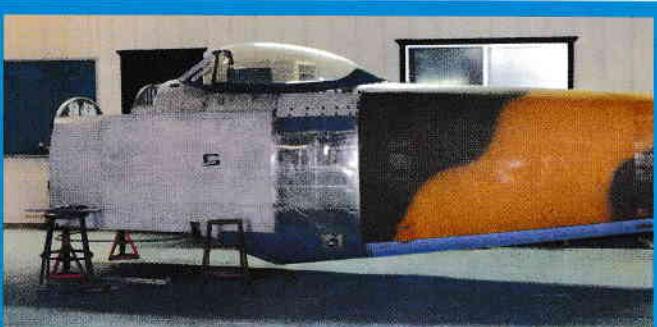
to the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in Calgary. Today it can be seen on static display at the Naval Museum of Alberta in Calgary.



TG114: REST OF THE STORY

In the early 1990s, Frank Sanders' sons Dennis and Brian decided to build another Sea Fury incorporating a Wright R-3350-26WD engine. In their storage yard they still had the center fuselage section of TG114 that Frank had not used in his rebuild due to the damage it had received in Bill Fornoff's landing accident.

The brothers mated the center fuselage section of TG114 to a tail off an Iraqi Fury and the center wing section of a German target tug. The airframe also received F-102 wheels and hydraulic brakes, a Skyraider prop, stretched canopy for a second seat, oil cooler spray bars and ADI for racing.



Joining the center fuselage section of TG114 and the tail section of an Iraqi Fury to make *Argonaut*. (Sanders Family)

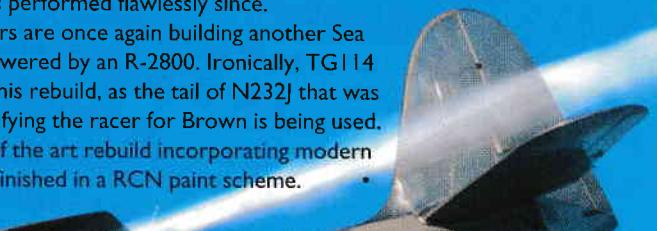


The rebuilt center section for *Argonaut* (Sanders Family)

Registered N19SF

it was painted in authentic RCN colors as TG114 and named *Argonaut*. In 2011, Sanders re-engined the Sea Fury with a Pratt & Whitney R-2800 CB16/CB3 after suffering reliability issues with R-3350 radials. The R-2800 Sea Fury flew for the first time on 19 August 2011 and has performed flawlessly since.

Today, the Sanders are once again building another Sea Fury FB. 11 to be powered by an R-2800. Ironically, TG114 will live on again in this rebuild, as the tail of N232J that was removed while modifying the racer for Brown is being used. This will be a state of the art rebuild incorporating modern avionics and will be finished in a RCN paint scheme.



Dennis Sanders with the newly rebuilt *Argonaut* on 22 April 1995. (M. O'Leary)



Argonaut demonstrating Sanders smoke generators. (Mark Watt)

Dennis and Brian with the freshly completed *Argonaut*. (M. O'Leary)





Mike Brown bends 232 into a tight turn to join up with the camera B-25. (M. O'Leary)

Unfortunately, 232 never regained its winning form with the clipped wings on it (new aerodynamic tips were added). Brown returned to Reno in 2007 qualifying on the pole once again but it suffered another engine failure in Sunday's Gold

race and was forced to drop out. Reno 2008 saw Brown qualify second, but finish third in Sunday's Gold final.

SOLD

After 2008's disappointing finish,

Brown decided to retire from racing and sell both his Sea Furies and Tigercat. Rod Lewis, president and CEO of Lewis Energy Group acquired all three aircraft for his Lewis Air Legends collection in Texas. Race 232

The new racing canopy installed on 232. (M. O'Leary)

was put into storage at Ione, but had its engine removed to be used on Lewis' Bearcat *Rare Bear*. Unfortunately, the engine had not been inhibited properly and was not used on the Bearcat.

The Sea Fury did not race for 2009 or 10, but returned to Reno in 2011. Race 232 had been trucked down to Fighter Rebuilders in Chino, California, where Steve Hinton and his crew installed a newly rebuilt R-3350 and put



Dennis Sanders lands at Lone with Race 232 after a test flight. (Mark Watt)

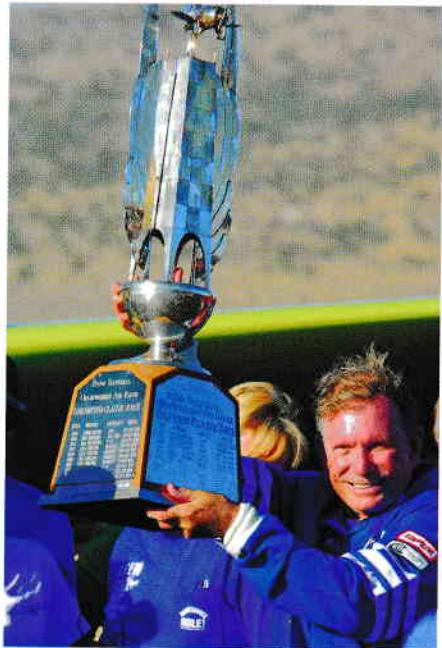
Now even more modified and finished in a radical new paint scheme, Mike Brown was photographed flight-testing Race 232 prior to Reno 2005. However, a failed motor meant he would not participate with 232. (M. O'Leary)

the longer "stock" outer wing panels back on. Flown by former Space Shuttle Commander Robert "Hoot" Gibson, the racer qualified fourth at an impressive 467.054-mph but ended up dropping out of the field due to engine problems before the racing started. Tragically the races were later cancelled due to the crash of P-51D Galloping Ghost and the loss of its pilot Jimmy Leeward and ten spectators on the ground. Race 232 was trucked back to Chino after the races



A yellow and red biplane is captured in flight against a clear blue sky. The aircraft has a distinctive red stripe along its fuselage and tail, with yellow wings and a yellow propeller. The front of the plane features a small emblem or logo. The perspective is from below, looking up at the aircraft as it flies away.

Reno is a lesser event with Mike Brown's decision to retire from air racing. Brown brought a lot of color, determination, and personality to the races — along with three Unlimiteds! (M. O'Leary)



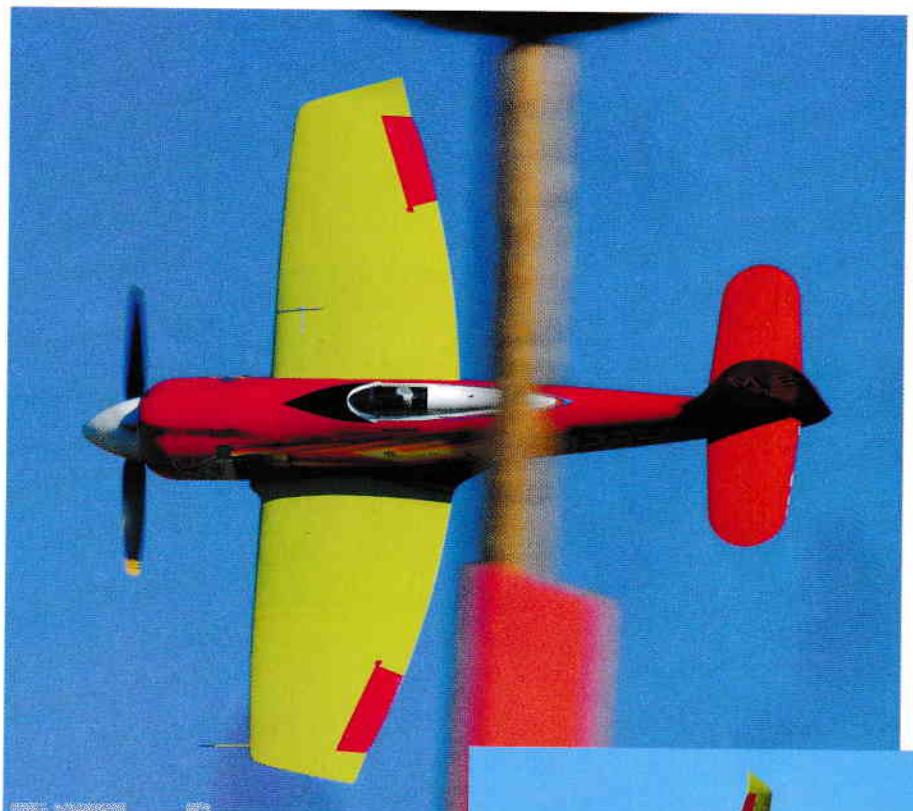
Jubilant Mike Brown after winning the Gold at Reno 2006. (Vaughn Larsen)

Race 232 displays its new outer wing panels and radical wing tips at Reno 2008. (Doug Fisher)

and placed in a hangar at the Planes of Fame Air Museum.

FUTURE?

Rumors abound about the future of 232 — continuing as a racing thor-



oughbred or returning to stock FB. 11 condition. Regardless of what Mr. Lewis decides to do, it will just add another chapter into the incredible life of this Sea Fury. Left to rot away in a field over 55-years ago until rescued by

THE SEA FURY KINGS

Founded by Frank Sanders in 1970 at Long Beach, California, Sanders Aeronautics has grown to be an industry leader in aircraft restoration and maintenance, as well as smoke generators, with their smoke generator division, Sanders Smoke Technologies Inc.

In 1976, the operation moved to Chino where the Sanders family quickly became known as the "Sea Fury Kings." With Frank's rebuild of 232 and the work he completed on other Sea Furies along with re-engining their Sea Fury *Dreadnought* with the R-4360 and *Argonaut* with the R-2800 they definitely earned that title. They have also become a fixture at the National Championship Air Races in Reno.



The Sanders family at Chino (left to right): Brian, Ruth, Frank, and Dennis. (Sanders Family)

Tragedy struck the Sanders family on 4 May 1990, when Frank was killed in the crash of the Red Knight T-33 near Roswell, New Mexico. It was a huge loss to the Warbird community.

Ruth Sanders and Dennis and Brian, continued on with their father's dream and kept the business thriving. The family had always wanted to own their own land with a permanent facility so in 1996 they purchased 40-acres at Eagles Nest Airport in Lone, California, and moved the shop to the new location.

Today they continue with numerous exciting projects, details of which can be found on their website www.sander-aeronautics.com.



Race 232 battles *Rare Bear* at Reno 2008. Brown qualified second and finished third in the Gold. (Vaughn Larsen)

Brian Baird; this Sea Fury has led a remarkable life.

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