



A Witchy Work of Art

As the world knows, the P-51 Mustang served as a prime instrument in bringing to a conclusion that awful conflict called World War II. Each P-51 surviving today is a reminder of the important role that the designers and the engineers at North American played in the field of aviation and also in shaping world history. This brilliant collective was forged in the crucible of world need. P-51 owner Bob Jepson feels that it is a great

honor to be able to own and fly a Mustang today, but that honor carries with it an obligation to maintain and, where necessary, to restore these great aircraft.

From Citation to Mustang

Bob is no newcomer to aviation; he started flying in the late '60s and early '70s while living in California. A business partner, who happened to be a certificated flight instructor as well, taught Bob to fly

in the partner's Beech Debonair. Bob flew his first airplane, a little two-place Cessna 150, for many hours and openly admits, "It was great fun!" Advancing quickly, he moved to a Piper Arrow and, continuing his training, ultimately received his multiengine and instrument ratings, a single-engine seaplane rating in his Lake Amphibian, and finally his commercial rating. For many years Bob has been a loyal and enthusiastic



Bob Jepson's Grand Champion P-51 Mustang

TOM SMITH, WB #9370

JIM KOEPNICK

Cessna customer, owning more than a dozen airplanes from the Cessna Citation line, including his present Citation X.

Almost 10 years ago, Cessna offered some of its top customers a day on the golf course with the renowned Arnold Palmer and a member of Cessna's senior management. Not being a golfer, Bob respectfully declined. Just a short while thereafter, Cessna invited him to spend a day playing with a

P-51 Mustang at Stallion 51 in Kissimmee, Florida. Cessna's hope was that its non-golfing customers would enjoy the thrill of flying with Lee Lauderback in his TF-51 *Crazy Horse*. After his Mustang flight, Bob felt that flying with Lee was so exciting that one afternoon was not enough. He told Lee that if a P-51 were to become available for sale, he would be interested in buying it. Bob now owns four Mustangs, all of which he restored

to show quality perfection. Bob's most recent restoration, *Little Witch*, won Grand Champion Post World War II Warbird at Sun 'n Fun 2003.

From a D to a TF

Bob bought Mustang 44-74497 in 1998. It was then a D-model Mustang with an extensive flying history, but in seriously deteriorated condition and in desperate need of immediate restoration. Lee flew the plane to Kissimmee and placed it into the skilled hands of his brothers, Peter and Richard Lauderback. Upon first inspection, they thought that the aircraft could be restored with just a little attention. But once the plane was opened up, it quickly became evident that a little attention was not going to solve its many problems. Bob and the Lauderbacks jointly decided to give the national treasure its due and treat it to a total rebuild.

With that decision made, Bob decided to convert the plane from a D-Model to a TF. "Any Mustang, whether it be a D or a TF, is without a doubt great fun for the pilot," Bob said. "But with a TF, the pilot is able to share with the person flying in the back seat that unique and singular joy a flight in a Mustang can bring."

Richard and Peter's plan of attack included a full schedule of activities before the various parts of the aircraft could be shipped across the country for the rebuild. They began the process of tearing down the plane and inspecting every part piece by piece. The fuselage was shipped to Square One Aviation based at Chino Airport in Southern California for the TF conversion. Using the latest technology, Square One converts D-Model Mustangs by using original TEMCO engineering drawings. The wing was shipped to Robert Odegaard Aviation in Kindred, North Dakota. With the purchase of Mustang 44-74497, Bob also acquired two engines that were rebuilt by Mike Nixon of Vintage V-12.



JIM KOEPIK

A Work of Art

Once the wing, the fuselage, and the Marlins were returned to Kissimmee, the Lauderback brothers began the arduous task of reassembly. The Lauderbacks are endowed with that uniquely wonderful talent of being able to take parts and transform them into works of art. Today, Bob not only has a plane that is beautiful, but one that shows the heart and soul of Richard and Peter Lauderback all through it. Bob refers to Richard and Peter as “artists beyond description.”

With a TF,
the pilot is able
to share...
that unique
and singular
joy a flight in
a Mustang
can bring.



TOM SMITH

The cockpit is as beautiful as it is practical.

the Lauderback brothers have managed to complete two TF projects and maintain 12 P-51s with a total of four full-time employees, including themselves.

Rolling out the *Witch*

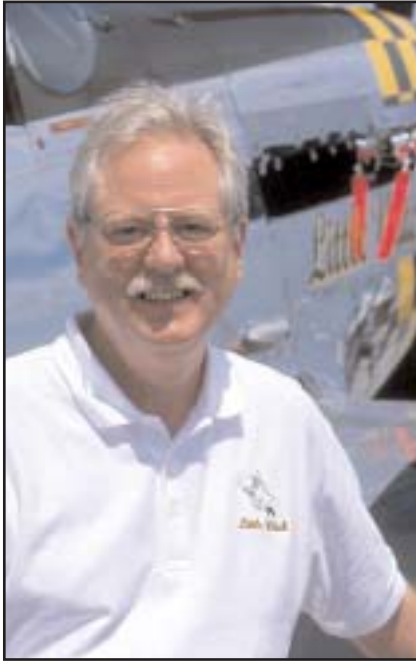
Once Bob's plane was finished, the Lauderbacks rolled it out to perform a few engine tests and minor tweaking. Lee then took 44-74497 to the skies over Kissimmee on a one-hour shakedown flight and found that no major adjustments were required. With about five hours on the plane, Lee headed north to Canada, where

For example, the cockpit is as beautiful as it is practical. It has spun design floorboards and a complete navigation package, including a traffic collision and alert devise (TCAD) system and Garmin GNS-530. The panel is milled to perfection so that all the instruments fit precisely. “All the systems installed and the precision of the rebuild have combined to make the plane a true joy to fly and make it comfortably compatible with today's crowded airspace,” Bob said.

Of interest, in the past five years



TOM SMITH



TOM SMITH

Bob Jepson,
Little Witch caretaker.


Sky Harbour took on the task of painting *Little Witch*.

Bob had thoroughly researched the paint scheme, coming up with the *Little Witch* colors flown by Lt. Donald W. Schoen of the 353rd Fighter Group, 352nd Fighter Squadron. Schoen distinguished himself in battle by shooting down three enemy aircraft and volunteering for a mission that he knew would attract friendly fire. During missions flown over the Russian front, in which both American and German fighters crossed daily, the Russians shot at everything that flew. The 352nd Fighter Squadron continued to return from missions designated to aid the Russians with tales of having been shot at by allies, the Russians. So the group decided that they needed to come up with a capsule containing a message written in Russian stating that the planes with the stars were friends. Schoen volunteered to fly the mission in which this message was dropped over the Russian front.

When Sky Harbour applied the brilliant black and yellow checkerboard of the 353rd Fighter Group to 44-74497, *Little Witch* was re-born! Bob feels incredibly fortunate

to own the airplane and feels that every day that it is in his hands, he is responsible for its care and safe-keeping. The day will come that it passes into the hands of a new owner. Hopefully, that person will feel, along with the joy of ownership, the responsibility of the care and upkeep that comes with these magnificent warbirds.

“Preserving these national treasures is great fun, a true labor of love and most gratifying,” Bob said. “It is the one thing that I have

done in my life, from a recreational standpoint, that has never become old or stale. I was not able to be at the Sun 'n Fun Awards Dinner due to an important family commitment, but was overjoyed to hear that Peter and Richard were recognized for what they have created and for their efforts in making the plane something that is so very special. I was also very pleased that the overall project had been recognized by the EAA as Post World War II Grand Champion.” 

1967 Canadair CL-41G Tebuan S/N 2202, B402AG



“Tutor” Like Snowbirds’ Jet
Pressurized & Air-Conditioned
Fully Aerobatic
Complete Rebuild 2002

- **Garmin 530 & 430 Comms/Navs/GPS**
- **159 SOH**
- **S-TEC 62 Autopilot w/Pre-Select & Altitude Hold**
- **Sandel EFIS HSI**
- **Certified to 45,000’ - MMO .80, VMO 470KTS**
- **Bose Stereo & Headsets, Ex-Large Luggage Area**

<p>info@jetcraft.com www.jetcraft.com</p>	<p>Raleigh-Durham, NC TEL: (919) 941-8400 FAX: (919) 941-8406</p>	<p>Redding, CA TEL: (530) 226-3399 FAX: (530) 226-3398</p>
---	---	--