Portraits of VooDoo

OUR PHOTOGRAPHS ILLUSTRATE THE FAMOUS RACER FROM ITS EARLIEST DAYS TO THE PRESENT

This is how *Voodoo* started out civilian life. Robert Ferrer is seen with his prize on 19 April 1960. The plane has last served with the Royal Canadian Air Force as RCAF 9289 before being acquired by Intercontinental Airways and then offered for sale. USAAF 44-73415 was given the civil registration N6526D and some of the RCAF markings can be seen in this shot. The aircraft is listed as being badly damaged in a crash at Richmond, Virginia, on 15 February 1962, but we can find no further information.

Wearing a faded blue-and-yellow scheme, N6526D was obviously repaired but we do not know where/when this photo was taken. The bent propeller is evidence of some form of accident.

The paperwork and surviving bits of N6526D were acquired by Bill Speers of San Diego, California, who was purchasing wrecked Mustangs/paperwork when and where he could find them. It was at this point that the Mustang, oddly, became two aircraft. The first was a composite aircraft Speers built for the RAF Museum, using the identity of 44-73145, with perhaps some bits of the aircraft, and components from an ex-Indonesian Air Force Mustang, plus lots of new-build parts, fiberglass, and bondo. When the RAF received the craft in 1989 (built on behalf of the Eagle Squadron Association by Kal Aero Services of California in exchange for Spitfire Mk. XVI SL574), the aircraft was considered "not of sufficient quality" — in other words, junk — and was rebuilt again by the RAF. Even though rebuilt, it is still basically junk. The paperwork for N6526D, along with more Indonesian parts went into the creation of what we should call N6526D #2. This aircraft emerged in 1988 as Race 44 and was later raced at Reno as Race 55 *Pegasus* by Delbert Williams. After Speers was killed in another Mustang, the aircraft was purchased by Bob Button on 6 June 1995 and began the long road on the journey to become *Voodoo*. (M. O'Leary)

Now registered N551VC and named *Voodoo Chile,* the Mustang is seen on its way to becoming a full Unlimited air racer. At this point, it has clipped wings and horizontal tail, new scoop, and various other refinements. It is being flown by Bob Hanna. (M. O'Leary)

Becoming a full-blown Unlimited, Sherm Smoot was photographed taxiing the bare metal *Voodoo* to the active at Reno 1997. (M. O'Leary)

Bob Hanna and *Voodoo* immediately before the 1998 flight in which the tail nearly came off the racer. Note the huge wing/fuselage strakes. (M. O'Leary)

With the wing/fuselage strakes removed, Skip Holm begins his flight test program with *Voodoo.* (M. O'Leary)

Now wearing a black-and-gold scheme, N6526D has its Merlin run-up at Van Nuys Airport by Brian Baird prior to a test flight in 1969, after being purchased by Mike Coutches. Note that part of the cowl is from another of Coutches' Mustangs. On 19 March 1977, the aircraft was taking off from Olympia, Washington, when pilot Julian Jenkins lost control of the plane, stalled it, and apparently crashed inverted killing both people. The NTSB listed the cause of the crash as the pilot's failure to maintain directional control and failure to obtain/maintain flying speed. As a point of interest, they also listed an additional cause of the accident as "an unapproved modification to include dual controls, which were partially completed at the time of the accident." (M. O'Leary)