

Nostalgia

'Miss Albuquerque' a P-51D Mustang N2116



'Miss Albuquerque' at Coronado with Reno Race No. 88. Photo probably taken by Doug Rhinehart in 1971, following a flight with Pete Ettinger. Reprinted by permission of Dan Rhinehart.

When I came across a picture of 'Miss Albuquerque' sitting on the ramp at Coronado Airport in 1971, I couldn't resist finding out more about her. Upon checking the FAA registry, I found that N 2116 had been re-assigned to a Nieuport 11 replica biplane. So where was 'Miss Albuquerque' now? I was able to contact Dan Rhinehart from information provided by the 'Abandoned Airfields' website (www.airfieldsfreeman.com). I also learned from the Reno Air Racing Association website (www.airrace.org) that 'Miss Albuquerque' had qualified with a 330.647 mph speed over a 9.81 mile course and raced in the 1971 unlimited class. She was flown by Pete Ettinger, who lives in Albuquerque and currently operates Aircraft Marketing, Inc. Thanks to Pete's generous loan of photos and some of his time, her story follows.



P-51D-30NA Mustang Serial No. 44-74850 on display at O'Hare Airport in 1951, prior to civilian conversion to N2116. Photo taken by D. Menard. Sent to Carl Ettinger in 1972 by Roger F. Besecker, photo courtesy of Pete Ettinger.

In 1971 Carl Ettinger (Pete's father) and Dick Durand were partners in this aircraft. They both bought, traded and sold all types of aircraft, including many ex-warbirds. N2116 was a 2 place, Mustangs Unlim-

ited, civilian conversion of a P-51D-30NA, which they took in trade in May of '71. They painted, upholstered, and made repairs with the intention of re-selling the aircraft.



Pete Ettinger in the cockpit of N2116 prior to entry in Reno Air Races., 1971. Photographer unknown. Photo courtesy of Pete Ettinger.

Sometime that summer they got the idea that the Reno Races would be the ideal place to showcase the plane. However, race officials informed them that it would not be allowed at the airfield, unless it was a participant in the races. The decision was made to name her 'Miss Albuquerque' and enter her. Pete Ettinger, who had soloed at sixteen and ferried aircraft cross-country for his father while in college, got the chance to race her at Reno. But that's another story!

In December, 1971 N2116 was sold to Don Plumb of Windsor, Canada. Don owned a restored Spitfire and wanted to add a P-51 to his collection. Drop tanks were fitted and Pete flew the P-51 non-stop to Windsor. After a successful restoration, Don exhibited the P-51 at several air shows. Unfortunately, Don Plumb died in March, 1976 as a result of a mid-air collision between his P-51, CF-USA and another P-51 in bad



Under Canadian registry as CF-USA after full military restoration by Don Plumb in 1972. Photo courtesy of Pete Ettinger.

weather. Both aircraft were enroute to San Angelo, Texas from the Connie Edwards ranch in Big Springs, Texas. Two souls aboard the second aircraft were also lost. Both airframes were a total loss and never restored. A model of N2116 is on display in the 'Calvalcade of Wings' at the Albuquerque International Sunport. Don Gillmore, Editor