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THE NA-106: THE MYSTERY MUSTANGS

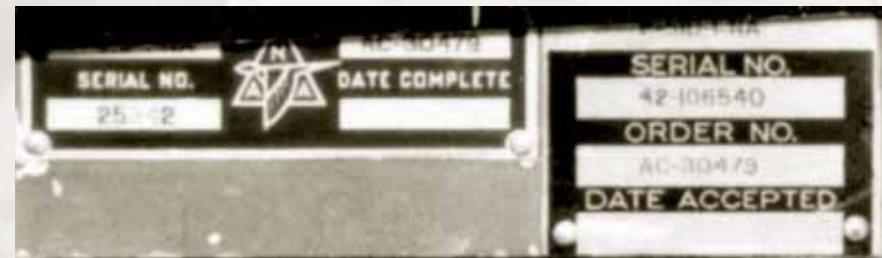
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THE NA-106: THE MYSTERY MUSTANGS

With the pressure of the Second World War, the production line for Mustangs at Inglewood (and, later, at Grand Prairie, Texas) was constantly evolving and changing. Not only was the tooling for mass production being refined, but even the factory "footprint" was constantly studied and modified to make sure more aircraft could be efficiently produced to a high

standard in the same space. With the addition of the Roll-Royce/Packard Merlin V-12 powerplant, production orders for the Mustang skyrocketed. The initial Merlin-powered aircraft comprised the P-51B/C series but the changing demands at the world's battlefronts called for an improved Mustang.

This variant was, of course, the P-51D/K. By the start of 1943, the bubble canopy was being introduced to Allied fighters such as the Spitfire and Thunderbolt and it only made sense that this canopy, offering immensely improved pilot visibility, be fitted to the Mustang. Also, there were calls for increased armament — the P-51B/C wing armament growing from four .50-cal Browning M2 machine guns to six such weapons. Now, how to do all this work without disrupting the production line?



Detail of the NAA and USAAF data plates



Excellent view of the cockpit of P-51D-1-NA 42-106540. To date, we have not been able to find an overall view of either 42-106540 or 42-106539 (nor any sort of photo of 539). The bird cage canopy is very evident as is the three-gun right wing. The aircraft was camouflaged Olive Drab/Neutral Gray.

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