RARA AVIS

THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S MOST ORIGINAL CURTISS P-40E KITTYHAWK AVAILABLE FOR RESTORATION

BY JERRY VERNON

An amazingly rare shot of our subject aircraft — Royal Canadian Air Force Kittyhawk 1034 on patrol over Vancouver during WWII.

During the Second World War, the Royal Canadian Air Force operated 134 Kittyhawks, mainly the Kittyhawk Mk. I (72 aircraft ordered directly from Curtiss by the Royal Air Force and then transferred to the RCAF), plus smaller numbers of the Lend-Lease Kittyhawk Mk. IA IP-40E-1), Kittyhawk Mk. III (P-40M), and Kittyhawk Mk. IV (USAAF P-40N Warhawk). In addition, four earlier Tomahawks were used as instructional airframes, and nine P-40K-1s were bought from the USAAF in the Aleutians, but later returned to the Americans.

Around 75 to 80 of the RCAF Kittyhawks and Warhawks survived WWII. These aircraft languished in storage until most were struck off charge in the latter half of 1946. Some were sold directly as scrap; but many went to private owners — the going price being generally $50 per aircraft. Some owners bought the fighters just to get the wheels and tires, the fuel in the tanks, or some other attractive items. They then discarded the airframes as junk.

Other Curtiss fighters were purchased to sit in backyards as keepsakes of the war or as the playthings of children. Some were purchased with the intent of flying them for sport or business or selling them for military use to third world nations. No matter how one views it, $50 was a bargain — even in 1946! This is the story of one such aircraft — a rare survivor that is today the most original WWII fighter available for restoration.

P-40E RCAF 1034

When the Kittyhawks were being sold, George Maude had the good fortune to acquire P-40E RCAF 1034. Today, it is probably the most original of all surviving Curtiss P-40s except for, perhaps, RCAF 1076, which is in the Canadian National Aeronautical Collection at Rockcliffe. The survival of this *rara avis* has sometimes been beyond belief, but today it is a rare artifact that serves as a time machine to an increasingly distant past.

George Maude, an RCAF marine section veteran, would leave the service and go to work for Air Canada at Victoria International Airport in 1951. During August 1946, he purchased RCAF 1034 for $50. However, George did not stop there. He also bought two Bristol Bolingbrokes — one for $35, the other for $50.

The aircraft were towed on crude log rafts to the Maude family home at Fulford Harbor, Saltspring Island. At that time, George worked with his late father, Capt. George Maude of the ferry *Cy Peck*. Later, one of the Bolingbrokes (RCAF 9104) was scrapped (although parts of it may still live on as a tool shed and hen house on the island).

The other Bolingbroke (RCAF 9892) was presented in 1963 to the Canadian National Aeronautical Collection, where it has been restored to static display.

It was the Kittyhawk that was George's pride and joy. This was evidenced when he would run up the Allison every few weeks. During a nearly three-decade period, the engine acquired ten-hours of running time. The rare fighter was maintained in almost perfect condition — except for an unfortunate happening with its wings.

The P-40, like the P-51 Mustang, has what might be called a "single-unit" wing. That is, there are two halves, joined at the center line —