



Lockheed P38 Lightning



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October 2009

**Willow Springs** event has space available so here is your chance to get your car on the track while helping us with our fundraiser. See the contact information below.

**Nominate** officers and board members through our November meeting. Vote at that meeting.

**Chino Airport Planes of Fame Air Museum** October 3, 2009 photos by Bill Harris

Dave Rudderow, Colleen Lister, Gary Mitchem, Gary Hirschberg, John Schirmer, Doug Schirmer, Bill Harris, Cindy Harris, Phyllis and I formed the gang for the day. We met at Donut Derelicts for the 7:30AM drive to a Chino breakfast at the famous Flo's Cafe. An old converted warehouse made for an expansive space. Tables were everywhere with little room to spare. It is an old fashion theme café with waitresses who held firmly to the traditions of a bygone era. So, none of us were taken aback by the greetings of "honey" or "sweetie". Then, too, we all were careful not to correct their speech nor offer a more politically correct alternative. Instead our ride prepared us for coffee and a bite in preparation for our journey into history.



We got an important lesson in history at the museum. Those who lived it gave us a special presentation of women's contribution to WW II war effort. A shortage of manpower meant women were enlisted in the ferrying of planes throughout the nation and even into the war theaters. Five octogenarians told their stories. One spoke of being forced by her instructor to learn to drive his brand new Chevy. With little more than verbal instruction as preparation of his lessons, he then had her pick up his wife from downtown alone. Fear struck his student when she hit the gate upon her return at the airfield entry making a modification to his fender not in keeping with GM's design. Fear was not part of another speaker's mindset as she described her exhilaration over towing targets for novice gunners. Imagine being at the receiving end of live cannon and machine gun fire. The entire group spoke with pride and we, too, are indeed proud of their service. Remember nearly 13 million Americans went to war. These women were sorely needed to help save the entire world from Fascism and Socialism (National Socialist Party).

I recall in 1952 drawing Korean service F86 Sabres and Jack Northrop Flying wings. Here, before me was one of the early Wing N9MB models that proved his concept. It was a pity that all of his bombers were destroyed so long ago. They traced the development from piston, turbo props ending in full jets. One of the mysteries of the time was their very small radar imprint. He was later shown the stealth flyers of today shortly before his death. Two complete versions of the Sabres are housed there with at least three more in pieces about the lot. A MIG15 is here too beside one of them. It seemed so dominative next to the F86.



The Japanese Zero A6M5 in one hanger was the terror of the Pacific skies. It outperformed everything we had at the war's onset. One was found by my neighbor's squad in the Aleutian Islands. The unfortunate pilot seeking the return to his base on American soil thought that he had found a field on which to land but discovered a light coating of permafrost instead. His plane's wheels locked and flipped him on the prop breaking his neck. Orville's squad found the plane largely intact. It was then shipped to Southern California for restoration and evaluation. Its performance envelope, characteristics and its lack of rear armor were noted. The result was the developmental improvements of our F6 Hellcat that later dominated the South Pacific. Our fighter pilots were taught to dive through their flight path and avoid following or leading left since their tighter turn radius would result in death. The Hellcat hurried engine mods gave it a higher stall ceiling that negated the Zero's superiority over our other aircraft of the day.

The P38 Lightning (night fighter) finished the job as the most deadly of all fighters of WW II. You may recall that a flight 16 P38 downed Yamamoto's flight of two Betty (Hamaki) bombers and 6 escort Zeroes and deprived Japan of its most renowned military mind. A full-scale display next to the Zero showed what the Admiral's plane looked like in 1985. The P38 also prompted the development of the ejection seat (already in use by German jet pilots) because its tail boom meant serious injury during a bailout unless the plane was flying upside down. That rear prompted the German pilots to declare it as the "fork-tail devil". German renditions including a ME109 and that new fangled plywood jet fighter shared a hanger with the Japanese display.

Speaking of its rear, the P38's lines remain a classic; in my mind, it rivals that of the Pantera. It is so inspiring that it captured Harley Earl's heart whose first encounter was just prior to Pearl Harbor. His peak of the early model formed the basis of his 1947 Cadillac design. The graceful look with the P38 twin-engine boom fuselage ending at the dual upright tail is carried to the tailfin of the Caddy. In 1949 GM brought out the truly modern overhead valve V8 to match its offerings of the earlier V12 and V16s. Lessons learned from the 1929 purchase of Allison Engineering Company, maker of the P38 engines, helped develop the advantage of an oversquare design. It also introduced another favorite of mine, the 331 cubic inch of 3.8125 bore and 3.25 stroke. Copying continued into its sister division; Oldsmobile offered its OHV V8 the same year. Mom's 1953 Caddy had not only those impressive fins but also that equally famous front Dagmar bumper that grabbed the attention of all the boys in my high school. (Perhaps it's why I love my '57 with its black pasties too.)

Maybe Bill Wright remembers who Dagmar was.

Roger Banowetz joined us about noon. He was just in time to watch a lucky guy enter a P38 as a reward for winning the raffle. Ask Roger how this porky winner was placed unto the package tray in back of this single seat fighter. Questions flowed easily about his "plumper's portrait", canopy bend, and the safety features with the lack of seat belts. Nevertheless, the sound of those counter rotating props urged by supercharged engines screamed an urgency that the lumbering sound of the B17 could not manage. The pilot gave us quite a show as he circled and made mock strafing runs at the crowd.



P38 Lightning



P47 Thunderbolt

Ford guys love the P51 Mustang yet few know that it was developed in just 100 days. It was delivered to Great Britain just one month before Pearl Harbor. Originally powered by the now Federal Government GM's Allison in-line engine, it switched to the Rolls-Royce Merlin at the urgings of Major Tom Hitchcock to speed it to 440mph. Late in '43 belly tanks augmented the tanks under the pilot and its wings allowing it escort duty deep into Germany to join the massive P47 Thunderbolt (above) with their big Pratt-Whitney engine like those Phyllis' mom built during the war.

The B17 was designed in 1935 despite objections from Congress and its isolationist sentiment. It was the same year that Germany went into mass production of oil from their rich coal mines. We maxed our allotment of 23 bombers to defend all of America in September 1939 just as Germany invaded Poland---"Peace in our time". One historian said, "In 1940, the United States had more money than time." At the war's opening for the USA, 17s sat side by side with Navy bi-planes and B24 Liberators, our light bombers. The example B17 being restored in the front yard is one that never saw war according to a volunteer. He told me of his experiences as top turret gunner and the mission credits he earned before the Mustang, P47 and P38 escorts were able to reach deep into Germany. The same belly tanks allowed Army Air Corps to also raise the mission limit higher for bomber crews from his earlier 25 mark to 35 to his dismay.

The volunteers throughout the facility gladly explain each display and many can relate some personal experience. War birds are from every era and a full compliment of models along with artifacts given by those who lived it tell a full story. November 7 they will introduce the dawn of the jet age...featuring the Lockheed T33 Shooting Star, a trainer based on the F80, America's first production jet. They'll show Bell's Airacomet their first jet plane: it is scheduled to fly next year. So, do make a point of visiting the museum some day.

We are so lucky to use our cars to take us to venues that underscore the power and thrill of pistons responding immediately to our urgings. Imagine the surge of 2200 hp from 18 cylinders as you are pressed into the seat of your Hellcat. There's nothing wrong with turbines. They twist not only jet engines to life but radial superchargers and my favorite --- TURBOs like the one for Phyllis' MG. Pistons roar while turbines whine --- just like some people I've come to know over the years. There is a story of one TPOC Pantera owner with twin turbos to force feed his Cleveland. OOPS, make it two owners. It all adds to the entire experience --- both the sound and sensation of movement through space.

Won't you join us at our next event?

**Reminders:** from [rkunishige@hotmail.com](mailto:rkunishige@hotmail.com). Everyone with an interest in DeTomaso cars is always welcome.

Oct 25 **Wings, Rotors and Wheels** on Sunday Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> is a \$45 planned event. See <http://www.wvrexpo.net/>. No on-site registration is allowed. Check out the military aircraft along with so many local hot rods.

Oct 31 & Nov 1 **Willow Springs Open Track** by Jim & Cherie Saxton's West Coast Racing 626 285-2024 [jim@westcoastracinginc.com](mailto:jim@westcoastracinginc.com). It is always a pleasure to hear the roar of our cats running at speed down the front straight. The average "Joe" in his street car can skip the race class and choose from the other three classes as well as take advantage of the many instructors who freely donate their time to ride with you or even drive your car to show how they'd approach the racing line. Car control is what you gain. You can even experiment with spring rates or tire pressures to balance the handling characteristics.

Nov 11 **TPOC Mtg** 7pm Mel's Drive-in 12241 Seal Bch Blvd, Seal Beach 563 431-7951. Elect your board.

Dec **No TPOC mtg.** Got to the party!

- Dec 6 ***ChristmasParty*** welcomes all to its annual event. Foxfire restaurant in Anaheim Hills, Santa Ana Canyon Rd. will be serving a Champagne Brunch for us at a subsidized price of \$30pp. Contact Bob Singer for tickets.
- Dec 26 ***Gondola Ride*** again ends a great year. Being with my loved one and a boat full of friends can't be topped. The Italian sailors cast off promptly 5:15pm. So come early and enjoy a bit of vino to warm your innards.

***Long Beach Swap Meet:*** Nov 8, Nov 29, Dec 13 at Veterans' Stadium