SEA FURY
Field of Dreams

IMAGINE WANDERING AROUND SCENIC MONCTON, NEW BRUNSWICK, DURING THE 1960S AND COMING UPON A FIELD OF TEN SURPLUS HAWKER SEA FURIES JUST LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO FLY THEM TO A NEW HOME! THROUGH MANY RARE COLOR PHOTOS RECENTLY UNCOVERED, WE TELL THE STORY OF AN UNUSUAL GROUP OF WARBIRDS AND WHAT BECAME OF THEM

BY DOUG FISHER

Known as the ultimate piston-engine fighter, the Hawker Sea Fury was the choice of numerous air forces following World War Two. The Canadian government purchased 74 Sea Furies for the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) as replacements for the Supermarine Seafire. The first Sea Fury was taken on strength in May 1948 and served with the RCN until being phased out and replaced by the McDonnell F2H-3 Banshee. As the Sea Furies were retired, they were flown to the RCN storage facility at Scoudouc, New Brunswick (NB), starting in August 1956. Scoudouc, a former Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) base, was located about 10-mi northeast of Moncton, NB. The fighters remained at Scoudouc until they were sold surplus with ten aircraft going to nearby McEwen Field after being purchased by Charlie McEwen.

McEWEN FIELD

Located to the north of the city of Moncton is a private airport now known as McEwen Field. In 1946, a young Air Cadet named Bob Simmons and his brother Donald, a former RCAF Flying Officer, decided to build their own private airport near Moncton. Don was an ex-RCAF transport pilot while Bob was an Air Cadet who helped pay for his flying time by, among other things, purchasing a surplus de Havilland

The sight of a row of Sea Furies certainly must have struck individuals driving past the airfield as unusual. (E. McQuinn)

Mosquito from War Assets for $25 and parting it out!

Everett McQuinn recalls: "It was Mk. IV LR536, one of 59 aircraft that were Leavesden-built as T.IIIs. The batches were LR516-541, LR553-585. Why they converted it to a Mk. IV, no one knows, but I had the spinners off this Mosquito in my possession for 30-years. I sold them for scrap for $20!" The Simmons succeeded in building the airport and running it for about 4-yrs before a fire put them out of business.

By the 1950s the airport was now owned by Charlie McEwen who operated McEwen Construction and Airfield Ltd. McEwen was a well-known entrepreneur in both the construction and aviation industry who went on to have a lengthy association with NB aviation as a long-time director of the Moncton Flying Club; running the Moncton Mosquito Control Organization for many years and working with Targetair Ltd., designing and

Imagine finding such a field today! This view of McEwen Field shows Sea Furies TG118 (107), VX686, VX690 (128), TF994 (102), VR918, VR919, TG114, WG567, VW227 (118), with TG119 not visible. (Everett McQuinn)

Everett McQuinn in the cockpit of TG114 at McEwen Field. (E. McQuinn)

FLASHBACK

building a target drone launcher system for the Department of National Defense. He passed away in 2009.

McEwen purchased ten surplus Sea Furies: TG118, TG119, VX690, TF994, VR918, VR919, TG114, WG567, VW227, and VX686. They were flown into his 3000-ft airstrip in 1959 and put in outside storage. McEwen planned to sell the aircraft or part them out.

The Simmons brothers purchased this ex-RCAF Mosquito for $25 and parted the aircraft out. (E. McQuinn)

Sea Fury VR919 in the snow at McEwen. As can be seen, the ex-RCN fighter-bombers were in very good condition. (E. McQuinn)

Everett McQuinn with Sea Fury VX686/CF-PRN, which after escaping the scrapman was unfortunately lost in a hangar fire. (E. McQuinn)

THE SURVIVORS
TG114, VR918, VR919, AND VX686

In the early 1960s, ex-RCAF fighter pilot and Warbird pilot Brian Baird had discovered the Sea Furies and decided to purchase two. He paid $500 each for the aircraft and had them registered CF-OYF (TG114) and CF-PRN (VX686). He managed to get CF-OYF flyable and flew it to Ottawa, Ontario. At the time

The Sea Furies were simply flown into McEwen Field and parked. (E. McQuinn)

Sea Furies TF994, VX690, VX686, and TG118. After arrival, the Sea Furies received no form of protection from the harsh Canadian weather. (E. McQuinn)

Sea Fury VX690 at McEwen — the condition of the aircraft quickly went downhill. (Leo Pettipas)

Baird was also ferrying ex-RCAF P-51Ds for a company in Indiana, who also had there eyes on the Sea Furies with an attempt to supply Cuban interests with aircraft as they were already supplying them with Mustangs.

With the job not working out, and threats of lawsuits, Baird flew the Sea Fury to Louisiana and put it in storage to protect his plane until he could find full time work that could fund the restoration. Unfortunately, while in

It was a well-known fact that the Sea Furies were for sale at minimal prices, but there were few takers. Sea Fury TF994/102 shows the effects of the weather. (L. Pettipas)

Sea Fury VX690 in an almost pastoral scene at McEwen. (L. Pettipas)

As time passed, the Sea Furies were shuffled around the small airfield. (L. Pettipas)

Houma, Louisiana, Bill Fornoff took the Sea Fury (now registered N54M) for an unauthorized flight and turned it on its back causing extensive damage.

While all this was occurring, a hangar fire back in Moncton destroyed CF-PRN (VX686). Baird later went back to McEwen and purchased some spares from VR918 and VR919 (fuselage, tail section, and wings) that had already been broken up.

Now hired by TWA as a Flight Engineer, Baird took all the parts and stored them on the farm of the Sanders family in Queen Creek, Arizona. Tragically on 7 August 1969 Baird was killed after striking a cable strung across the Fraser River while ferrying a NAA T-28 from Alaska to San Francisco.

Up and coming Warbird restorer, pilot, and ex-drag racer, Frank Sanders purchased the Sea Fury parts from Baird's widow. He trucked them to his house in Santa Ana, California, where he rebuilt the aircraft before moving it

Five Sea Furies in the snow at McEwen during 1961. TG114 is now NX232MB with Rod Lewis. (Wayne Townsend)

High-angle view of VW227/118 during the winter of 1961. (W. Townsend)

Open cowling reveals the Bristol Centaurus sleeve valve radial engine. (W. Townsend)

Sometimes the Sea Furies were nearly buried in the heavy snowfalls common in the area. (W. Townsend)

Surreal Sea Fury lineup in the snow. (W. Townsend)

to Long Beach for its first flight in the hands of Darryl Greenamyer.

Sanders flew the Sea Fury for many years on the airshow circuit before deciding to sell it. The plane passed through numerous owners including a stint in the UK before being

Even though the German government was operating Sea Fury target tugs at the time, they showed little interest in acquiring the McEwen aircraft, but they did purchase numerous components once the Sea Furies were broken up. (W. Townsend)

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Lieutenant R. McKay with FB.11 TF994 of No. 803 Squadron aboard HMCS *Magnificent* on 9 September 1948. (James Ryan/DND/National Archives of Canada)

purchased by Mike Brown who won the 2006 Unlimited Gold Championship at the National Championship Air Races in Reno, Nevada, with the now highly-modified aircraft.

Now owned by Lewis Air Legends, it can still be seen at Reno, now being flown by Robert "Hoot" Gibson.

The fuselage center section of TG114 also flies on in Sea Fury N19SF *Argonaut* owned by the Sanders family of Ione, California, and other parts are being incorporated in future Sea Fury rebuilds by the Sanders.

For a full history of these airframes, see *Warbirds International* Vol. 31/Nos. 2 and 3.

Author's map showing Moncton International, McEwen Field, and Scoudouc, New Brunswick.

THE McEWEN FIELD SEA FURIES

TF994

- To Fleet Air Arm (FAA) in December 1947.
- To Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS) *Gannet*.
- Taken on strength Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) on 24 May 1948
- Departed aboard HMCS *Magnificent* with No.803 Squadron as BC*C on 25 May 1948.
- Missed all wires, crashing into No.2 barrier HMCS *Magnificent* 16 August 1948.
- Cockpit filled with smoke causing emergency landing Dartmouth 16 December 1948.
- Tire burst during landing Dartmouth (officially recorded as a wheels up landing on airfield) 31 March 1950.
- No.870 Squadron BC*D, NAVY*102 13 July 1951 to March 1953.
- Struck off strength 1 July 1956.
- Stored at Scoudouc.
- Stored by McEwen Field, Moncton, broken up for spares.

TG114

- To FAA in December 1947.
- To RNAS Gannet; taken on strength RCN on 24 May 1948, departing aboard HMCS *Magnificent* with No. 803 Squadron as BC*L on 25 May 1948.
- Barrier landing as BC*C 16 August 1948.
- No. 883 Squadron BC*L 29 November 1948.
- Ran off runway, hit light with prop Dartmouth 30 November 1948.
- No. 803 Squadron BC*L 5 February to 13 April 1949.
- No. 803 Squadron 16 June 1949 to 21 August 1950.
- Set a speed record from Malton, Ontario, to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, of 1.75-hrs 15 December 1949.
- No. 870 Squadron BC*F 18 July 1951.
- Struck off strength 2 October 1956.
- Stored at McEwen Field.
- To civil register as CF-OYF/N4763T/N54M/N232/N232J/G-BVOE/N232J. Current as NX232MB with Lewis Flying Legends. Center section of TG114 used in rebuild of N19SF *Argonaut* with the Sanders family at Ione.

TG118

- To FAA in January 1948.
- To RNAS *Gannet* for RCN.
- Taken on strength by RCN 24 May 1948.
- On HMCS *Magnificent* with No. 803 Squadron on 25 May 1948.
- No. 883 Squadron on 18 November 1948.
- Mid-air collision with Firefly PP426 on 26 January 1949.
- No. 803 Squadron on 5 February 1949.
- Heavy landing HMCS *Magnificent* on 17 March 1949.
- No. 883 Squadron on 15 March 1951 coded VG-AA*B, NAVY*106.
- Struck off strength Scoudouc on 2 October 1956.
- Stored at McEwen Field; reduced to spares.

TG119

- To FAA in January 1948.
- To RNAS *Gannet* for RCN.
- Taken on strength by RCN 24 May 1948.
- On HMCS *Magnificent* with No. 803 Squadron on 25 May 1948.
- School of Naval Aircraft Maintenance, 13 April 1949.
- No. 871 Squadron VG-AA*B 6 May 1953.
- VF-871 (NOTE: During this time period, the RCN adopted USN-style squadron designations) NAVY*110.
- VF-870, Scoudouc 19 August 1953.
- VF-871 24 July 1954, NAVY*108.
- Struck off strength 2 October 1956.
- McEwen Field.
- Acquired by Bancroft Industries and donated to Canadian Aeronautical Collection in 1963.
- Currently on display at the Canadian Aviation and Space Museum.

VR918

- To FAA in February 1948.
- To RNAS *Gannet* for RCN; taken on strength RCN on 24 May 1948.
- Departed aboard HMCS *Magnificent* No. 803 Squadron on 25 May 1948.
- No. 803 Squadron BC*L 5 February 1949.
- Floated over wires into No. 2 barrier HMCS *Magnificent* 19 March 1949.
- Force-landed Dartmouth after vibration and power loss 11 June 1949.
- With No. 883 Squadron VG-AA*Y or VG-

Sea Furies including TF994 and TG118 at Dartmouth on 2 June 1949. (F.C. Pilischuk/DND/National Archives of Canada)

Sea Furies of No. 803 Squadron, including TG114 and VR918, aboard the *Magnificent* at Colon, Panama, on 15 March 1949. (James Ward/DND/National Archives of Canada)

Center fuselage section of TG114 being used in the rebuild of N19SF. (Sanders Family)

WG567

Robert Vanderveken of Pierrefonds (Montreal), Quebec, purchased WG567 from McEwen and had it registered CF-VAN in the early 1960s. He

AA*S, belly-landed Dartmouth 3 May 1951.
- No. 871 Squadron HMCS *Magnificent* AA*Y, NAVY*115 21 April 1952.
- Ferried to disposal by VX-10 July 1956.
- Struck off strength at Scoudouc 2 October 1956.
- Stored at McEwen Field; broken up for spares (tail unit used in rebuild of TG114 when owned by Frank Sanders as N232).

VR919

- To FAA in February 1948.
- To RNAS *Gannet* for RCN.
- Taken on strength RCN on 24 May 1948.
- Departed aboard HMCS *Magnificent* on 25 May 1948.
- No. 803 Squadron 1 October 1948.
- Seagull went through propeller, struck cowling and starboard wing 4 January 1949.
- Landing gear failed to lower, wheels-up landing 26 May 1949.
- No. 871 Squadron May 1951.
- No. 870 Squadron 5 November 1951.
- No. 871 Squadron HMCS *Magnificent* VG-AA*L 30 November 1951.
- To Fairey for overhaul November 1953.
- Back to VF-871 23 July 1954.
- Struck off strength at Scoudouc 2 October 1956; remained in long term storage until at least August 1959.
- Stored at McEwen Field; broken up for spares. Fuselage center section used in rebuild of TG114 when owned by Frank Sanders as N232.

VW227

- Accepted by FAA in July 1948.
- Taken on strength and aboard HMCS *Magnificent* on 16 February 1949.
- No. 883 Squadron 8 June 1950.
- No. 870 Squadron 29 October 1951.
- No. 871 Squadron HMCS *Magnificent* 15 November 1951.
- No. 871 Squadron VG-AA*H, NAVY*118 18 December 1951 to April 1953.
- VF-871 1955.
- Struck off strength at Scoudouc 3 May 1956.
- Stored at McEwen Field; broken up for spares.

VX686

- Accepted by FAA in December 1949.
- Taken on strength by No. 803 Squadron and aboard HMCS *Magnificent* on 11 October 1950.
- No. 883 Squadron VG-AA*P 13 January 1951.
- Hit barrier, nosed up HMCS *Magnificent* 23 March 1951 as AA*P.
- No. 871 Squadron HMCS *Magnificent* VG-AA*T 1 May 1951.
- Marked AA*T for Mediterranean cruise of 1952.
- NAVY*127 13 June 1952 until 29 December 1953.
- Stored, then to Fairey Canada, last Sea Fury overhaul.
- Tested and flown by VX-10 to Scoudouc 2 November 1956.
- Struck off strength at Scoudouc 7 November 1956.
- Stored McEwen Field 1963.
- Purchased B. Baird CF-PRN; destroyed in hangar fire.

VX690

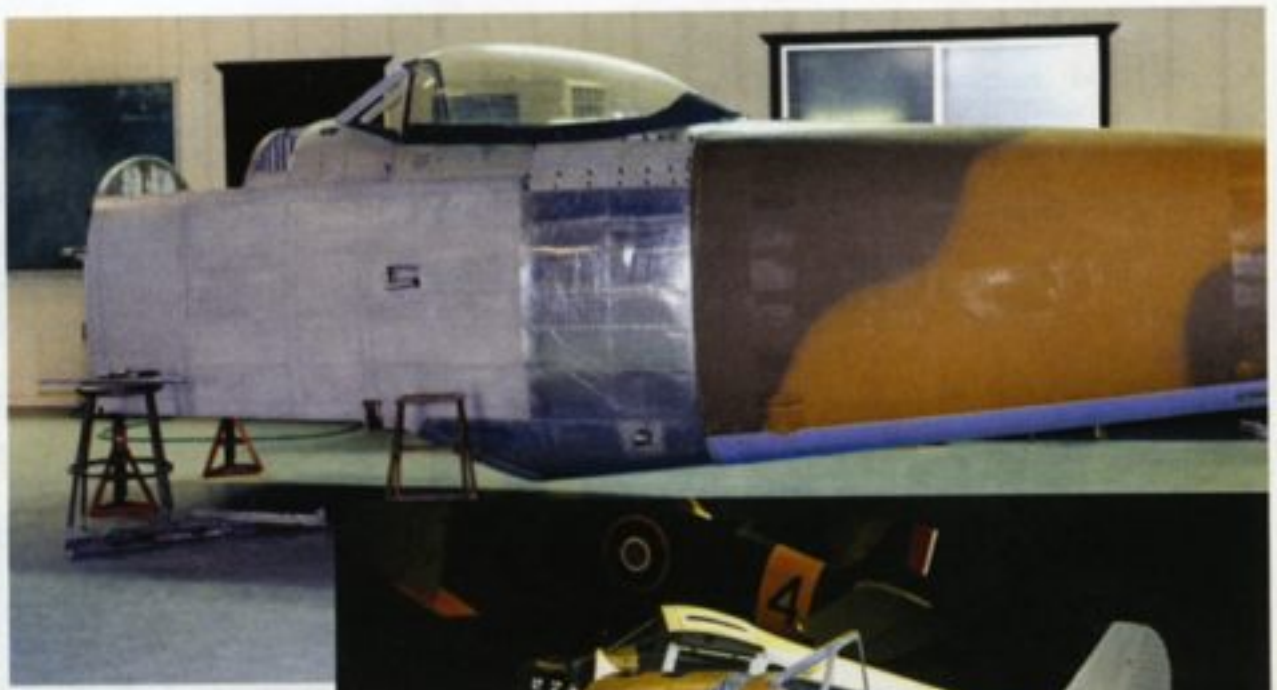
- Accepted by FAA in December 1949.
- Taken on strength by No. 883 Squadron aboard HMCS *Magnificent* on 11 October 1950.
- No. 883 Squadron 16 January 1951.
- No. 803 Squadron BC*O 14 April 1951.
- NAVY*128 1 May 1951.
- Struck off strength at Scoudouc 2 October 1956. Stored McEwen Field; broken up for spares.

WG567

- Accepted by FAA in June 1951.
- Flown from UK via Hal Far, Malta, taken on strength aboard HMCS *Magnificent* on 28 August 1951.
- Stored reserve Dartmouth 28 November 1951.
- No. 871 Squadron HMCS *Magnificent* NAVY*133 16 October 1952.
- Struck off strength 8 February 1957 at Scoudouc.
- To civil register as CF-VAN/N878M.
- Currently flying with Eric Woelbing of Wisconsin.

had the fighter painted a distinctive bright red with a gold stripe.

In 1965, the plane was acquired by Mike Carroll and registered N878M. He had the Sea Fury extensively modified by Vern Barker's Pylon Air facility in Long Beach, California. Pylon Air removed all the military equipment, increased fuel capacity to 588-gal (standard FB.11 was 240-gal) and clipped the wings by 6.5-ft overall. A small Formula One style canopy was also added.



TG114 being joined with the aft fuselage of an Iraqi Fury to create *Argonaut*. (Sanders Family)

The battered center section of TG114 was rebuilt into pristine condition. (Sanders Family)

Sea Fury TG118 of No. 803 being lowered onto the deck of HMCS *Magnificent*. (J.E. Colbert/DND/National Archives of Canada)

Handlers position TG118 on the deck of the *Magnificent*. (J.E. Colbert/DND/National Archives of Canada)

TG119 on display at the Canadian Aviation and Space Museum in Ottawa, Ontario. (Jim Buckel)

Named the *Signal Sea Fury* after the trucking service Carroll was president of, the aircraft raced as #87. Raced with some success, the Sea Fury was sold after Carroll was killed in the crash of his P-39Q *Cobra III*. (See *Warbirds International* Vol. 31/No. 6 for the complete story.)

Doctor Sherman Cooper purchased the Sea Fury and named it *Miss Merced* after the town of Merced, California, where he practiced dentistry. In 1971, while being flown by Cooper, *Miss Merced* suffered an engine failure and

Sea Furies of No. 817 Squadron in formation on 26 May 1952 with VR918 in the center. (D. Quirt/DND)

Sea Fury VR919 at the remote storage facility at Scoudouc during the late 1950s/early 1960s. (DND)

received heavy damage in the ensuing crash landing. Cooper survived the crash but was killed a few months later in the crash of his Pitts Special.

Frank Sanders purchased the remains of WG567 and later sold them to Jim Mott. Mott rebuilt the Sea Fury back to relatively stock condition, but powered it with a Centaurus 175 out of a Blackburn Beverley transport, which swung a four-blade propeller. He named the Sea Fury *Super Chief* in honor of his American Indian heritage.

The Sanders later sold the plane to Steve Boulanger and Jim Michaels who had the Centaurus removed and a Wright R-3350 installed. It was again repainted as *Miss Merced*. The plane is currently owned by Eric Woelbing of Wisconsin, but rarely seen (**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Mr. Woelbing has recently purchased the highly-modified Sea Fury racer *Furias* that was damaged at Reno 2012).

TG119

After being struck off strength, TG119 ended up at McEwen Field before being acquired by Bancroft Industries of Montreal, Quebec, and donated to the Canadian National

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VX686 being towed aft on the *Magnificent* prior to launching on an air combat patrol off Iceland during Operation *Mariner* on 30 September 1953. (T.C. Galley/DND/National Archives of Canada)

VX686 aboard the USS *Wasp* in Grand Harbor, Malta, during joint Allied exercises. (E.D. Manuel/DND/National Archives of Canada)

Aeronautical Collection in 1963. Now renamed the Canadian Aviation and Space Museum, it is currently on display for all to see.

McEWEN FIELD MEMORIES

For this article the author received numerous rare color photos and the memories of a few Sea Fury enthusiasts from the Moncton area.

Everett McQuinn remembers the Sea Furies quite vividly: "I would visit the Sea Furies quite often with my younger brother Don who was a pilot in the RCAF at the same time as Brian Baird. Don was in the RCAF from 1955 to 1960. He was a Harvard instructor at Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. Later on he flew T-Birds, C-47s, and B-25s at MacDonald, Manitoba. Brian Baird flew F-86s. He was stationed at Chatham, NB, for a while and came to visit us at our house in Riverview.

VX690 at Mt. Hope, Hamilton, Ontario, on 9 June 1952. (Jack McNulty)

The beginning of the Sea Fury Kings — the Sanders and friends at the family ranch in Chandler, Arizona, during 1969 with the remains of TG114, VR918, and VR919. (Sanders Family)

TG114 being placed on Darryl Greenamyer's trailer prior to rebuild. (Sanders Family)

"We used to sit in the Sea Furies often and daydream. For fun one day I had my picture taken in front of VX686 and sitting in the cockpit of TG114 with my leather flying helmet on.

"I was 30-years-old at the time. And recall that you could have purchased Sea Furies for $500 each! I couldn't get one

WG567 after being delivered to Mike Carroll and still in the colors and markings of CF-VAN from when Robert Vanderveken owned the Sea Fury. (Doug Fisher Collection)

WG567 after being modified by Pylon Air for Mike Carroll. (Doug Fisher)

The Sea Fury arriving at the Sanders' Chino hangar following its crash at Mojave. (Sanders Family)

Sea Fury WG567/N878M as it is today. (Mark Watt)

WG567 after being restored for Jim Mott and fitted with a Bristol Centaurus from a Blackburn Beverly transport. (Doug Fisher Collection)

across the Gunningsville Bridge, even with the wings folded. You could imagine the noise it would make if I had started the engine in my backyard; it would have shattered the windows of every house in the neighborhood!"

After VR919 was broken into spares, Everett managed to acquire the instrument panel and some landing gear parts. He has donated them to the Shearwater Aviation Museum in

Frank Sanders in TG114/N232 along with Ormand Hayden Baillie's Sea Fury CF-CHB. (Sanders Family)

Interesting formation with Frank, Ormand Hayden Baillie, and John Van Andel in the Corsair. (Sanders Family)

Shearwater, Nova Scotia, Canada, of which he is a proud member.

Wayne Townsend also remembers the McEwen Field Furies:

"I was 19-years-old and attending Mount Allison University as an engineering student in 1961 and heard about the Sea Furies out at McEwen Field. My roommate, Jim Thompson, and I hitched a ride out to the field from

Frank wiping down N232 after an early flight. (Sanders Family)

N232 coming in low and fast around a Mojave pylon. (Sanders Family)

Testing the Sanders Smokewinders. (Sanders Family)

Robert "Hoot" Gibson in TG114/NX232MB rounding Pylon 2 at the 2012 Reno National Air Races. (Doug Fisher)

Sackville and spent several hours looking them over. Unfortunately, it was the middle of winter and I only had a rather poor 35mm camera. It was late when we got there and the light was fading fast.

"There were only eight aircraft there when we visited as two had been flown out fairly recently (probably TG119 and WG567). We looked them over, took a few pictures and were even brazen enough to open the canopy and have a look inside! As I recall, most of the essential instruments were there minus the military and radio equipment.

"Someone had recently chosen a rather nice one to purchase with very low hours; some were said to have zero-time engines. The new owner drained the 50-liters of inhibiter out of the Bristol Centaurus engine and, after firing it up, he took off for Ontario. Apparently somewhere near Ottawa the prop control went and it was hunting between fine and course pitch — almost tore the engine out of the plane we were told. They also mentioned it only took two starter cartridges to get the Centaurus going after all that time!

"We were also told that there was a deal in the works to sell the rest to Cuba [or a Latin America country] but that had been shot down by the government. The rest were to be broken up for spares, apparently most parts ended up in Germany. (See Nick Stroud's complete history of the German Sea Furies in "Into the Red" *Warbirds International* Vol. 31/No. 7.)

PARTING OUT

The remainder of the Sea Furies at McEwen are believed to have been broken up and sold to Germany as spares for their target tugs, but perhaps one survived and will be found tucked in a hangar in New Brunswick. We can always dream! **WI**