

PLUM CRAZY

Built in 1944 shortly before the end of WWII, this beautiful P-51 Mustang fighter never left the US before the end of the war. It was transferred as part of a block of surplus fighters to Sea Island (Vancouver) Canada in 1950 where it served in the RCAF until 1958 when it was sold out of the Crown Assets Disposal Corporation.

Al Paulson (the founder of Gulfstream) purchased the airplane in 1964 for his friend Clay Lacy to race in the inaugural Reno Air Races. Around that time, Al was starting an airline with service to Hawaii. He ordered 150 gallons of a custom purple paint to paint a stripe on the side of the airliners. He was accidentally shipped 1500 gallons of this custom purple paint, and so all of the toolboxes, tugs and ladders in his hangar, along with the new P-51 Mustang, were painted in the purple color.

Clay campaigned the purple Mustang at the National Championship Air Races in Reno, NV from 1964 to 1972, winning the National Championship in 1970.

Clay purchased the airplane in 1967 from Al and competed in many air races across the United States and attended many airshows with it. The purple color made the airplane instantly recognizable, and because of this, Fred Smith, the founder of FedEx, decided to incorporate the color purple into the logo for FedEx. If you get a chance to look at the airplane closely, you will see many of the air races that it competed in listed on the right gear leg door.

The great Bob Hoover once flew this airplane in an airshow when his own Mustang was inoperative, and the airplane has carried a number of other famous people as passengers. This famous Mustang has also starred in an episode of Magnum PI, "Two Birds of a Feather," and is one of three vintage air racers featured in the Revell model "Air Racers!"

After having owned the airplane for 55 years, Clay sold his beloved Mustang to his friend Vicky Benzing in 2019. Vicky flew it to Reno that same year to be exhibited as a static display. After the air races, she flew it down to Chino, CA for restoration under the careful guidance of Steve Hinton Jr and his team at Fighter Rebuilders. Repainted in its original purple racing livery and with a freshly overhauled engine, Vicky campaigned it to a 4th-place finish in the Unlimited Class at the final National Championship Air Race in Reno, NV in September 2023.

A favorite among youngsters in the early years when Clay was flying the airplane, Vicky is again sharing this iconic purple air racer with airshow fans across the country.