THE BIG DAY
How the 357th FG broke the Luftwaffe's back

YELLOWJACKET MUSTANGS
Chuck Greenhill’s matched pair of P-51Ds

WOODY'S RACERS
Post-war Cleveland air racers

A-36A RESTORATION
Detailing a new and rare rebuild from American Aero
On a very clear day at San Bernardino, three beautifully maintained F-51D Mustangs from the 196th FS await their next flight. We have not been able to find exact documentation on why the noses have been painted yellow - perhaps for an exercise or use as target tugs. As can be seen, the middle F-51D is equipped with target tow gear.
It was not all that long ago when, after World War Two, Merlin engines thundered through the skies over America powering F-51 D and F-51 H Mustangs being flown by "Weekend Warriors" - pilots of the Air National Guard. How did the Air Guard get Mustangs when their pre-war mounts were a series of clunky and outmoded biplanes? It's an interesting story.

With the atomic bombings of Japan and the end of WWII, America rapidly demobilized. Between September and December of 1945, the United States Army Air Forces went from 2,253,000 personnel to less than 889,000. Even more dramatic, the number of USMF aircraft went from 63,745 on 10 August 1945 to 34,195 by 30 June of the following year. This great drain of skilled manpower greatly weakened the USMF - and this weakness would be made painfully evident just five years later when North Korea invaded South Korea.

Funding to the military was also drastically cut and there was a real battle going on between the USMF and US Navy to obtain funding for new programs and continued operations. Along with this battle came another fight - high-ranking USMF officers wanted to do away with Reserve and/or National Guard units so that funding could be diverted to the regular USMF.

However, heavy-duty lobbying in Washington DC would result in funding being made available for the Guard. An initial plan for post-war NG units was presented USMF on 9 October 1945, but this was soon revised approved by the Commanding General, USMF. As bureaucracy, even though the plan had been at the highest level, nothing really happened until 1946 when the Army Chief of Staff directed that the National Guard be immediately activated days later this plan was announced from state governments were considered and 1946, it was ordered that the formation of these units take place immediately with the following order:
Mission of the National Guard of the United States: To provide a reserve component of the Army and Army Air Forces of the United States, capable of expansion to immediate war strength, able to furnish land and air units fit for service anywhere in the world, trained and equipped to:

- Defend critical areas of the United States against land, seaborne, or airborne invasion.
- Assist in covering the mobilization and concentration of the remainder of the Reserve forces.
- Participate, by unit, in all types of operations, including the offensive, either in the United States or overseas.

Mission of the National Guard of the several states: To provide sufficient organizations in each state so

The California ANG was allocated a small number of RF-51Ds including 44-14845N, which was photographed with two 100-lb practice bombs fitted under the wings. As a point of interest, this aircraft was sprayed with an overall aluminum finish. (W.T. Larkins)

194th FBS F-51H 44-64350 displays the unit's large insignia carried under the windscreen. The unit was based at Hayward, California, before moving to Fresno in California's central valley.

F-51D-30-NA 44-74820M photographed at Santa Rosa, California, during August 1951. The Mustang has been fitted with target lug gear. (W.T. Larkins)
trained and equipped as to enable them to function efficiently at existing strength in the protection of life and property and the preservation of peace, order, and public safety, under competent orders of the state authorities.

According to the complex plans, the National Guard’s air arm was to comprise 541 units, with most of these being support units. Combat elements would be organized into twelve wings. These wings would be under the overall command of Air Defense Command (ADC) who in turn would spread the responsibilities to the First, Second, Fourth, Tenth, Eleventh, and Fourteenth Air Forces. The dozen wings would be divided into 20 fighter groups comprising 62 squadrons. Also there would be two light bombardment groups with 62 squadrons and five composite groups with a dozen fighter squadrons and six bombardment squadrons.

Storage facilities across the United States were bursting with former combat aircraft — the majority of which would be, unfortunately, scrapped. However, the USAAF did keep vast reserves of aircraft that could be useful to a more modern military and this included thousands of P-51s, P-47s, A-26s, and other planes. Under this new plan, Mustangs would

From 1 March 1953 to 30 June 1953, the 194th FBS was tasked with keeping two F-51Ds on alert from sunrise to sunset as part of an experimental program to see whether ANG units could supplement the Air Defense Command. California Mustangs were under the overall control of the 144th FG.
equip NG units in the Midwest and West while Thunderbolts would be assigned to the East Coast and the South. Each fighter squadron would be allocated 25 fighters along with four target-towing aircraft (Invaders), two instrument trainers (Texans), two liaison planes (Stinson L-5s) and one C-47 Skytrain (some units had two C-47s while a couple of units had C-46 Commandos).

Many of the 555 H model Mustangs eventually served with the ANG including 44-64480. William T. Larkins took this magnificent nighttime shot of the 194th H with a very large flash bulb! The flash helps pop out underwing details including the rocket rails and blue-painted 100-lb practice bombs. Taken at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, during August 1952.

All 48 states, the territories of Hawaii and Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia immediately began recruiting
With the end of the war, most USAAF personnel wanted to return to civil life, but the drop in the post-war economy led many of these men to seek a full- or part-time job with the new NG. There was a lot of work to be done in a very short amount of time along with a competitive spirit to see what state could field the first operational unit. The State of Colorado was the first with the 120th Fighter Squadron (Single-Engine) that, on 30 June 1946, became the first air or ground NG unit to be extended federal recognition after the end of the war.

Working with an efficiency that is sadly missing in our current government, NG units became quickly operational but a major blow came in FY47 when some

With the F-51H, markings became a bit more standardized than the confusing mixture carried by F-51Ds. This 194th FBS F-51H 44-64466 was photographed with non-standard very large underwing drop tanks. (W.T. Larkins)

It would appear from its overall scruffy condition that F-51D 44-72969 had just been received from storage by the 194th. The only evidence of its Guard affiliation is the NG carried on the vertical fin. This is an historically important photo taken on 10 September 1948, before the 194th was at Hayward. They started at Oakland with just a few planes. As with many ANG F-51Ds, this aircraft was taken back by the USAF for the Korean War where it served with the 8th FBG, but crashed near Namwon during a strafing run on 19 September 1950. The Mustang was photographed over Crissy Field and the Golden Gate Bridge. Pilot was Maj. W.W. Foy. (W.T. Larkins)
Fitted with underwing drop tanks, 194th FS F-51D-30-NA 44-74825 was being flown by Brig. Gen. John Felton Turner (CO of the 144th FG, which was then headquartered at Hayward) when photographed on 24 June 1951 over Verba Buena and Treasure Islands. Note that this Mustang has been sprayed overall in aluminum. (W.T. Larkins)

$53 million in N.G funding was transferred to the Regular Army to make up for congressional budget cuts. Also, some states were having difficulty obtaining flying fields. The War Assets Administration had sold the majority of wartime fields to local governments for pennies on the dollar. Even with the monetary

Captain W.W. McDonald goes through a cockpit check before starting the Merlin of this F-51D of the 195th FS (SE) at Van Nuys.

F-51Ds of the 195th FS (SE) on the ramp at Santa Rosa, California, during a 1950 training exercise.

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"With the gathering of different ANG units at Santa Rosa, California, I wanted to try to get a formation photograph of the three different states represented at the annual camp," recalled aviation historian William T. Larkins. "It took a lot of talking and pleading, but once the brass got interested then everything began to come together. On 29 August 1950, my camera plane was a Nevada ANG T-6 flown by Lt. Col. Breeden of the California 144th FG. In the photo, the California 194th Mustang was flown by Lt. Col. Atherton; the Nevada 192nd FS example was flown by Maj. Santos of the 144th FG (he had "aced" out the Nevada pilot for the photo mission); and the Utah 191st FS F-51D was piloted by Maj. Lamb, the Utah operations officer." (W.T. Larkins)

cutback, 56 squadrons were established in the District of Columbia, Territory of Hawaii, and 42 of the 48 states.

Mustangs comprised 30 of these squadrons, Thunderbolts 18, and Invaders eight. By the end of FY 47, some 1965 aircraft had been delivered. To bring the units up to mandated strength with a 10% reserve, an additional 359 aircraft were required, but during 1948 many delays were encountered even though federally-recognized squadrons had grown to 73, but the problem was that the units were up to only 76.6% of authorized strength. Also at this point, there was really no standardization in markings and many of the aircraft simply had a large NG painted on the fuselage and wings.

The United States Air Force was created on 18 September 1947 and, through its Air Defense Command, became the inheritor of the NG units, which officially became the Air National Guard (ANG). All this brings us to the coverage of our first Mustang-equipped NG/ANG state - California.

From 1925 to 1940, California was home to the 115th Observation Squadron based at Griffith Field, Griffith Park, in southern California, and over the years flew a variety of Douglas observation biplanes before receiving the much more modern North American 0-47 and BC-1A. On 3 March 1941, the unit was called to active duty and remained state-side, changing bases seven times. The unit flew coastal patrol and even made covert missions into Mexico to chase down the
r rumor that the Japanese had built secret submarine bases in that country. In late 1944, the unit went overseas as the 115th Liaison Squadron and flew Stinson L-1s and L-5s before moving on to Piper L-4s and operating in the CBI.

The 115th OS was inactivated on 23 December 1945 and on 24 May 1946 was assigned to the California National Guard at Van Nuys Airport with the new designation of 115th Bomb Squadron (Light). Flying Douglas A-26B/C Invaders, the unit moved to nearby Burbank in April 1948 and was called to duty for the Korea War on 1 April 1951 as the 47th BG at Langley AFB, Virginia. While at Langley, the unit converted to the North American B-45A Tornado four-engine jet bomber. After all that work, the unit went back to the Invader during February 1952. The unit was returned to state control on 1 January 1953 as the 115th Fighter-Bomber Squadron and returned to its original home of Van Nuys Airport with F-51 D/Hs where the unit became known as "The Hollywood Air Guard." The 115th operated Mustangs into February 1955 when they converted to the F-86 Sabre.

On 2 June 1948, at Oakland Airport, the Utility Flight of the 194th FS (SE) was formed with a small number of NM-16s and A-26 Invaders. It wasn't until 2 March 1949, that the 194th FS (SE) received federal recognition at Hayward Airport in the bay area. Equipped with F-51Ds until the summer of 1952 when F-51Hs were received, the unit was redesignated as the 194th Fighter Interceptor Squadron and was returned to state control on 1 January 1953 as the 115th Fighter-Bomber Squadron and returned to its original home of Van Nuys Airport with F-51 D/Hs where the unit became known as "The Hollywood Air Guard." The 115th operated Mustangs into February 1955 when they converted to the F-86 Sabre.

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An F-51H leads a line-up of 195th F-51 Ds.

from 1 March 1953 to 30 June 1953, as part of an experimental program, the 194th kept to F-51s on a sunrise to sunset alert. This was done to see if Air Defense Command could be supplemented with ANG units as the threat of Soviet long-range bombers began to grow. With residential expansion around Hayward, the 194th (now redesignated a FBS) moved to Fresno Airport in the central valley in November 1954 and converted to the F-51 H and was redesignated the 194th FIG the following year and converted to Sabres in April 1958.

Going back to Van Nuys, the 195th FS (SE) was extended federal recognition on 29 September 1946 and was equipped with F-51 Ds. Called to active duty for the Korean War during March 1951, the unit remained at Van Nuys and during October 1952, F-51 Hs began to serve alongside the F-51 Ds. By December of 1952, the unit had returned to state control and in March 1954, as the 195th FS, the unit converted to F-80C Shooting Stars to become the first ANG jet fighter squadron. Moving to George AFB and called to active duty as the 196th FBS, personnel and several F-80s were transferred to Eniwetok where they provided aerial defense during nuclear testing known as Operation Greenhouse. Transferred to Japan, the 196th FBS initially provided aerial defense of Japan before heading to South Korea for combat operations. During this time, the unit began flying F-84Es. On 10 July 1952, the unit was returned to state control but was not activated until October when they began flying F-51 Hs. Redesignated 196th FS, the unit flew Mustangs until March 1954 when conversion to the F-86A started.

As can be seen, California's NG/ANG has enjoyed a long history with the Mustang. If readers have any Mustang NG/ANG stories they would like to share, please contact the Editor at moleary@challengeweb.com.

Crew chief of a 194th F-51H watches as a flight of replacement North American Sabres roars overhead. The majority of surviving F-51 Hs were flown to McClellan AFB, Sacramento, where they were scrapped without being offered for surplus sale.