

P-51



photo © Wayne E. Mason

“Sweet and Lovely” by Ralph J. Ferrusi



I e-mailed my “P-51-nut” friend Wayne out in Indiana (or someplace) my Tondelayo!!! article in the February/March Boating on the Hudson and Beyond, and he responded that he was a “Nose Art” nut, and attached the photo of the P-51 “Sweet and Lovely”, with its human “Sweet and Lovely”, accompanying this article.

Wayne noted the photo was taken September 28, 2007 at the Gathering of Mustangs & Legends held in Columbus, Ohio at Rickenbacker Air Force Base, and there were, astonishingly, 77 Mustangs in attendance, “plus many other war birds”.

I’m familiar with a lot of Mustangs, having seen them at air shows, sat in them, seen pictures of them, or read about them. “Moonbeam McSWINE”, “ALABAMA RAMMER JAMMER”, “JERSEY JERK”, “Ferocious Frankie”, “Fragile but Agile”, “Toulouse Nuts”, Captain Don Gentile’s “Shangri-La”, Major “Ratsy” Preddie’s “CRIPES A MIGHTY”, Captain “Kit” Carson’s “Nooky Booky IV” come to mind, but I’d never heard of the “Sweet and Lovely”.

First things first, I Googled “MustangsMustangs”, and, lo and behold, quickly discovered the “Sweet and Lovely”, with a brief description of its history, and about 50 photos. Next

I Googled “P-51 Sweet and Lovely” and came up with mega-tons of info about the current “Sweet and Lovely” and the “real” “Sweet and Lovely” of the 487th Fighter Squadron, 352nd Fighter Group, the “Blue Nosed Bastards From Bodney”, “Ratsy” Preddie’s outfit (I had suspected the “Sweet and Lovely” was from the 352nd from what I could see of its blue nose).

Next, just out of curiosity, I Googled “How many P-51 Mustangs are still flying”. Hang onto your hats, there are droves of P-51A’s, B’s, C’s, and H’s, but mostly P-51D’s and K’s, “Airworthy, On Display, or Under Restoration” in (besides the USA) Australia, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and Venezuela!!!! It would take years to go through all this info to come up with numbers summarizing it, so let’s just summarize the “Sweet and Lovely’s” current and real histories:

N451D, P-51D-25-NA 44-73279 was built at North American Aviation, Inglewood, California in 1944, and was acquired as a “collection of parts” by Bob Baker in 2000. Baker devoted 7000-8000 hours over a four-year period to restoring this P-51 to the “Sweet and Lovely”: he wanted a paint scheme that hadn’t been done before, and wanted it to be of a plane whose pilot was still alive at the time, so he could introduce it to him, and, maybe take him for a ride!

He ultimately contacted Lieutenant Cuthbert A. “Bill” Patillo (who shot down an ME-262) of the 487th Fighter Squadron, 352nd Fighter Group: the “Blue Nosed Bastards of Bodney”. Patillo’s P-51K Mustang was the “Sweet and Lovely”...

In the 2007 Gathering of Mustangs and Legends Bill was reunited with Baker’s P-51 restored in the “Sweet and Lovely” colors, and signed his name on the rudder. Bill later flew with the USAF Thunderbirds. Baker ultimately acquired another P-51 and restored it in the “Little Rebel” colors of Bill’s twin brother Buck, who flew in the 486th Fighter Squadron, 352nd Fighter Group!!!

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