

A North American B-25 Mitchell bomber soars as the sun sets over the Chino Air Museum in California. North American is a heritage company of Boeing.



# The Planes of Fame

Photos by Erik Simonsen

## A California museum works to preserve aviation history for future generations

BY ERIK SIMONSEN

What began as a backyard collection of several World War II airplanes saved from the scrap yard became the United States' first aviation museum west of the Rocky Mountains.

The Air Museum Planes of Fame at the Chino Airport, Calif., which this year is celebrating its 50th anniversary, is the oldest privately operated air museum in the world. Its collection of more than 150 historic aircraft features several airplanes from Boeing and its heritage companies.

The museum is dedicated to collecting, restoring, displaying and preserving aircraft and memorabilia for the educational benefit of current and future generations. Only a fraction of the more than 300,000 aircraft produced by the United States during World War II exist today.

"During the late 1950s the airplanes

that served us so well in winning World War II were being systematically destroyed," said museum founder Edward Maloney. "I was fed up with the aircraft being cut up for scrap."

The collection includes several extremely rare flying examples: a one-of-a-kind 1942 Northrop N9MB Flying Wing, a Seversky 2PA/AT-12 Guardsman, and a Boeing P-26 Peashooter (the first all-



A North American F-86F Sabre Jet (left) and a MiG-15 fly at this year's air show at the Chino Air Museum. During the show, the aircraft simulated a dogfight.



The Boeing Kaydet "Stearman" biplane performs with a wing walker. The aircraft was made by the Stearman Aircraft Division of Boeing in Wichita, Kan.

## ■ HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



The Boeing F-15C Eagle (top) appears with the World War II-era Lockheed P-38 Lightning.

metal monoplane fighter for the U.S. military, built in 1932).

What's particularly unique about the Chino Air Museum is that the aircraft are not all relegated to static displays. The staff maintains and flies many of the aircraft. During its annual air show, a minimum of 25 to 30 World War II and Korean War vintage aircraft go airborne all at once. And where else can you see a North American F-86F Sabre Jet and MiG-15 reenacting a Korean War dog-fight? During its 2007 Air Show, held in May, the only three flyable P-38s in the world performed together.

Extensive restoration work is now being carried out on a Boeing B-17 (Picadilly

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—Edward Maloney, founder of the Air Museum Planes of Fame

Lilly) obtained directly from the U.S. Air Force in 1957, and a prototype Bell YP-59A Airacomet. Both aircraft are being restored to flying condition. Built in 1942, the P-59

was the first jet fighter developed by the United States. In about a year, the museum's jet will become the only flying example in the world.

The nonprofit museum is supported by donations, contributions from aviation enthusiasts and untold hours of dedicated volunteers. "The Planes of Fame is an air museum for all ages," said Mark Foster, vice president and general manager and Warbird pilot. "People work and dedicate their time here because they love aviation and want to contribute in some way, as well as share their experiences with others." ■

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