

# What's happening at PIONEER AERO RESTORATIONS

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With Wanaka behind us some normality is returning to the shop. When everybody got back to town a few of the guys took a bit of a break to recharge their batteries after the 3-week 7-day, 12-hours-a-day input to get Tony Banta's P-40E to the Show.

It was then tidy up time for Tony's aircraft. Some of the ancillary systems such as the guns and oxygen, which hadn't made it in time for the Show, were fitted and the shark's mouth which had been a temporary for the Show, was removed and replaced with a rendition specifically to Tony's specifications. Tail numbers were added and the serial stencil applied.

Then it was time to disassemble, pack in the container and send it on its way.



*In the box*



*Put to bed*



*The boys say goodbye*

It left New Zealand the second week of May and was due to arrive in the USA on 26 May. All things being equal it should be at its home base for assembly June 1 when three guys from New Zealand arrive to reassemble it.

John Lamont is scheduled to fly into the US on June 14 to do test flying and then it's check out time for Tony and a couple of his flying colleagues.

Back in the shop it's work going ahead on two other P-40 projects.

## Jerry Yagen's P40E

Jerry's RH wing has had its component rebuild and trial fit-up to Spar 5 and is now pulled down and riveting is turning all of the parts into a completed wing. This job is now up to Spar 3 and progressing rapidly.



*Jerry's wing going together*



*Undercarriage links ready to install*

Jerry's other wing is being fitted out with controls and plumbing and all the undercarriage linkage and attach parts have been serviced, plated and trial assembled.

Many of Jerry's other components have been serviced and rebuilt while most of the shop's focus was on finishing Tony's aircraft. As a result, Jerry's fuel tanks are now at the stage where only the filler necks need fitting (best to do when they are offered up into the wings – so that will have to wait a bit) and then they can be finally assembled and the halves joined together.

The tailplane is nearing completion with only the rear cover left to install.



*Fuel tanks ready for final assembly*



*Tailplane almost finished*

### **Judy Pay's P-40F Wings**

Work is also full on with Judy's project. We are rebuilding Judy's wings, from tip to tip, including all the pieces that hang off, and go in the wings. When they go back to Judy she will be able to fit the undercarriage legs and wheels, stand the wings up and drop the fuse on. After hooking up the controls and plumbing, the wings will be ready to fly. While this is a 15-month contract, we are going to try and target March 31 as completion date.



*Wing tip components ready*



*Ammo Bay door parts waiting to be assembled*



*Judy's RH wing leading edge being assembled in the fixture*



*The components of the structure from Spar 3 to 5 are being rebuilt systematically*

## The La-9

The aircraft is still awaiting the arrival of the engine from the Czech Republic. The guys over there have had a series of surprises from failures of test stands to replacement of engine bearers and finding a genuine new ASH-82FN injector which has been serviced and fitted. But ... the advice we received last week was that intermediate power runs were complete with all Ts and Ps looking normal – only high power checks to do and it will be packed in a box and sent on its way.

Hopefully when the next newsletter comes out the engine will be here and being installed.

## Another P-40 Project!

We have a new project in-house. Just to make sure we're not going to get bored (?) it is another P-40 project. This is a sister ship to Charles Darby and my P-40N1 (Currawong). It's another P-40N1, this time A29-414 which was an RAAF 78 Squadron aircraft. The fuselage was recovered from New Guinea (Tadji to be exact) some years ago and this will be a longer-term project, the progress of which will depend on workload and the availability of parts.

Work has commenced on the fuselage and by removing all of the damaged skins and broken bits, what's left of the fuselage doesn't look too bad.

We do have a complete stringer kit and lower longerons on their way from Ken Hake and, as we have all of the original skins off "Currawong" and while it's a longer term deal, it shouldn't take us too long to have something looking like a nice fresh P-40 fuselage sitting in the shop.



*As A29-414 arrived on the truck...*



*and in short order had its clothes off and some of the frames out to be rebuilt*

## Other news

There's been a bit of a move in work direction for the shop also. The Avspecs guys, who have had a long love affair with Spitfires, are going to focus more on pursuing this type of work. They already have the MKXIV (ex Alpine) on the go and they have another Spit on the way and perhaps another one also in the "wings". As and when time and space will allow, probably as our joint venture jobs come to a conclusion, they will probably take on other projects also.

As Pioneer owns 95% of the P-40 tooling and jigs we will be continuing down that path, however that is not to say we won't be looking at other interesting projects also. The Pioneer team have really enjoyed the challenge of restoring the La-9, where there weren't parts readily available and the rebuilding and sourcing of almost everything proved an interesting challenge. Another job like that would keep the brain departments stimulated.

And just to close this issue...



...the smiling face is that of Dick Sasse. Dick is from West Australia and was the operational test pilot of the Hogan/Darby P-40 after it was assembled new in Australia during WWI I. Why is he smiling? – because he has just taken his first ride in A29-448 in 59½ years (this time as a passenger)! Last ride was the test flight he conducted in 1943.

Keep smiling and give our love to any warbird you may see.

*Garth*

PS Our web site is up and running. Still a bit of refining to do which will happen in the next month or so. Check it out at [www.pioneeraero.co.nz](http://www.pioneeraero.co.nz)