

# What's happening at PIONEER AERO RESTORATIONS

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Well - ... late again. We've been holding back on producing the next newsletter in the hope that we'd have the engine of the La-9 on hand so we could include a few photos ... but alas ... no engine as yet. We are advised that it is ready to ship and that AVIA is checking the prop after it was installed and run on the engine. It is then all supposed to be ready to airfreight to us.

Que sera sera!



*Still all I need is my engine and my prop!*

Still, lots of other things going on.

Judy Pay's mainplane assemblies are progressing rapidly. All the components for the RH wing have been rebuilt and trial fitted. The leading edge assembly was riveted up to Spar 2 in the leading edge jig and moved into the main wing fixture, which allowed the LH leading edge to be fitted into the leading edge jig. This has been briefly held up while we await the main undercarriage attach fitting from the machine shop. (The leading edge spars can't be installed until the attaches are in place.)

However, while we have been held up on this, work has proceeded rebuilding all the other wing components for the LH wing and a large part of this is now ready to build this wing.



*RH Wing pinned together*



*LH Wing in the Leading Edge jig*



*LH Wing components  
"in waiting"*

While the major wing work has been going on, more work has continued on the other components with the Flaps, Ammo Bay Doors, Gun Bay Doors and Fuel Bay doors, all either finished or nearing completion.



*Flaps*



*Gun Bay Doors*



*Fuel Bay Doors*

With Avspecs now going their own way (more on that later), we have taken over the whole of Judy's wing job and Avspecs are going to finish off Jerry Yagen's E model P-40, with a small amount of work from us to supply various components.

Jerry's aircraft is progressing rapidly with a large Avspecs team hard at it. For our part we have finished the Fuel Tanks, Ammo Doors and LH undercarriage fairings and doors. We have also started work on the RH undercarriage fairings and doors and the keel fairings.

The Avspecs team have the engine in with preliminary fits of the top and chin cowls done while the fitting out of the aircraft rigging and plumbing is well underway.



*Jerry's Fuel Tanks*



*Engine in & chin cowl fitted*

And finally, the in-house project. Jaren (our webmaster) has been tracking down more history of the aircraft and this is on our website. For those of you who haven't visited, give it a try at [www.pioneeraero.co.nz](http://www.pioneeraero.co.nz) - Anyway we're only putting in what time we have available on this project, but it is still progressing. We've been to all sources of P-40 parts known to us and the project now comprises of more than 95% of the required P-40N1 specific items required to build a complete aircraft, and we should have the few remaining pieces on hand in the next few months.

At that time this project is going to be offered for sale. If you know someone who wants a complete P-40 project (and wants it restored by us!) tell them to keep an eye on the "For Sale" page of our website.



*Top longerons & front frames rebuilt*

On the housekeeping front, Warren and Avspecs, after initially indicating they wanted to remain in our existing facility, have now decided to move to new premises and to that end they are having a new hangar built on the field and we are buying their share in the hangar.

At this stage they plan to move out by year's end which will then allow us to re-arrange some items in the shop and be back up and running as a single entity in the New Year.

Next newsletter will be out a little more promptly - hopefully sooner than planned if a certain ASH-82 arrives.

*Garth*

P.S. A recent visitor to the shop was John "Honk" Miller. John was flying Vildebeests in Singapore when it fell. He escaped and returned to New Zealand to retrain on Hawker Hinds, Harvards, and Kittyhawks. He was one of the founding members of 16 (F) Squadron, formed on 1 July 1942. Once in the islands they lost a few pilots due to palm trees and night flying incidents. Around July 1943, Mort Vanderpump, Keith Mulligan (*Kittyhawks & Coconuts*), Honk and three others were sent up to Santos to make up for the attrition.

On 3 September 1943 they were in P-40Ms escorting B24s, when one of the bombers developed engine trouble and started to fall behind. Honk and Vanderpump turned back to help and found the B24 under attack from "a few zero's" as it says in Honk's log book. Upon arrival of the P-40s the Japs scarpered, so the two P-40s escorted the bomber home. That was the end of it as far as the two of them were concerned. At the end of the tour they were coming home via Santos when they were advised to smarten themselves up as a senior US person wanted to see them. He presented them US DFC's, these being the first won by Kiwis in WWII. Another person had been cited for the award some months before Honk and Vanderpump, but due to red tape had not yet been awarded the medal. All three had the awards gazetted on the same day, with Honk and VDP "receiving" theirs first.

Due to deafness Honk only completed one tour and flew for the last time on 2 November 1943 in P-40N NZ3083. Incidentally he flew nearly all the P-40s in the number sequence of Ray Hanna's, the only exception being Ray's.



*Before...*



*Honk, first time in a P-40 since NZ3083 in 1943*