

Ventura Memorial Flight Association, Purposes and Donations

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Ventura Memorial Flight Association
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Edmonton, Alberta
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Purpose of the VMFA

The Ventura Memorial Flight Association was formed in 1987 with the purpose of recovering a crashed Lockheed Ventura GR.V aircraft from a site 50 miles from Yellowknife, NWT, and return it to flying condition.

The Lockheed Ventura was a development of the Lockheed 18 Lodestar and was designed as a fast daylight bomber for an RAF Specification. An order for 675 aircraft was placed in the spring of 1941, but that order was cancelled in favour of De Havilland Mosquito.

This left Lockheed with only one customer for the Ventura, the RCAF, who saw the Ventura as a replacement for the Lockheed Hudson. Although the Hudson saw wide use as a maritime patrol bomber in Canada we had a problem of large uninhabited coasts to patrol with few airfields. As the Ventura was much faster than the Hudson it could cover more area in a day.

This kept the program going until December 1941 when the USA suddenly found itself at war. The Ventura Mk I and II aircraft were then used by the RAF as bombers while the USAAF and the US Navy both ordered the aircraft as anti-submarine aircraft. This built on the design already started for the RCAF and emerged for the US Navy as the PV-1, and in Commonwealth Air Forces as the Ventura GR.V. Thus the Ventura was the only combat aircraft of the Second World War that was designed to meet a Canadian specification.

Although its use in Europe was coloured by heavy losses on the attack on the Phillips Factory at Eindhoven and one disastrous operation the aircraft saw wide spread success as an anti-submarine aircraft in the Atlantic and Pacific and as a bomber in the Pacific. It was also the basis of the first successful US Night Fighter for the US Marine Corps, using a British radar. It was selected for this role as its performance was similar to the Bristol Beaufighter.

In the RCAF the Ventura bombers, including the prototypes, were used as trainers at #34 OTU in New Brunswick, while the GR.V aircraft were the main inshore anti-submarine aircraft for the last half of the War.

Our aircraft, RCAF #2195, was built in 1943 in the middle of the production run and purchased by the RCAF. It was assigned to #149 (BR) Squadron at Annette Island, Alaska, then to Terrace, BC, where it served as the COs personal aircraft. At the end of the war it was briefly stored at Vulcan, Alberta, before being selected for use as a gunnery trainer. It was part of the first contract of work undertaken by the new Avro Canada at Malton and was flown on training from Trenton until 1952 when it was declared surplus and sold to Spartan Aerial Surveys of Ottawa. There it received a minimal change in equipment and flew as an initial mapping aircraft and transport before force landing near Yellowknife in 1953.

The landing did minimal damage to the airframe which was left sitting on large overload fuel tanks that had been installed in the bomb bay. Thus returning the aircraft to flight is a matter of repair, not restoration. We have collected all the necessary parts, manuals and parts drawings for this work, including special and secret equipment used during the war, including a working WWII radar set. If we had the funding this aircraft could be re-built to fly in 18 months. It would be the only complete flying Ventura in the world.