

THE MALLARD STORY

The Mallard as an aircraft

The Mallard was built by the Grumman Aircraft Company from 1946 to 1951, and is often confused with its larger counterpart, the Albatross. It is a smaller aircraft and has a flat rear stabilizer which is the easiest way to distinguish the two.

It was built as a commercial aircraft after the success of the "Goose" and "Widgeon" which were built and used in service by the military. The Mallard has fixed wing floats and tricycle landing gear as opposed to the retractable floats and tail dragger gear of the others.

The Mallard saw service in many fishing camps and tourist destinations flying to exotic locations both in Canada and the Caribbean, and by the Royal Egyptian Air Force for one of their Kings use.

It was converted to a turbo version late in its life in 1970.



The High Country Flyers Mallard

It is not known any more who started the Mallard, but it was built originally as a flying model.

It came to be a hand me down at the Sandy Point Fall Classic in and around the year 1998.

The story as I remember it was that the original builder could no longer continue the build due to health or age, and it was brought to the Fall Classic to be auctioned off. Only, no one wanted to buy it. One of the flyers finally offered \$10 bucks for it and loaded it onto the roof of their vehicle and brought it home.

I am not sure of the next step, but I can only imagine the scene of pulling up to the house with a 10' airplane fuselage strapped to the top of the vehicle, "Honey I'm home, and guess what I bought today?".

The first time I spotted it was when it had been deposited in the back storage room at the High Country Flyers clubhouse in Logan Lake. The behemoth took up most of one wall of the shelf unit, and as it was not clear as to what should be done with it, or who wanted to do anything with it, it languished in this spot for several years.

Finally, one of the then current club officers decided that it was time to do a major clean up / clean out of the clubhouse and it was unilaterally decided that it was time for it to go.

However, as the rest of the club members arrived for the clean up party, the general opinion was that no one could bear to destroy this creation of time, effort, and love.

With some brainstorming taking place while it sat unceremoniously on the grass outside the club house, it was decided that it should become the club mascot, and that it would make an impressive weather vane with some effort and cooperation.

It was decided that it could become a club project and so all it needed was a place to make the transformation. There was the problem, this large an object needed a considerable size location with its 13 foot wing span.

I decided that I had a spot to store it while we came up with a plan as to where to make the transformation, so it was once again loaded up and shipped this time to MY home.

As it was, I had a 10' x 20' storage garage that it could hang from until such time as we got started with the project, so it had been rescued from the scrap heap once again.

It took a couple of more years before we actually got started on the conversion, and in the end, I had the room in my shop to make it happen, so in 2006, we picked one night a week, and over the course of the winter, we gathered together with coffee, donuts, a lot of laughter and stories, and tons of ingenuity to create a stable rotating airplane that would withstand the weather, wind, and rain. Complete with salad bowl cowls, wooden props, and ready rod prop shafts it was ready to “fly” come spring. It was painted originally in the Canadian Coast Guard colors of the time which was a Grey and White with Red stripe.



A pole was cemented into the ground with eight feet sticking out, into which the top 12 feet of pole was lowered into and the “Mallard” was mounted to a bearing made from a recycled pulley from an automotive air conditioning compressor. But it didn’t stop there, it was decided that it should be able to be raised and lowered, and as we had built a triangle bulletin board around the base, we had the ability to stand on top, and three strong fellows could slide the inner pole up another six feet, then stabilize the top with three guy wires and we had ourselves a most impressive mascot.



The Mallard graced the presence of the High Country Flyers field for many years, each fall it was removed and stored fully assembled, hanging inverted from the roof of our lawnmower storage shed. Each spring it was removed, checked over and then remounted on its perch to once again fly over the field for the season. It “flew” over the field for 10 years, and was overhauled and repainted to its current color midway through its life.

This continued until the property that the field was on was sold in 2016, and the only two solutions, were to destroy it, or find storage until such time as the club could secure a new field.

As it happened, I had just opened a new truck shop, and found room on the mezzanine to store it until a solution was found, which turned out to be a third solution, give it away to a new home.



Now, in 2019, the Mallard lives on, at its new home with the Kamloops Model Airplane Society, once again, proudly watching over the field, ever ready to point its way into the wind.



May she fly proud for many years to come, and if in some distant day it finally meets its end, and although it was not the intended life it was built for, it will have had a great life, appreciated by many and built with love for a hobby of wonder and dreams.

All the members of High Country Flyers that were involved in this project will be proud to see it flying once again, as well as the many hundreds of flyers from around Western Canada and the USA that have seen it over the years.

To the many flyers that have worked on this aircraft at its initial construction, its conversion to a wind vane, its upkeep, and its continuing life, thank you.

Norm Bryson

Past President High Country Flyers

Past President Kamloops Model Airplane Society

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