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AIR-BRITAIN - Founded 1948



Hidden Desert Boneyard By Patrick Dean

All aviation enthusiasts have heard stories of hidden boneyards of vintage aircraft. Some of us have spent days and, sometimes, weeks chasing these elusive stories. Recently, when talking with a group of fellow enthusiasts, I was told about a storage area in the Nevada desert that contained old 'World War II' aircraft. I imagined an assortment of B17s or B29s that had escaped the scrapman's smelter. What I found was something quite different altogether. Following directions that were patchy at best, I left my home in Henderson, Nevada, and drove 50 miles out to the high desert towards Eldorado Canyon. Several hours later I found what I was looking for. Just past the small town of Techatticup on an unmarked dirt road, I came across an amazing sight, a compound full of aircraft. However, they were not WWII vintage as I had been told, but were, in fact, North American T-28 Trojans. I counted over 50 of them in various states of decay. Seeing them took me right back to my youth; it was like being reunited with an old friend. Forty years earlier I had done my Air Force technical training on this very type at Sheppard Air Force Base. Later still, I would work on them again whilst stationed at Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi. After being allowed to inspect the airframes, I

determined that the T-28s were all 'B' and 'C' model trainer versions with no combat 'D' models amongst them.

I did find one 'A' model which still had its Wright 1300 engine and two-blade propeller. One question remained. How did they end up there? After making contact with some friendly locals at the Eldorado Canyon General Store, I was told that they all belonged to a businessman from Boulder City, Colorado. The gentleman in question owned and flew his own T-28 and was looking for spares to support his aircraft. He later managed to acquire a stock of surplus airframes from Keesler Air Force Base. He had them transported to Nevada because of the dry climate. Looking at some of the airframes, it's clear that they will eventually be scrapped. Currently, they are all disassembled, with all serviceable parts being stored. Some are good enough to be offered for sale as a complete T-28 kit of parts. Some could even be offered to aviation museums. I estimated that 20 complete aircraft could be rebuilt from the stock of airframes on hand. After seeing the aircraft again, I wondered if I might have worked on some of them. After all, they were transported from Mississippi. I will never know, but it does the soul good to re-visit the past!



Our heading photo gives a good idea of the extent of the compound at Techatticup with its lines of T-28s. On the left, a piece of nostalgia – Patrick Dean's photo from 1970 of the ramp at Keesler AFB with a pair of Navy T-28s in view.

Below left: The US Air Force T-28A with its R-12300 engine and two-bladed prop intact and, below right, another view of the storage yard.

