



Nieuport 28

By PETER M. BOWERS

The Nieuport 28 was one of those airplanes that became famous (or infamous) practically by accident. Developed in 1917 as an intended replacement for the famous V-strut Nieuport 17, 24 and 27, the 28 was a transitional model between the established lightweight Nieuport fighters and the heavier models that followed. The 28 was larger than the V-strutters all around and featured a full size lower wing, so it was a true biplane rather than a sesquiplane. Armament consisted of two synchronized Vickers guns in a rather odd arrangement, one on the left side of the fuselage outboard of the center section struts and the other inboard of the struts but still to the left of the fuselage centerline. The 28 was the first production Nieuport to use two synchronized guns--the others had used a single synchronized Vickers on the fuselage and a free-firing Lewis gun mounted on the upper wing.

Although tested in two different prototype forms and put into limited production, the 28 was rejected by the French as a combat type. Since the widely publicized "clouds of Airplanes" that were to pour from American factories in 1917-18 did not materialize, and the Allies could not spare first-line equipment for the unarmed American Expeditionary Forces, the already obsolete 28 was the only thing available. The factory sandwiched the production of new 28s in among the V-strut trainers it was turning out in quantity for the French and Americans, and a total of 297 were delivered to the A.E.F.

The Nieuport 28's chief claim to fame is that it was used to score the first combat victory by an operational U.S. unit--Lt Alan Winslow of the 94th Pursuit Squadron knocking down an Albatros D-Va on April 14, 1918. Lt Douglas Campbell, also of the 94th, became America's first ace while flying a Nieuport 28.

As a combat machine, the type left much to be desired. It still had the old Nieuport characteristic of fragility and earned a reputation for shedding the upper wing fabric in a long dive. The 160 hp Gnome "Monosoupape" rotary engine was also troublesome (the 28 was the only airplane to use this particular engine model in combat). The 27th, 94th and 95th Pursuit Squadrons alone used the 28, and it was replaced as quickly as possible when better equipment, notably Spad XIIIs, came along.

Quite a number of 28s came to the United States after the war, some remaining in Army service as trainers for several years before a few came into civilian hands. Twelve were transferred to the Navy which used them as advanced trainers and for experiments in flying land-plane fighters from battleships. At least five of the

civilian owned models survive today. In the late 1920s several had their wing spans reduced by five feet, apparently for racing. Four were active in the 1930-31 movie "Dawn Patrol" and were used again in non-flying scenes for the 1937 remake of the same film. Two are flyable today, one full-span model owned by Cole Palen of Rhinebeck, New York, and a clipped-wing model with steel tube N-struts owned by Talmantz Aviation of Santa Ana, California. The latter has at least two others in "basket case" condition, and a fifth, formerly in the Jarrett Museum, is in the possession of Ned Kinsinger and is due for eventual restoration.

PHOTO 1 (above): Signal Corps Photo showing lineup of Nieuport 28s of the 95th Pursuit Squadron.

PHOTO 2: First prototype Nieuport 28 without dihedral. When Nieuport added vertical fins to its designs, starting with the 24, it continued to apply the tail stripes to the full width of the vertical tail.

PHOTO 3: Second prototype 28 with decreased center section gap and dihedral on the upper wing. Later versions increased the gap and decreased the dihedral.

PHOTO 4: Nieuport 28s of the 95th Pursuit Squadron returning from a mission. With no brakes or steerable tailskid, and an engine that couldn't be throttled down, most of the ground maneuvering was done with the assistance of mechanics holding on to the wing struts.

PHOTO 5: A captured plane of the 95th photographed by the Germans with the short-lived tail stripe arrangement of red, blue and white (starting from the rear).

PHOTO 6: One of the postwar U. S. Navy models fitted with flotation gear just ahead of the lower wing and above the landing gear. Repainted rudder stripes are entirely behind the hinge line and wartime circles have been replaced with stars under the lower wingtips. Photo was taken on September 3, 1920.

PHOTO 7: Navy Nieuport 28 ready to take off from a platform built over the forward turret guns of the battleship, U.S.S. Arizona.

PHOTO 8: One of the clipped-wing 28s used in the original "Dawn Patrol" movie. The standard I-struts were replaced by l-struts on this plane and at least one other clipped-wing 28.

PHOTO 9: Lineup of Nieuport 28s and Thomas-Morse S-4Cs in the 1937 remake of "Dawn Patrol". Errol Flynn is in the full span N-strut model in the foreground; David Niven in the clipped-wing N-strutter next to it. Two clipped-wing l-strut 28s and three Thomas-Morse planes fill in the background.



PHOTO 2: Manufacturer's Photo

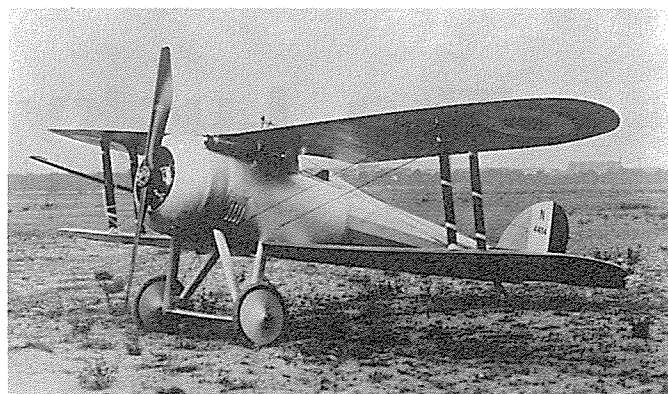


PHOTO 3: Manufacturer's Photo



PHOTO 4: Signal Corps 16825



PHOTO 5: P. M. Bowers Collection



PHOTO 6: U.S. Navy AN-16786

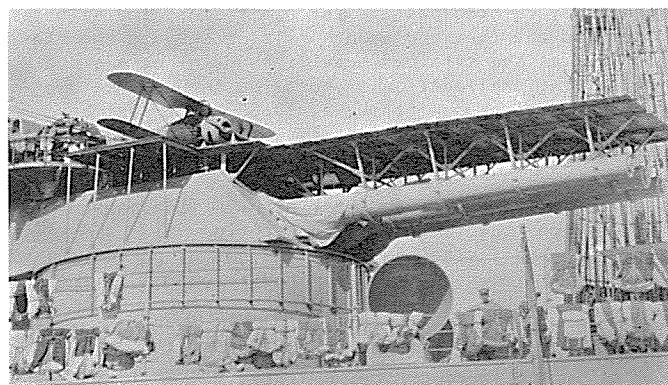


PHOTO 7: U.S. Navy 16873



PHOTO 8: R. R. Martin

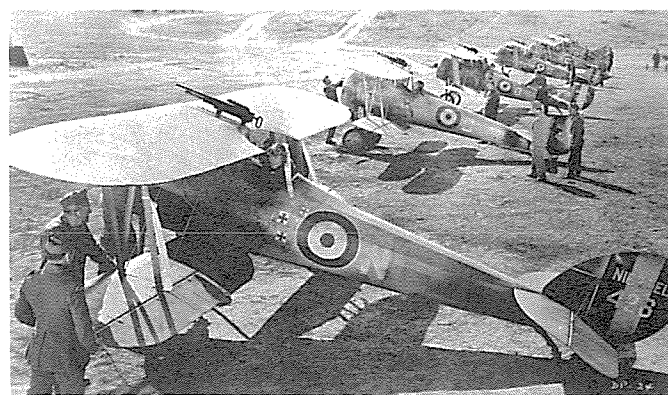


PHOTO 9: W. M. Jefferies, Jr. Coll.