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# The One and Only

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# FAIRCHILD M-84 FAMILY PLANE

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by Kent A. Mitchell

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**T**HE END OF WORLD WAR II saw the [then] numerous manufacturers of aircraft anticipating sales of thousands of personal planes to the ex-military pilots returning to civilian life. There would be "a new plane in every hangar!" What was not anticipated was that many of the tens of thousands of military-trained pilots had *enough* of flying, did not particularly *like* to fly, or did not *want* to fly—so returned to the farm, and *never ever* flew again!

More significant—for those returning pilots who *did* wish to buy a plane—the U.S. Government was getting into the business of aircraft sales. The furious rate at which American industry had produced aircraft was one of the miracles of the war. With victory came the

gigantic problem for disposal of surplus planes.

First to go were more than 5,000 trainers, commencing in March 1944. These were aircraft that had been purchased by the government for the civilian pilot training program. [Many of these planes were Fairchild PT-19, PT-23, and PT-26 trainers, the military designations for the company's civilian M-62 series.] Within two years, the newly created War Assets Administration had received a secondhand air force of more than 64,000 planes for disposal. About 37,000 of these were liaison, utility cargo, transports, and trainers.<sup>1</sup>

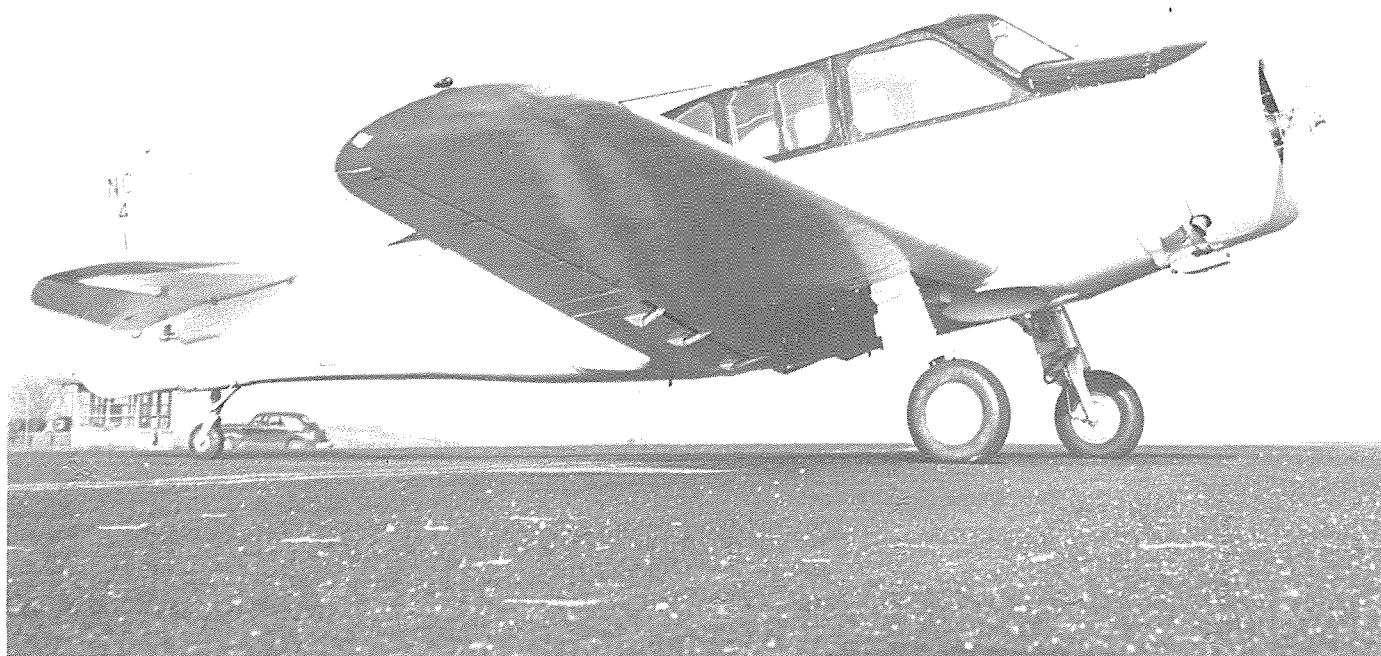
With such a glut of surplus planes in the marketplace, Fairchild realized they were not going to sell any more of their

civilian Model M-62 trainers. However, Fairchild chief engineer Armand Thiblot modified and adapted the drawings for the two-place M-62 trainer tooling and assembly fixtures to produce a four-place "family plane" designated the M-84, which could be offered to the postwar market.<sup>2</sup>

Basically, the trainer fuselage was split down the middle and widened to accommodate side-by-side seating. The open cockpits were replaced by an enclosed cabin with a door on the right-hand side over the wing center section. The center section was modified to accommodate retractable landing gear.

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NX41893, the only Fairchild M-84 ever built (1945).  
(Photo by Lyle S. Mitchell)





The Fairchild M-84, designed as a family plane for the postwar market. (Fairchild Aircraft Photo, Ott F. Beckner Collection)

The four-seat M-84 was derived from the two-seat Fairchild M-62 trainer. (Photo by Lyle S. Mitchell)



The wing outer panels and tail surfaces were not changed.

From the firewall forward, the engine and cowling installation for the M-84 was similar to that designed for the Fairchild PT-23 airplane. The engine was the seven-cylinder, radial, air-cooled, Continental W-670 which produced 220 hp (at sea level). Photographs reveal that a cowling modification provided a carburetor air scoop at the bottom of the engine for this installation. Other photographs also reveal that the M-84 utilized a two-blade, wooden, electrically controlled variable-pitch propeller manufactured by Beechcraft Propellers.

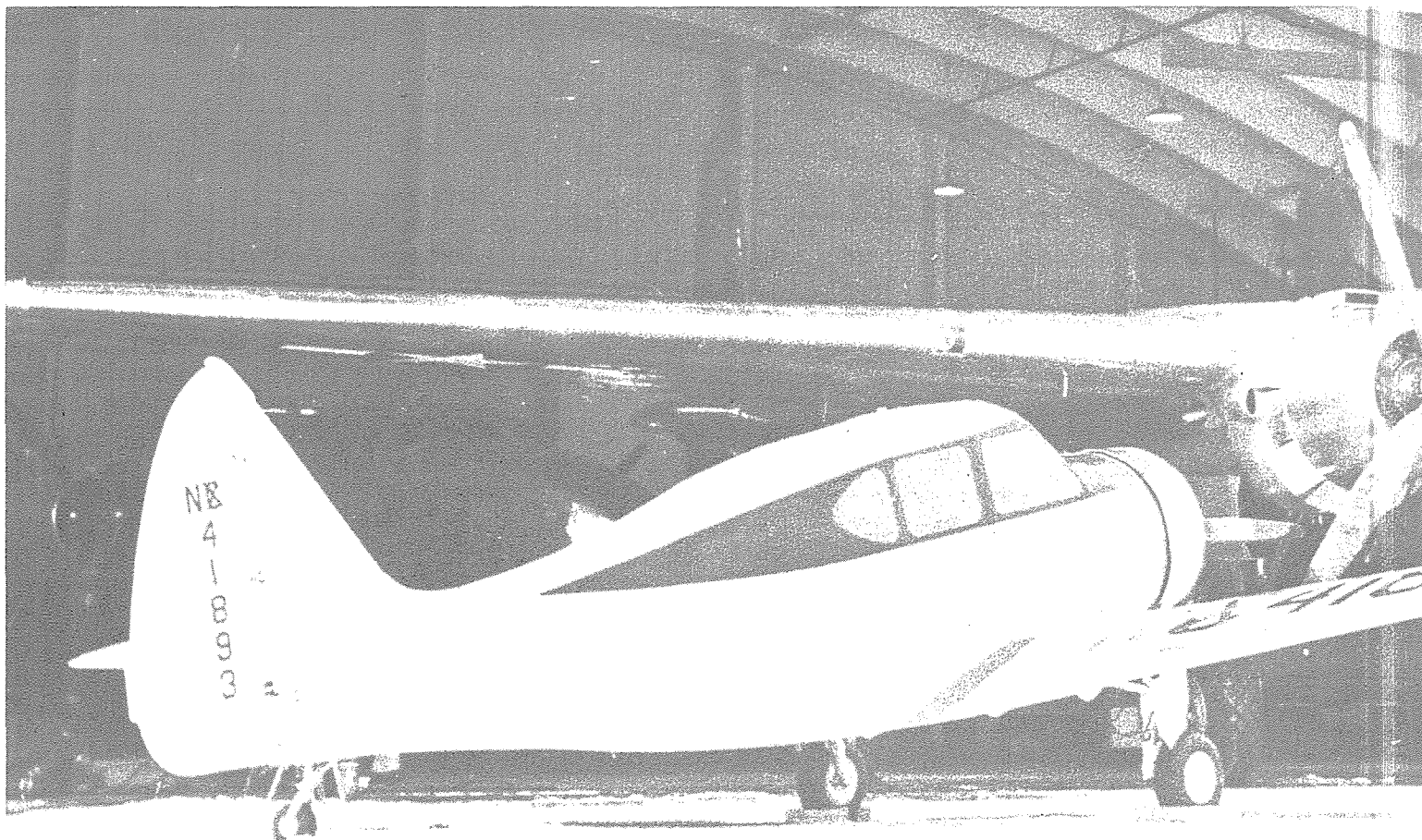
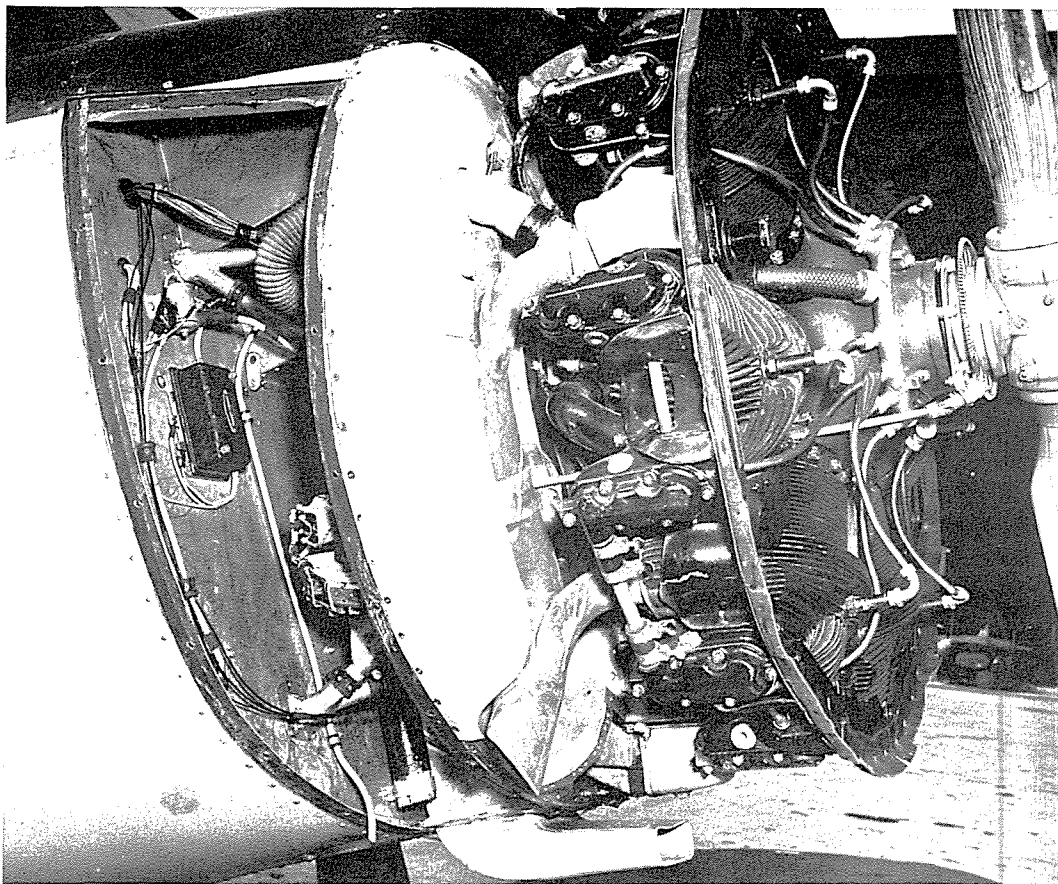
The prototype, NX41893, first took the air in December of 1945. However,

Primary and wrap cowling removed, right side view shows the Continental W-670 engine installation in the M-84.

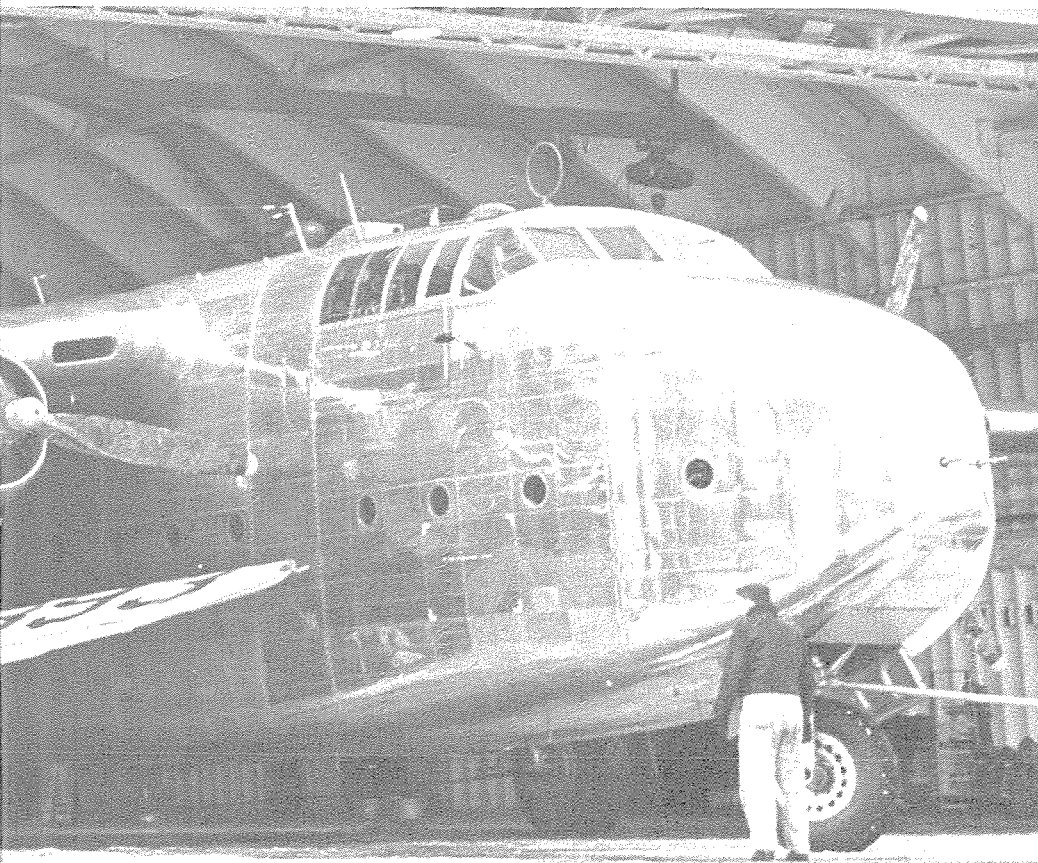
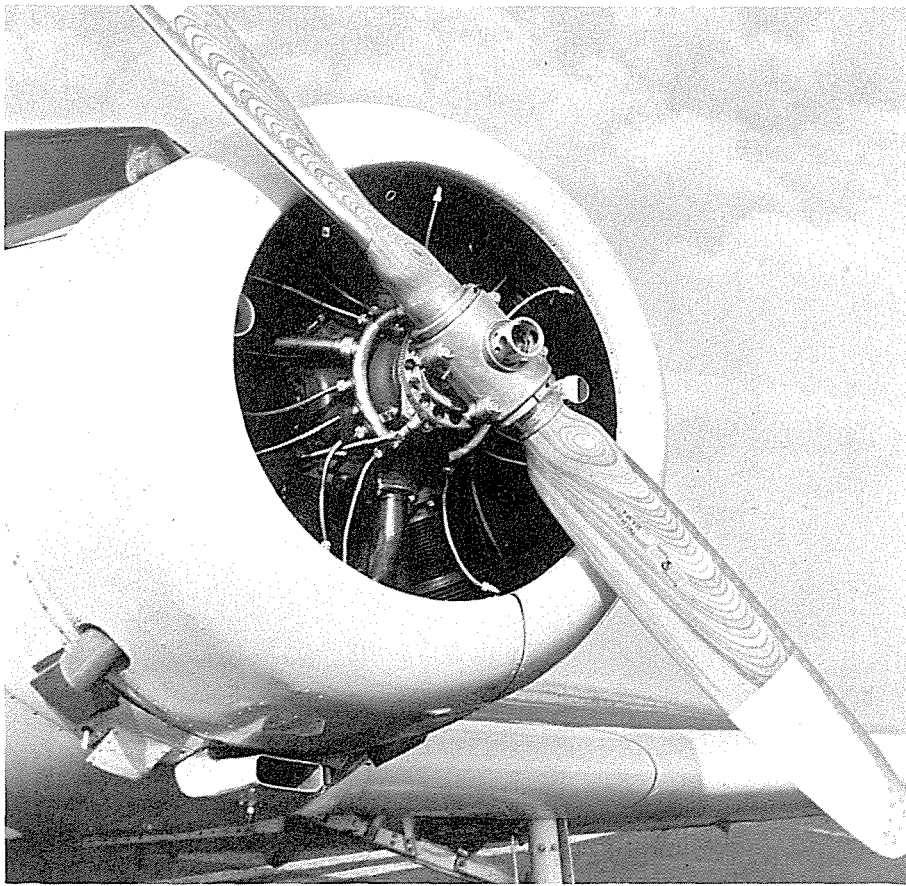
(Fairchild Aircraft Photo No. 12171)

Close-up view shows the electrically controlled variable-pitch prop manufactured by Beechcraft Propellers (Drawing No. 201-2H, blade serial numbers 3 and 4). (Photo by Lyle S. Mitchell)

Losing its hangar space to the shining new C-82, the M-84 shows its cabin and baggage doors. (Photo by Lyle S. Mitchell)







after receiving CAA certification for the M-84, Fairchild realized that their competition in the commercial world was the then-new Beechcraft *Bonanza*, the North American *Navion*, and the Belanca *Cruisair*—as well as their own F-24 which was then being built in Texas by a subcontractor, Texas Engineering and Manufacturing Company (TEMCO). Consequently, the M-84 design was not considered for production.

For five and a half years, the M-84 was used for short flight Fairchild executive transportation by both the Aircraft Division and the Ranger Engines Division.

On May 29, 1951, the M-84 was retired from service and donated to the Washington County (Maryland) school system in Hagerstown "... to further technical aviation study and training." Towed to the edge of town, the ship was then taxied several blocks behind a marching band down North Potomac Street by Fairchild chief pilot Dick Henson to a ceremony at the town's high school.<sup>3</sup>

After the local politicians, school officials, Fairchild officials, and photographer had departed, the M-84 was towed to the school system's vocational training center on the other side of town—where it remained ignored for many years. An "aviation training program" never materialized. Parked outside, the aircraft soon deteriorated in the weather and at the hands of rock-throwing vandals.

After becoming such an eyesore and embarrassment to the school officials, the remains of the airplane were uncere- moniously carted off to the local dump—an ignominious end for the snub- nosed, one-of-a-kind airplane. □

*Author's Footnote:* All you PT-19 owners out there reading this article—don't bother contacting me as to the whereabouts of the M-84 retractable landing gear. For 40 years Fairchild personnel have been fielding telephone calls and letters from people trying to buy that mechanism. It no longer exists. Honest.

#### REFERENCES

1. "War Wings for Peace" booklet, Division of Information, War Assets Administration, Washington, D.C., November 1, 1946, 29 pages (unnumbered).
2. *Yesterday—Today—Tomorrow, Fifty Years of Fairchild Aviation*, Fairchild Hiller Corporation, 1970, p. 56.
3. "A Flying Horse Goes to Pasture," *FAD* magazine, Vol. IX, No. 5, June 29, 1951 (published monthly for employees of the Fairchild Aircraft Division), p. 5.