

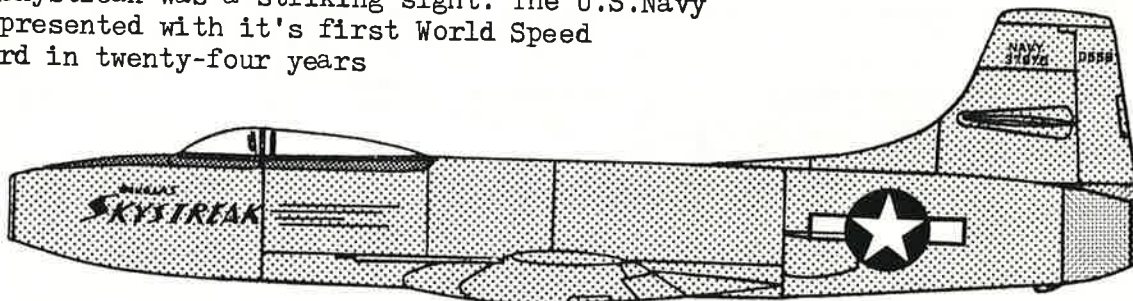


Meikraft Models

DOUGLAS D-558.1 SKYSTREAK

By 1944 the design of military aircraft had reached a point where the available wind tunnels couldn't keep up with the pace. Most manufacturers were producing designs with very high sub-sonic speeds and the first supersonic types were on the drawing boards. The U.S. Navy and the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (N.A.C.A.) approached Douglas designers with a need for an experimental aircraft that could be used for high speed jet research. The Douglas D.558 was the Douglas reply, six being ordered in 1946. Two variants were to be produced, three of the sub-sonic, straight wing D-558.1 with simple nose intake and three of the swept wing D-558-2 Skyrocket with low side intakes which would go on to become the first aircraft to achieve Mach 2.0.

The first Douglas D-558.1 Skystreak was rolled out in early 1947, 37970 featuring a full length bubble canopy that was exchanged for a "V" windscreen and stronger canopy, similar to an X-15 style, after a few flight tests. Resplendent in an overall scarlet paint job with a flashy Douglas Skystreak logo on the nose and a long black anti-glare panel around the cockpit, the Skystreak was a striking sight. The U.S.Navy was presented with it's first World Speed Record in twenty-four years

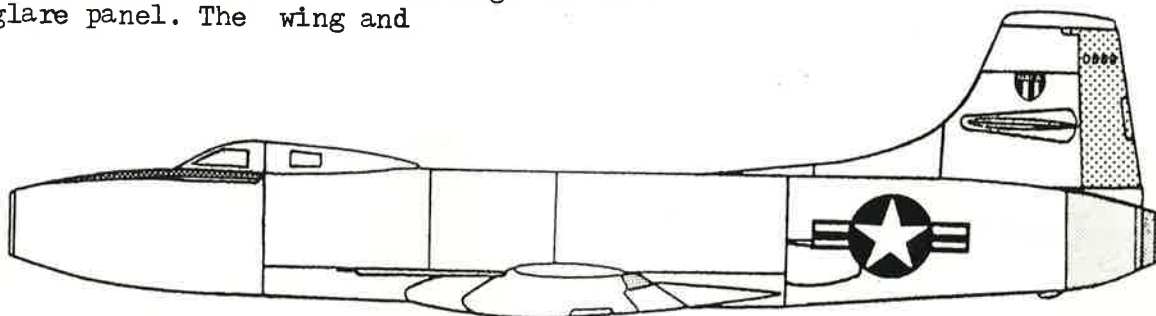


on August 20, 1947 when Cdr. Turner Caldwell took the first Skystreak 640.663 mph over a closed course. Five days later USMC Mjr. Marion Carl upped the record to 650.606 mph in the same aircraft. Both records were achieved with wingtip fuel tanks in place.

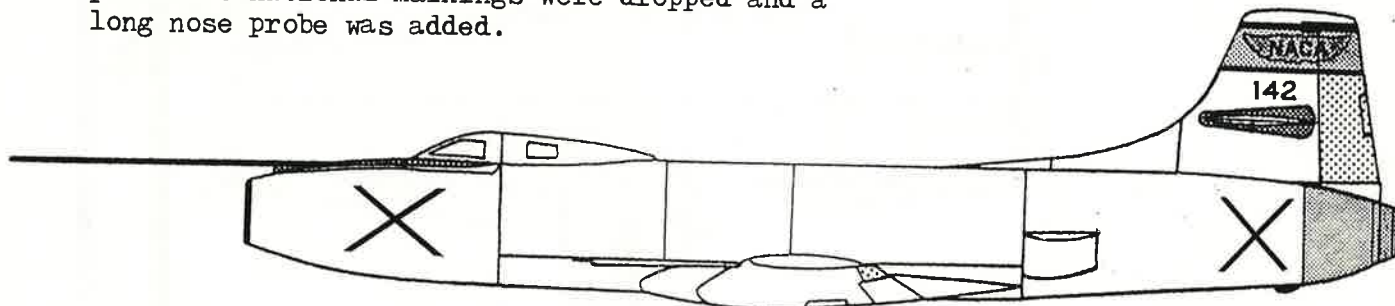
The second D-558.1 flew on August 15, 1947, 37971 being upstaged a couple of months later when Capt. Chuck Yeager pushed the Bell X-1 past the speed of sound. Not to be outdone, the third Skystreak, 37972, with Eugene May at the controls, hit Mach 1.01 while in a shallow dive. Testing continued on the three airframes under U.S. Navy and N.A.C.A. ownership for six years, a total of 229 missions being flown. The second aircraft was destroyed after 46 flights with the loss of pilot Howard Lilly. Number one exists today at the U.S. Navy Aviation Museum, Pensacola, Florida. Number three aircraft is on display at the U.S.M.C. Museum, Quantico, Virginia.

Considering that only three aircraft were built there were several color schemes used over the years. The original scarlet scheme with star and bar on the rear fuselage sides and Skystreak logo is shown above. Our center spread shows this aircraft after the canopy was replaced, the bottom view showing the aircraft without the wingtip tanks used on the early record runs. The red bar was added to the national markings soon after rollout.

Early scarlet paint schemes for all three aircraft were pretty much the same, only the aircraft number on the tail being different. Photographs show various lengths of tail cones in use for the first year or so. The early speed record aircraft did not have the Skystreak logo on the nose for the runs. Prior to NACA operations the aircraft were all painted white overall with national markings on the fuselage and the anti-glare panel. The wing and



tail control surfaces were soon stripped of white paint to provide a better air flow, leaving a rather attractive color scheme. This color scheme featured the early NACA shield on the tail with only the D558 legend on the rudder. The early NACA emblem was replaced with the yellow band with black winged emblem while the red control surfaces were retained. At some point the national markings were dropped and a long nose probe was added.

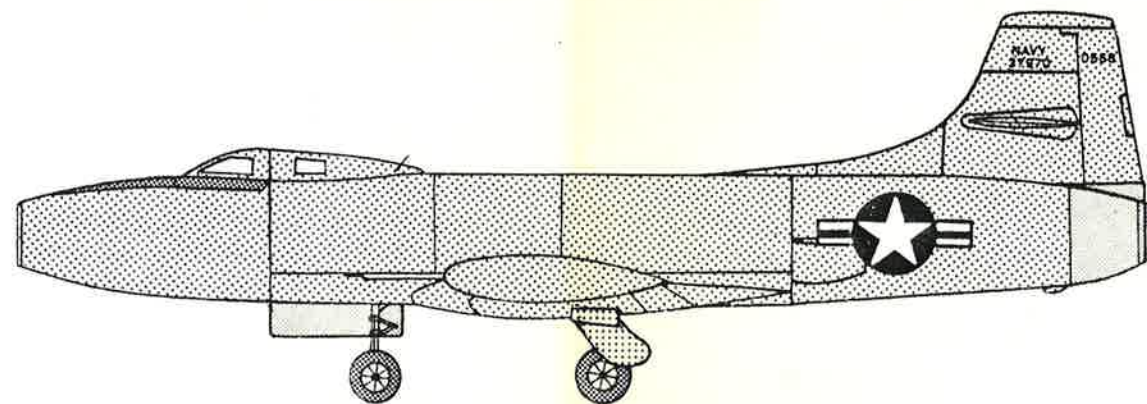
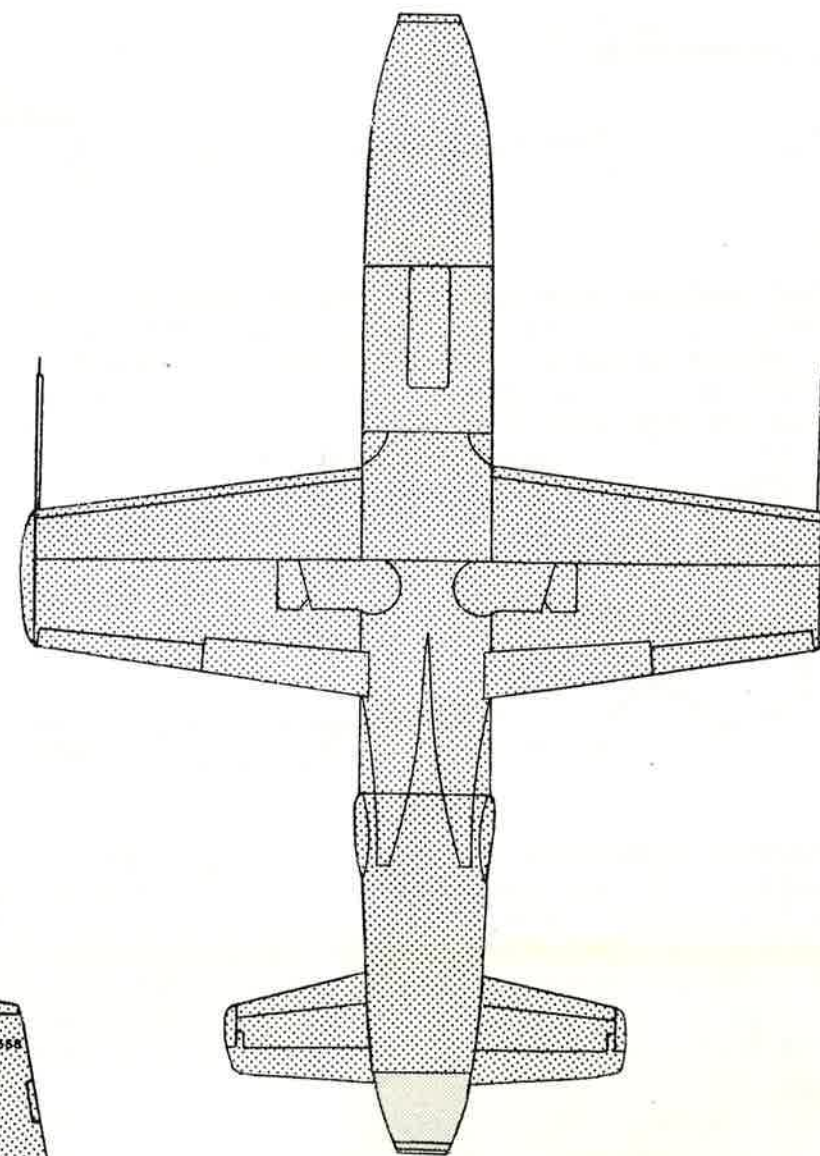
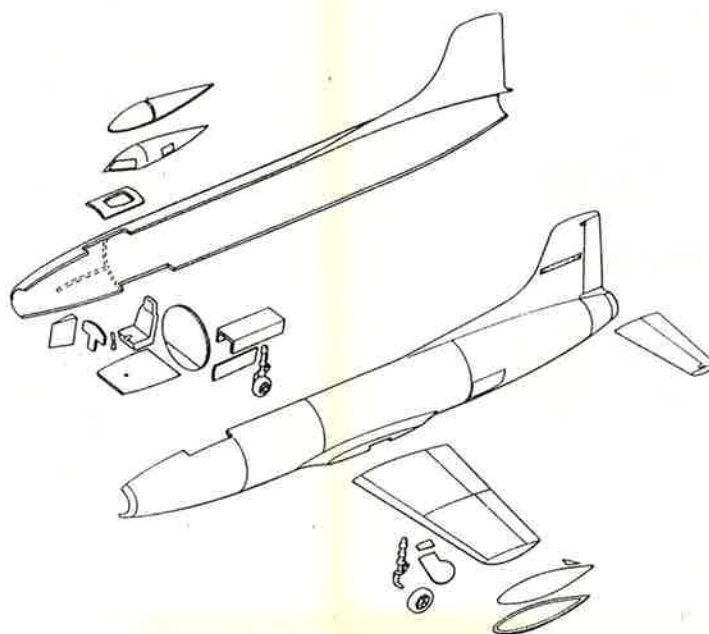
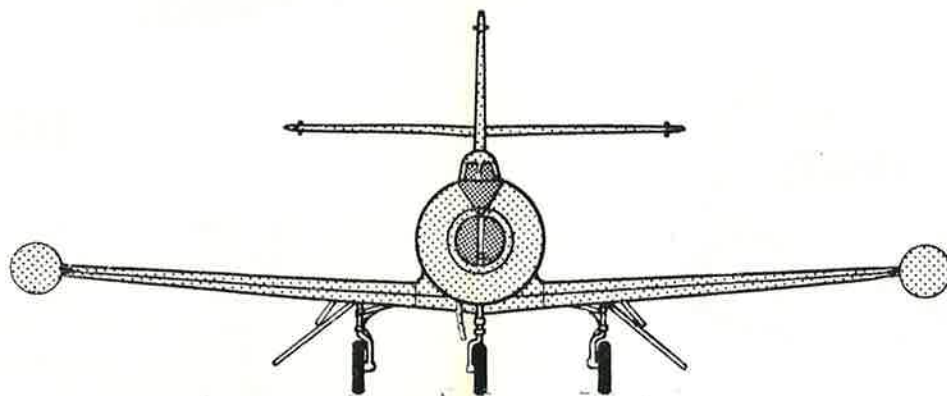
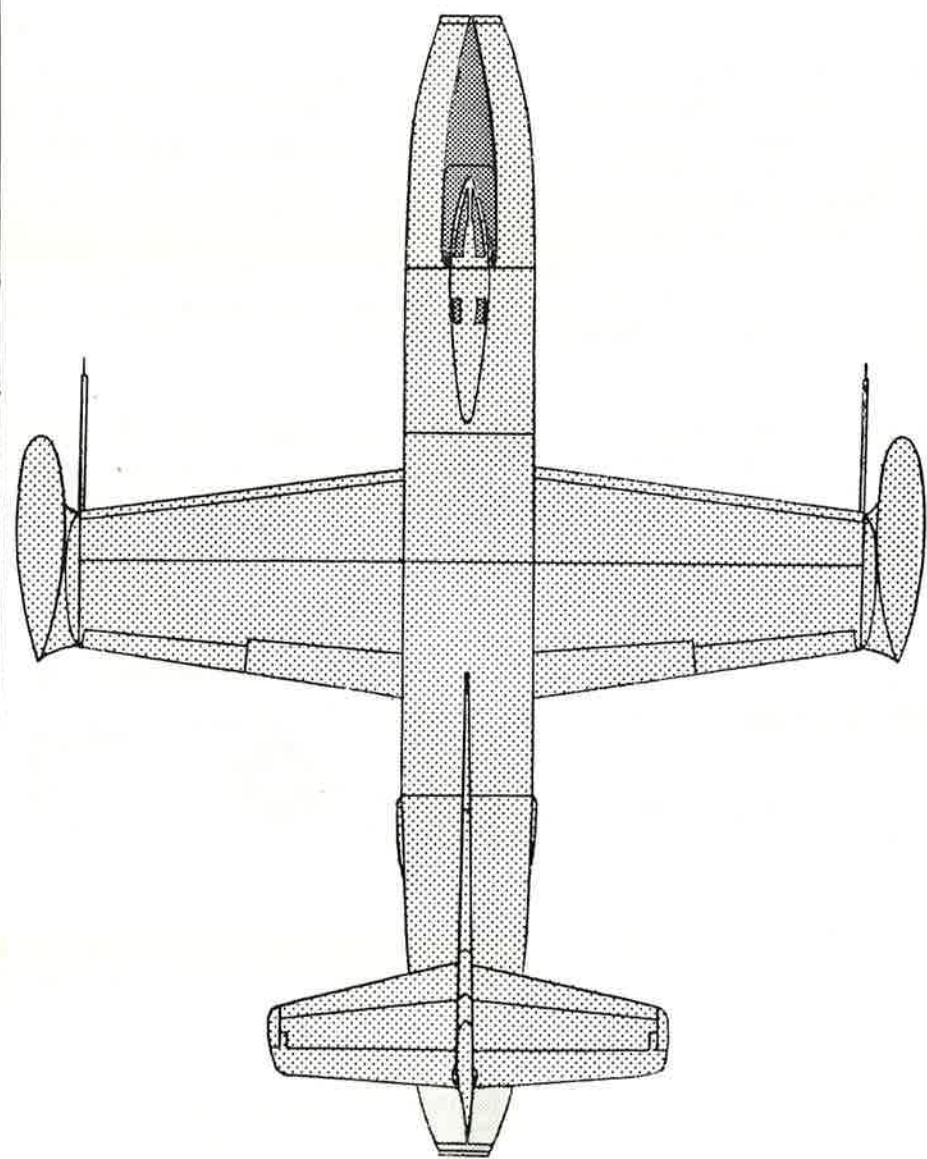


The illustration above shows perhaps the last operational markings. The NACA aircraft number, 142, has been added to the tail and large black X markings are carried on the fuselage. NACA lettering appears in black on the right upper wing surface. At least one photo shows one of the aircraft with all upper wing and horizontal stabilizer surfaces in red, no NACA markings in place and large 3/4 length fins on the wingtip tanks. The entire canopy on this aircraft was black, along with the tips of the wingtip tanks.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. AIRPOWER, September, 1985, Vol. 15, #5, "Sky Scorchers", by Steve Pace. Several excellent photos, including cockpit details and the early record setting configuration. The excellent cutaway is from 1947 issues of FLYING MAGAZINE and has been printed backwards.
2. AIR CLASSICS, September, 1976, Vol. 12, #9, "Skystreak", by Robert Trimble. Photos include both types of NACA markings and the same backwards cutaway, excellent text.
3. KOKU FAN, October, 1983, "Yesteryear Series, No. 7", by R.E. Williams. Several excellent photos including detail shots and the unusual white/red color scheme with tip tank fins.
4. SCALE-MASTER FAX-FILE SHEET #25. A good set of scale plans with three good photos including the early NACA markings.
5. AEROPLANE MONTHLY, July, 1979, "Preservation Profile No. 75". Color view, good photos.

MEIKRAFT MODELS to date: Vought SB2U, Piper L-4, Albatros D.I / D.II, Seversky P-35 / P-35A, Hansa-Brandenburg W.29, B.E.2c, Douglas D.558-1 Skystreak



B.E.2c, Douglas D.558-1 Skystreak