

# THE NAVY'S ANOMALOUS **SEA FURIES**

By Leo F. Pettipas,



Long-standing members of IPMS Canada who like Hawker Sea Furies will no doubt recall Volume 6, Nos. 1&2 (1973) of Random Thoughts, which featured the "North American Sea Fury Special" written and illustrated by Bob Bowles and Ray Cryderman. From a modeller's standpoint, it was at the time by far and away the best publication available on the topic of Royal Canadian Navy Sea Furies.

The "Sea Fury Special," like many other historical-type articles appearing in modellers' magazines, involved a bit of educated quesswork made necessary in order to fill in gaps in the authors' available information base. As time goes on and as further research is done, new data often come to light that call for updates of and corrections to earlier statements in the older publications. The purpose of this article is to do just that regarding one particular conclusion drawn in the Bowles & Cryderman study, and to add further to the specific topic in question.

# **RCN MARKING STANDARDS**

Until the latter half of 1952, RCN aircraft appeared in the marking scheme called for under the ICAO system instituted in 1947. Initially, individual a/c carried a three-letter code on both sides of the fuselage and under the port wing. The first two letters identified the squadron to which the airplane belonged, and the third, the particular machine carrying it (Fig. 1). Pat Martin (Royal Canadian Navy Aircraft Finish and Markings 1944-1968) refers to this as the "VG Era."

With 1952 came a major change in the way in which the Navy marked its aircraft (the "NAVY+3 Era"). The ICAO call letters were done away with and replaced with the word NAVY and a three-digit radio call number. On most operational aircraft, the first digit equated with the crew structure of the machine. Since the Sea

Fury was

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a single-seater, the first numeral in the series was to be, in theory at least, a "1" (e.g., as shown in Fig. 2).

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## AN EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

In their RT article, Bob and Ray refer to a set of drawings appearing in the January and February 1963 issues of Model Airplane News (MAN). These drawings depict RCN Sea Fury **TF 996** bearing the call number "254." Bob and Ray were well familiar with the new markings system, and since 254 obviously doesn't fall within the 100 series of numbers, they questioned the historical correctness of its appearance in the drawings. Rather, they regarded it as a "long perpetuated error," and went on to write: "At the risk of putting our heads on the block, we'll go so far as to say, NO R.C.N. SEA FURY EVER **CARRIED THE SIDE NUMBER 254!!"** 

Bob and Ray were also familiar with an official Navy manual detailing the new (1952) Sea Fury colour scheme and markings. This manual showed the number 254 on general arrangement drawings, but they interpreted this as simply an idealised schematic generated for instructional purposes, rather than as a representation of an actual airplane.

They suggested that the MAN draughtsman may have worked from the contents of this manual, hence the "spurious" number 254 appearing in his drawings.

#### **CONFIRMING EVIDENCE**

Significantly, Sea Fury **TF 996** is shown to have carried the call number 254 in John Griffin's authoritative Canadian Military Aircraft Serials and Photographs 1920-1968. the data for which were drawn from official DND files. John's information is confirmed in Alexander Grant's more recent Tabulated Histories of the Aircraft of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Armed Forces (Maritime Air Group) June 1945-May 1997, also compiled from official DND documents. TF 996 was the actual serial number of a real airplane, and with that in mind I had to wonder why the Navy would have chosen to combine a "bogus" radio call number along with a bona fide serial number in the drawing in its manual.

Today, the weight of evidence leads me to conclude that TF 996 did indeed carry the radio call number 254 at some point in its career, although I've personally never seen a photograph of it bearing that number. Nor



Fig. 1. Sea Fury TF 996 showing her call sign BC\*K of the 'VG Era' (1947-1952). Credit: W.R. Crosby/National Archives of Canada/PA-134183.

can I explain why a front-line single-seat aircraft received a **200**-block side number. But — and this is where things really get interesting — I do have photos of it carrying the call number **294! Figure 3** shows this airplane with all port fuselage markings plainly visible. It would thus appear that **TF 996** temporarily

bore **254** before that number was replaced by **294**. Or, it was assigned **254** on paper, but it was never actually painted on the aircraft, **294** being applied instead. Whatever the case, I think we can reasonably conclude that the reasons for such changes are forever lost in antiquity!



Fig. 2. Typical markings scheme of the NAVY+3 Era Sea Furies, showing the 100-block radio call number. Credit: Western Canada Aviation Museum 31965.



Fig. 3. Sea Fury TF 996 clearly showing the side number 294. Credit: R.E. Quirt, via S. Soward.



Fig. 4. Sea Fury WZ 636, showing the atypical 300-block radio call number 354. Also non-standard is the "square" style of the numerals (compare with those shown in Figure 2), suggesting that they were applied at the British factory rather than in Canada. Credit: MAP

#### AN ADDITIONAL DEVIATION

As I say, it's by no means clear to me why these departures from the standard practice of allocating 100-block call numbers to single-seat operational squadron Sea Furies were deemed appropriate in the case of TF 996. But to add to the puzzle, it happened twice; only on the second occasion, the number in question was drawn from the 300 block: the Sea Fury bearing serial number WZ 636 received the call number 354 (Fig. 4).

Pursuant to the standard radio call number system applied to operational squadron aircraft, numbers in the **300** range were, logically enough, usually allotted to the Navy's three-seat TBM Avengers. And indeed, number **354** was carried by one of the Avengers (serial number **69425**), as we might expect. What it was also doing on a single-seat Sea Fury is anyone's guess.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

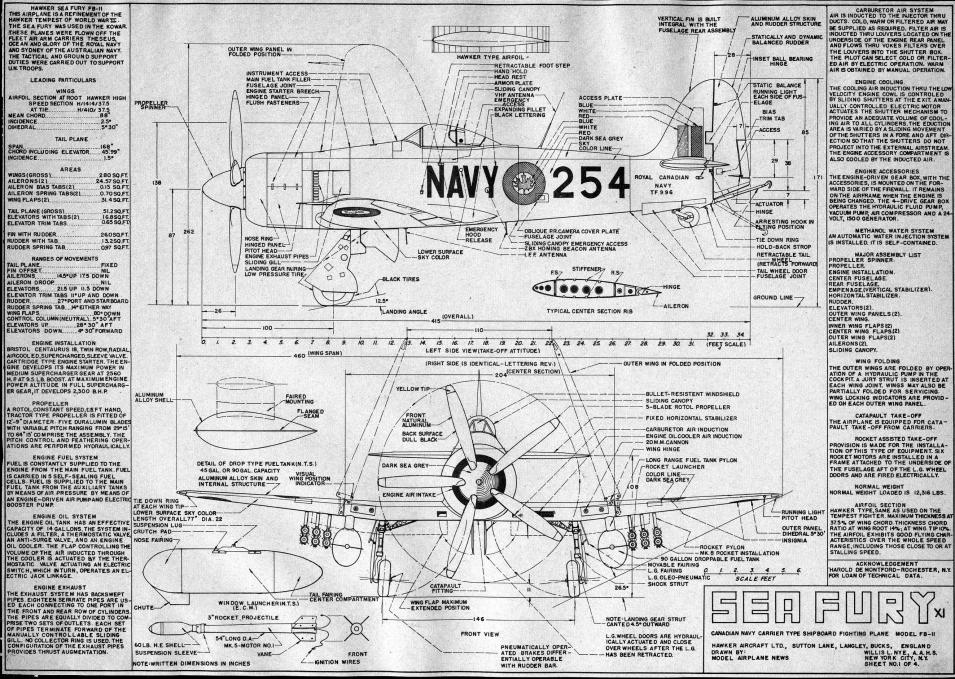
While atypical markings do raise "why" questions which, after all these years, are pretty well impossible to answer, they do offer opportunities to the modeller who wants to replicate something that's different and unusual and yet a genuine piece of our aviation history and heritage.

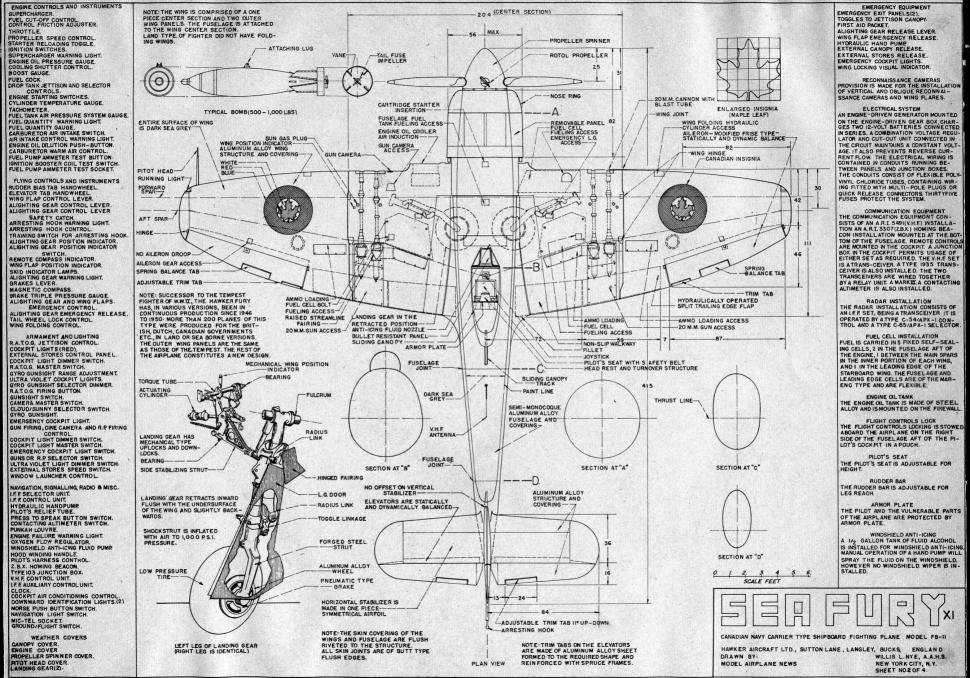


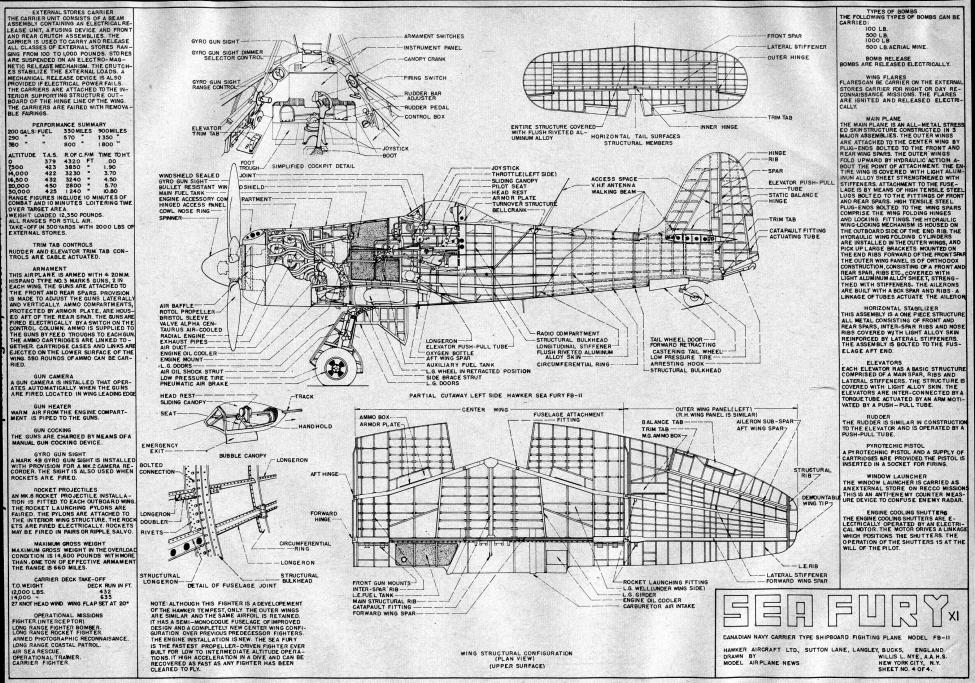


About the author: Leo Pettipas is a native of Halifax, now living in Winnipeg. A former Honorary Historian with Winnipeg Chapter, Canadian Naval Air

Group (CNAG), he authored seven books and was recognised nationally as CNAG's 1986 Member of the Year. He has published over 50 articles on Canadian military aviation in Canada and the USA. He was Editor Emeritus of Certified Serviceable: Swordfish to Sea King (1994), covering the support elements of Canadian Naval Aviation, and technical advisor in the preparation of Patrick Martin's book, Royal Canadian Navy Aircraft Finish and Markings 1944-1968 (2007). In 1999 he was appointed an Associate Air Force Historian at 1 Cdn Air Division, Winnipeg. In this capacity he co-authored the 2007 book, 402 "City of Winnipeg Squadron History: On Guard for 75 Years.







OXYGEN AT HIGH PRESSURE IS CONTAINED IN TWO WIRE WOUND CYLINDERS. THE GAS FLOWS FROM THE OYLINDERS. THE GAS FLOWS FROM THE CYLINDER THROUGH A FILTER, THEN TO A PRESSURE REGULATOR, IT FLOWS THROUGH THE FOOM THE PILLOT'S HEADSET.

PILOT'S SAFETY MARNESS THE PILOT'S SEAT IS PROVIDED WITH A SAFETY MARNESS. A DUICK-RELEASE TYPE SHOULDER HARNESS ALLOWS THE PLOT TO LEAN FORWARD WITHOUT HINDRANCE. WHEN THE TENDION IS RELEASED, THE SHOULDER MARNESS AUTOMATICALLY CAN BE TIGHTED BY OPERATION OF A CONTROL LEYER.

VACUUM SYSTEM
THE VACUUM SYSTEM TO OPERATE CERTAIN
FLIGHT INSTRUMENTS IS ENERGIZED BY AN
ENGINE ROT THE ACCESSORY GEAR SOX. EXHAUST AIR FROM THE WACUUM SYSTEM IS
USED TO PRESSURIZE THE FUEL CELLS.

COCKPT AIR CONDITIONING WITH ORDER TO MAINTAIN COMPORTABLE TEMPERATURES FOR THE PILOT A COMPLETE AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEM IS INSTALLED. WARM OR COLD AIR IS DRAWN FROM BEITHER THE CILO DAIR IN DRAWN FROM BEITHER THE CILO DAIR INDUCTION SCOOP COLD AIR WHEN USED, IS DRAWN AHAD OF THE CILO COLER. THE PILOT, BY OPERATION OF A MIXTURE CONTROL WAIVE, CAN CONTROL THE AIR TEMPERATURE INSIDE THE COCKPIT. WARM AIR IS DRECTED TOWARD THE PILOTS FEET, WINDSHIELD, AND THE INSTRUMENT PANEL PUNKAH LOUVERS.

GUN BAY HEATING
WARM AIR FROM THE ENGINE IS PIPED TO
THE GUN BAY IN EACH WING THE WARM
AIR ESCAPES THROUGH A COYERED AND
FILTERED ORIFICE. THE DUCTS AND GUN
BAYS ARE LAGGED WITH INSULATION TO
MINIMIZE HEAT DISSIPATION.

PHEUMATIC SYSTEM
AR, UNDER PRESSURE, OPERATES THE
BRAKES ON THE LANDING GEAR. AR UNDER PRESSURE IS PROVIDED BY AN ENGINE-ORIVEN VACUUM PUMP ATTACHED TO
THE ACCESSORY ORIVE BOX. AFTER FLOW
ING THROUGH AN OIL SEPATATOR, WATER
TRAP, AND A PRESSURE REPOLLATOR, THE
TRAP, AND A PRESSURE REPOLLATOR, THE
TEAP, AND A PRESSURE REPOLLATOR, THE
BRAKES SUSTEME AIR FROM THE AR BOTTLE FLOWS THROUGH A PRESSURE REDUCER TOTHE BRAKES. SUPPLY FOR THE
BRAKES IS TAKEN THROUGH A RELAY UNIT
WHICH PERMITS DIFFERENTIAL BRAKING
ACTION. IN AN EMERGENCY, THE LANDING
ACTION. IN AN EMERGENCY THE LANDING
ACTION OF THE PRESSURE TO THE ACT
ATMG COMPONENTS. THE AIR ROTTLE CIT
ATMG COMPONENTS. THE AIR ROTTLE ACT
ANGERED WHEN THE PLANE IS ON THE

HYDRAULIC SYSTEM
THE HYDRAULIC SYSTEM IS A DOWTY TYPE
"LIVE LINE TYPE AND OPERATES THE FOLLOWING SUPPLY CIRCUIT.
LANDING GEAR AND WHEEL DOORS

GROUND

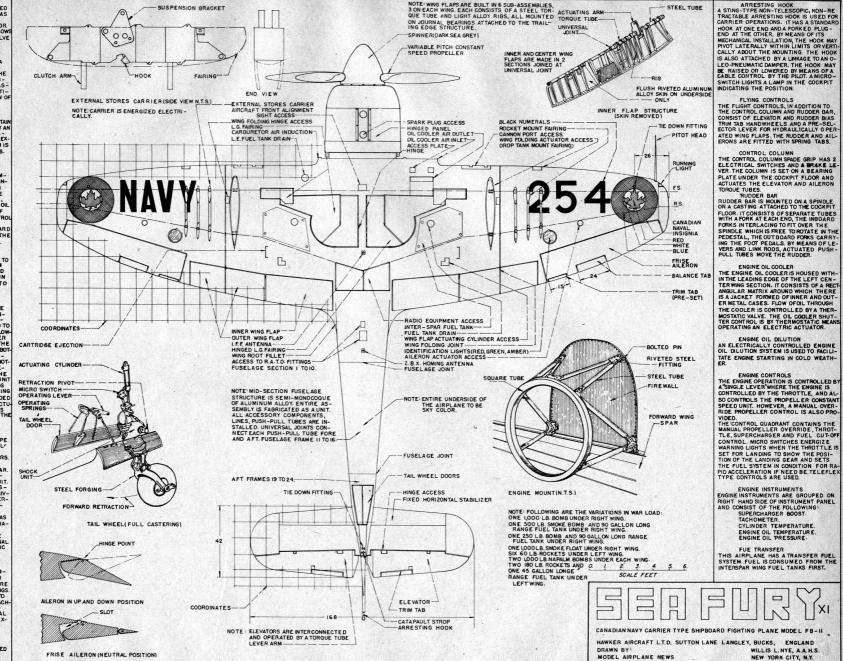
LANDING GEAR AND WHEEL DOORS,
WING FLAPS, AND LOCKING GEAR
EACH OPERATIONAL COMPONENT FUNCTIONS OFF ITS MOLIVIDAL, PIPING CIRCUIT,
ENERGY TO POWER THE HYDRAULIC SYSTEM IS OBTAINED FROM AN ENGINE - DRIVEN IS OBTAINED FROM AN ENGINE
TAINED FOR THE SYSTEM MANUAL LY OPERATED SELECTOR WALVES CONTROL THE
MOTIVATING FORCE TO EACH OPERATIONAL
COMPONENT IS BY MEANS OF HYDRAULIC
SOMPONENT IS BY MEANS OF HYDRAULIC

ENGINE MOUNT
THE ENGINE MOUNT IS OF THE DYNAFOCAL TYPE. IT CONSISTS OF 8 TUBULAR
STEEL MEMBERS ATTACHED TO A SOUGHE
STEEL MEMBERS ATTACHED TO A SOUGHE
STEEL OF STEEL CHANNEL FITTINGS
THE FUSELAGE STRUCTURE BY 4 ATTACH
MENT BOLTS. THE ENGINE RING IS ATTACHED TO THE ENGINE BY DYNAFOCAL
SUSPENSION UNITS TO PROVIDE A FLEX-

ACTUATING CYLINDERS.

IBLE MOUNTING

ENGINE PRIMER
THE ENGINE IS PRIMED WITH FUEL BY
MEANS OF AN ELECTRICALLY OPERATED
PRESSURE TYPE FUEL PUMP.



SHEET NO.3 OF 4