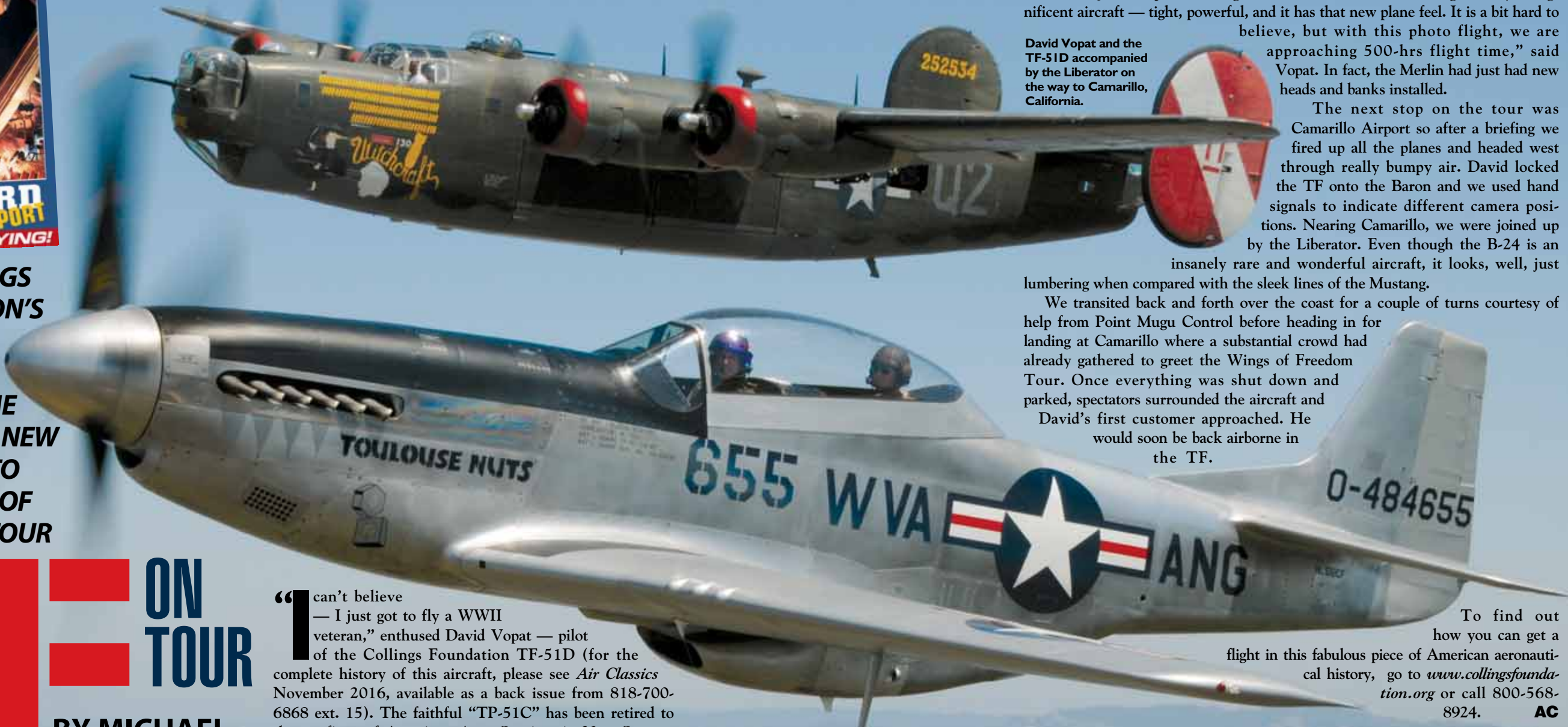


**THE COLLINGS FOUNDATION'S TF-51D MUSTANG HAS BECOME A POPULAR NEW ADDITION TO THE WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR**

**TF-51D ON TOUR**  
**BY MICHAEL O'LEARY**

David Vopat in the cockpit of the dual-control TF.



the P-51. Qualified pilots can log the TF-51D time. This Mustang is really a magnificent aircraft — tight, powerful, and it has that new plane feel. It is a bit hard to believe, but with this photo flight, we are approaching 500-hrs flight time,” said Vopat. In fact, the Merlin had just had new heads and banks installed.

David Vopat and the TF-51D accompanied by the Liberator on the way to Camarillo, California.

The next stop on the tour was Camarillo Airport so after a briefing we fired up all the planes and headed west through really bumpy air. David locked the TF onto the Baron and we used hand signals to indicate different camera positions. Nearing Camarillo, we were joined up by the Liberator. Even though the B-24 is an insanely rare and wonderful aircraft, it looks, well, just lumbering when compared with the sleek lines of the Mustang.

We transited back and forth over the coast for a couple of turns courtesy of help from Point Mugu Control before heading in for landing at Camarillo where a substantial crowd had already gathered to greet the Wings of Freedom Tour. Once everything was shut down and parked, spectators surrounded the aircraft and David’s first customer approached. He would soon be back airborne in the TF.

To find out how you can get a flight in this fabulous piece of American aeronautical history, go to [www.collingsfoundation.org](http://www.collingsfoundation.org) or call 800-568-8924. **AC**

“I can’t believe — I just got to fly a WWII veteran,” enthused David Vopat — pilot of the Collings Foundation TF-51D (for the complete history of this aircraft, please see *Air Classics* November 2016, available as a back issue from 818-700-6868 ext. 15). The faithful “TP-51C” has been retired to the confines of American Aero Services in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, for overhaul. “This fellow flew B-25s and other multi-engine aircraft,” continued David, “but when I handed over the Mustang’s controls, he knew exactly what he had to do and had us back on course to Brackett Field. What a thrill!”

The Wings of Freedom Tour was out in full-force at Brackett Field, which is next to the Los Angeles County Fairgrounds, with the TF, the B-25, B-24, and B-17 and all aircraft seemed to be doing a good business. “Since the TF is new to the Tour, it has really attracted lots of attention,” said Vopat who flies with the airlines as his “day job” but has built up lots of time in Warbirds and vintage and veteran aircraft — including the Planes of Fame’s Northrop N9M Flying Wing.

“The TF-51D is just such a great aircraft and, if a passenger is qualified we put him in the front seat and it is very exciting to get the chance of sharing the Mustang and its history with another pilot. Of course, many of our customers just want to go for a ride and feel all the noise and power of



The factory-fresh TF-51D always attracts a crowd no matter the stop.