Once in a Lifetime: Flying Aerobatics in a P-51 Mustang!
by Chris M. Front

One of my "bucket list" items was to fly a P-51 Mustang. I saved up for several years to make that dream come true as a 60th birthday gift to myself. I arranged to fly with Lee Lauderback at Stallion 51, based at Kissimmee Gateway Airport (ISM) on President's Day, 17 FEB 2020. My wife Jessica and I travelled to Orlando, Florida where we built a long weekend getaway around my Stallion 51 experience. Stallion 51 has a very professional and thorough P-51 Mustang training operation. The fortunate individuals who have the wealth and good fortune to own and fly P-51s are most often trained by Lee and his team of instructors at Stallion 51. Lee did the re-currency training for WWII aces like COL (ret.) Clarence "Bud" Anderson and BGEN (ret.) Chuck Yeager. Lee is known in warbird circles as "Mr. Mustang" because he has more time flying Mustangs than anybody else on the planet – it's hard to imagine, but he has well over 10,000 hours in Mustangs!

The thing that makes Stallion 51 especially well-suited for training is that they have two of only a very few TF-51 Mustangs. As you may know, with the P-51D model of Mustang, it is common to remove the 85 gallon centerline fuel tank and old WWII radios that were behind the pilot's seat in order to add a jumpseat for a lucky passenger. Some conversions even add a stick and rudder pedals for the backseater. Unlike those common P-51D conversions, the TF-51 conversion has a complete set of controls and instruments in the rear seat, making it particularly well-suited for training. Stallion 51's two TF-51s are called Crazy Horse and Crazy Horse².

Upon arrival to Stallion 51, I happen to run into Lee Lauderback as I enter and immediately recognize him from photos I've seen. I introduce myself and he gives me a friendly greeting, then leads me upstairs. The Stallion 51 offices are on the second floor of their hangar, and the hallway to the briefing room is lined with windows looking out over the airplanes in the hangar. As a warbird fanatic, I am impressed with the scene below me. Lee explains that Crazy Horse is in another hangar receiving routine maintenance. Crazy Horse² is in the foreground, receiving a final polishing. Arrayed around the hangar's sides and back are an L-39 Albatross, a P-51D Mustang, and two AT-6 Texans. Everything is pristine. Wow!

Stallion 51 has several instructors who conduct their Mustang training. On this day I am fortunate to have Lee Lauderback as my instructor pilot. Upon my arrival at Stallion 51, the weather is marginal VFR but expected to improve, so Lee gives me a leisurely and very thorough briefing on the Mustang's flight characteristics, emphasizing the importance of constantly managing both rudder and elevator trim, anticipating how the rudder and aileron inputs will vary with speed changes while maneuvering, and so forth.

Lee inquires about my flight experience and my desires for the flight. I summarize my training and experience, having learned to fly at the Navy Flying Club at Naval Air Station North Island about 20 years ago, and having earned my commercial certificate with instrument and multiengine ratings. Most pertinent for today's flight is my tailwheel endorsement, with time in several different traildragger types. I have

also had some aerobatic training and experience, enough to view myself as a competent novice. But most of my aerobatic flying was in a rented Citabria; a very low-performance aerobatic airplane. I've had only a few aerobatic flights in higher performance airplanes (one flight each in a North American T-28C; a Pitts S-2, a Super Decathlon, and Mark Meredith's modified DeHaviland DH-1 Super Chipmunk). I had gotten pretty comfortable in the Citabria flying loops, aileron rolls, Cuban 8s, Split Ss, Immelmanns, and Hammerheads. But I had only just started to learn barrel rolls when the Citabria was sold. Also, I never got to try a 4- or 8-point roll because those are pretty much impossible in a Citabria, and I would like to try those today.

Lee and I agree that our top three priorities will be: 1) Safety, 2) Fun, and, as time permits, 3) Education. When Lee asks if there is anything in particular that I'd like to do, I tell him that Cuban 8s are pretty much my favorite aerobatic maneuver, and that barrel rolls, 4-point and 8-point rolls would be fun to try. I am up front about the fact that I haven't flown a taildragger or aerobatics in about a year due to the Citabria being sold, and I'm a little concerned about my G tolerance. So, we agree that we will start mellow with 2-3 G maneuvers and build up to the 4 G maneuvers, monitoring how I'm feeling as we go. I assure Lee that I will be forthright if I start feeling funky. There is no way that I am going to hurl in Crazy Horse²!

Checking weather again, it's looking good and we go downstairs and outside to do a walk around preflight inspection of the airplane with Lee pointing out various points of interest, such as the taller vertical stabilizer on the TF-51 compared to the stock P-51D. The maintenance crew, led by Lee's twin brothers, keep this airplane in immaculate condition. After our walk around, Lee reviews a checklist of preflight items prepared by the maintenance crew and signs off. It's time to mount up.

Lee talks me through getting strapped in to the parachute and restraint harnesses and spends some time familiarizing me with the rear cockpit layout, noting the locations of the various trim knobs, flap and gear handles, canopy ejection handle, and so forth. This includes a safety briefing on emergency egress, should that become necessary. We take the time to insert ear plugs under our helmets because, I'm told, the Mustang is very loud -- particularly on takeoff. Lee gets strapped in to the front cockpit and begins running through the pre-start checklist items.

I don't know what kind of parachute they use, but the parachute pack that I am sitting on is not at all uncomfortable. I've flown in some aerobatic airplanes in which the seat pack was uneven, with a lump here or there and an unwanted depression or tilt in other places. The one in Crazy Horse² is just as comfortable as a seat cushion. As you can see from the photo, it's not as roomy as a North American T-6 or T-28, or any of the Grummans, because those are all radial engine airplanes with wide bodies and lots of room for the pilot and side instrument panels. The relatively narrow profile of the V-12 Merlin enabled North American to design the Mustang's fuselage to take advantage of the low flat plate drag of the nose and cowling around that V-12. It is slender compared to radial engine fighters and, as a result, the cockpit is tighter, especially in the rear seat where I am sitting. It feels similar to a Citabria, Husky, or Super Cub, but the bubble canopy gives a sense of openness with the result that you don't feel cramped.


N351DT
ALT
2 MIN TURN
INSTANTANEOUS VERTICAL SPEED
MANIFOLD PRESSURE
COOLANT TEMP
OXYGEN REGULA


Strong

Like any good airplane nut and warbird fanatic, I love the sound of a Merlin engine cranking to life and this is the first time that I've been able to enjoy that sound from inside the cockpit, just a few feet behind the engine! The start and rumble of that Packard-built Merlin brings home the reality that we are actually going to go flying in this magnificent airplane. After a quick brake check, Lee gives me control of the aircraft and we taxi to the run-up area. The Mustang has an ingenious system for managing the tailwheel steering: to permit full pivoting of the tailwheel (for instance, to make a tight, pivoting turn to park) you hold the stick full forward. Bringing the stick aft locks the tailwheel. So, the normal placement of the stick for takeoff and landing automatically locks the tailwheel for the pilot; no need for a separate tailwheel lock lever. The Mustang also has other pilot-friendly systems, like automatic settings for the superchargers and the coolant door positions. Even the mixture has an auto-lean setting. As a result of these well-designed systems, the pilot can focus on flying the airplane and scanning for traffic as he climbs, without worrying about leaning the mixture or engaging the supercharger. As we taxi, I find that steering requires only light pressure on the rudder pedals. No need for differential braking unless making a tight turn.

We get to the run-up area and Lee directs me to make a tight turn in the corner so that we're facing the hold-short line for Runway 15 about 50 yards away. Making a tight turn in a taildragger with differential braking is always fun, but I am mindful that I'm in an 8,000 pound airplane and inertia must be respected. So I'm conservative with my pedal work and it works out well. Lee has me bring the power up to 1,500 RPM and, as we wait for the engine oil temperature to warm up, Lee uses the time to work through a variety of checklist items, vocalizing each for my benefit as he goes.

A Beech Baron has taxied into position next to us on my right and goes through his run-up. Barons are beautiful twins and, typically, they look large and impressive to me on the ramp. But the view from my seat in the Mustang's cockpit has me looking down from above the Baron and, as the Baron completes his run-up and taxies to the hold short line in front of us, I'm struck by the fact that the Baron actually looks little from this perspective. Another wave of awe washes over me. I am strapped into a real beast!

Then Lee talks me through the run-up. I advance the power to 2,300 RPM. Lee then demonstrates cycling the prop and has me do it twice more before he checks the magnetos from the front seat. Sitting in the cockpit only a few feet behind that rumbling Merlin, hearing the roar and feeling the airplane shake with both of us holding the brakes as more than 1,400 horses are trying to pull the airplane forward is really exhilarating! With the run-up complete, Lee has me bring the power back to 1,000 RPM and taxi forward to wait our turn for departure behind the Baron.

Soon enough, we are cleared for takeoff on Runway 15. As he explained in the briefing, this is the only part of the flight in which Lee will be primary on the controls, with me following through to feel his control inputs. Many Mustangs have been crashed on runways from pilots applying power too quickly and becoming victims of the enormous torque produced by over 1,400 horsepower spinning a 4-blade, 400 pound propeller. So, it's understandable that a new student follows through on the controls for their first takeoff. Lee expertly lines us up and advances the power initially to 40 inches of manifold pressure at 2,300 RPM, releasing that freakin herd of horses as we surge forward. The roar of the Merlin becomes deafening and, despite the earplugs, almost painful. Lee advances the power further, to about 55 inches MP. In just a few seconds, the tail comes up and, moments later, we are airborne. I am marveling that there was still more power available during the takeoff – Lee told me in the briefing that with combat loads, WWII pilots would use 60 inches MP and 3,000 RPM! Lee was babying the engine and it still produced a deafening roar and very rapid acceleration. I am following Lee on the controls, relishing the familiar sensation of rising above the runway and welcoming the process of becoming acquainted with this new-to-me airplane.

Lee reduces the power and, as we depart the pattern, he transfers control of the airplane to me. The moment I've awaited for decades has arrived; I am now flying a Mustang! The Kissimmee tower gives us a traffic advisory and Lee tells me to turn to the southwest. KISM lies beneath the Orlando Class B, so we have about 12 nautical miles to fly to get clear of the floor of the Class B above us. This is Lee's home territory and I don't concern myself with navigation, focusing instead on feeling the airplane respond to my control inputs and trying to soak in the reality that I'm actually flying a Mustang! Lee gives me general headings and altitudes to fly and I am using the opportunity to begin to get a feel for the airplane. I now see for myself what Lee meant during the briefing when he said that the Mustang was designed to fly a little nose low in level flight, to improve deflection shooting with the guns. He had cautioned me that pilots new to the Mustang tend to climb while trying to fly level due to the sight picture over the engine cowling. From my rear cockpit, the airplane is in level flight when I place the top of the windscreen that is above and in front of Lee level with the horizon! Lee coaches me to experiment with the elevator and rudder trim knobs to learn their impact on the control inputs. Both only require small movements and I observe aloud that the elevator trim is particularly sensitive. Lee agrees and points out that it gets even more sensitive at higher speeds.

Flying at 170 KIAS, it only takes a few minutes to get clear of the Orlando Class B and we are now fee to play. Lee has me bring the power back to 42 inches for a 150 KIAS cruise climb up to 8,500 MSL. As we level off, he has me bring the RPM back to 2,700, then suggests that I do whatever I want to begin to develop a feel for the airplane's handling characteristics. I start with alternating turns left and right, varying bank from about 45 degrees initially, then 60 degrees, pulling a few Gs to warm up, focusing on using the rudder to start and complete the turns and registering how much rudder is required to maintain coordinated flight. The Mustang is very responsive but also very stable. It is a pleasure to fly, and the view from the bubble canopy is wonderful. Even Lee's helmet a few feet in front of me doesn't feel like an obstruction because the 360 degree view is otherwise so unrestricted. And looking out over that Mustang wing with the invasion stripes and the iconic star and bars as I maneuver – it is delightful; literally a dream come true. The fact that I am actually flying a Mustang sinks in and I shake my head and smile, marveling at this happy reality and soaking it all in.

My brief reverie is cut short because, while I've been getting acquainted with Crazy Horse[2], Lee has been coordinating with Miami Center and getting us cleared into the military restricted area (R-2901) in which we can play without worrying about traffic. It is President's Day, a

federal holiday, and most of the military pilots have the day off. Other than some parachute activity in the northern tip, we will have R-2901 to ourselves.

We start off by reducing manifold pressure to 26 inches for slow flight and a stall series. As the airplane slows, Lee asks how I'm doing with the trim and I reply that I'm getting a feel for it. Then Lee waves his two hands above his shoulders and asks me to show him my two hands. The request seems strange to me, but I respectfully comply, waving both of my hands at him as he watches in the small rear-view mirror on the canopy frame. He notes his approval that the airplane has continued flying straight and level without my hands on the controls, and I realize that he was checking whether I am, in fact, properly setting the rudder and elevator trim as he had encouraged.

As I fly nose high in slow flight, Lee points out the wing buffet and then the elevator buffet, noting that we're about one knot above the stall. He suggests a gentle turn to the right using rudder, and I'm feeling pleased with myself for holding the airplane in the buffet while turning with rudder. Then Lee calls for a turn back to the left. I lighten the right rudder and start to feed in a little left rudder and, in an instant, the stall breaks. The left wing and nose drop. But all that is needed is a slight reduction in back pressure on the stick for the Mustang to start flying again. A little right rudder lifts the wing. It is an easy recovery. Lee then tasks me with more slow flight and stalls, having me verbally calling out when I feel the wing and the elevator buffet, then recovering from the stalls that ensue with continued back pressure. I get a wing drop to the right and then a wing drop to the left. It's completely dependent on rudder pressure during the break. Each time, a slight lowering of the nose produces immediate recovery. Finally, Lee has me bring the power up to 30 inches and 150 KIAS while I turn to the left with about 60 degrees of bank and talks me through an accelerated stall. Again, recovery is easy and I'm feeling reassured by the Mustang's excellent flight characteristics.

It is time for aerobatics! At Lee's direction, I increase power to 37 inches MP and accelerate to 200 KIAS and we start with a wingover to the left and then one to the right. The first wingover to the left is a little sloppy because I am focused more on listening to Lee's guidance than just feeling the airplane and flying the airplane. The wingover to the right is better as I start to loosen up and trust my feel for the airplane, then just add in whatever fine-tuning Lee suggests. I'm getting a feel for the Mustang and finding it delightful to fly. Next are aileron rolls. I start with a roll to the left ("How did I know that was going to be the case?" Lee jokes) and the "sacred circle" forms well on the horizon. Lee laughs aloud and gives an encouraging assessment of it. I follow with an aileron roll to the right which works out just as well. The Mustang is a blast!

Now for some barrel rolls. We accelerate to 230 KIAS and pick out a lake off the nose to use as our target heading. A big cumulus cloud off the left wingtip will serve as the 90 degree point reference. Lee talks me through the barrel roll and I end up rolling out perfectly lined up with the lake. Importantly, I'm surprised by the fact that I've remained oriented throughout the maneuver.

There's something that happens in your brain the first time you really "get" an aerobatic maneuver – after a certain amount of disorientation when first trying the maneuver, with repetition, your brain figures it out in a way that allows you to remain oriented throughout the maneuver. I had only a few barrel rolls in my aerobatic instruction history – a few in a Decathlon and only a few more in a Citabria – and had not yet progressed to really "getting" the barrel roll. Flying this one in the Mustang with Lee, I am delighted to discover that I "get" it! I was able to remain oriented through the whole maneuver, despite being inverted and 90 degrees from our initial heading at the mid-point. I believe that today it has come together due to the combination of the Mustang's amazing performance, beautiful flight characteristics, and the bubble canopy that allows me to maintain situational awareness in all attitudes, as well as Lee's excellent preflight briefing and in-flight instruction. In any case, after rolling out on the lake, I'm able to immediately enter another barrel roll, this time to the right, and again maintain orientation throughout the maneuver. As we go through the vertical climbing to the right, Lee recognizes that I'm a little too light on the right rudder and has me add a little more right rudder to fix it. That fine-tuning makes it work out perfectly and, as we near the apex and go inverted, Lee comments that it's like a ballet. I'm able to figure out how to smoothly complete it to roll out level and aimed exactly at the lake again. Lee compliments me on the results. I can't believe that I'm performing barrel rolls with this level of grace and situational awareness. The combination of grace and power that the Mustang provides in response to my control inputs is absolutely delightful, and my sense of the airplane is growing quickly – this experience is deeply gratifying.

As we pass through R-2901, I inquire about some of the unusual markings on the ground and Lee points out a variety of targets that the military guys use for practice, ranging from a huge bull's eye for bombing practice to a mock airport with MiG 29s mock-ups on the ramp for them to shoot at. Lee observes that the runways of the "enemy" airport will provide a nice reference line for some vertical maneuvers and has me turn to line up with the runways. He instructs me to lower the nose and accelerate to 260 KIAS, trimming the airplane for higher speed, before a 3-G pull up into a loop. As we come over the top, inverted, I find the runways through the scattered clouds below us and fine-tune the lineup for the back side of the loop. Yee haw!

Thank God above, I am having no trouble with pulling Gs, and the maneuvers are working out well. This airplane is freakin marvelous! As I complete the loop, Lee suggests going right into a half Cuban 8 – same entry speed. At 260, I give another 3-G pull and up we go. Coming over the top, I wait for the 45 degree down line and give a push, then roll left from inverted to normal flight, again finding the runways and lining up. That has gone well, so Lee encourages another one to finish the Cuban 8, challenging me to roll to the right from the inverted 45 degree down line on this one. My pull this time produces 4 Gs and, as I come over the top on this one, anxious to make this half of the Cuban 8 as good as the first half, I get a little ahead of myself and stick the down line to roll to the right about 10 degrees before hitting the 45 degree mark. My lineup on the runways is good, but I'm displeased with myself for rolling early and call myself out on it over the intercom. Lee agrees that it was a little early, but notes that it was good overall. Always the perfectionist, I'm in the midst of internally kicking myself for the minor error when the silliness of my internal chastisement is exposed as we fly through the burble from the first half of the Cuban 8 and the airplane rocks – a rewarding proof that my line has been good throughout. Lee laughs with pleasure when we hit the burble and his enjoyment helps me to stop dwelling on minor errors and return to appreciating the fact that I'm flying aerobatics in a freakin Mustang!

We take a quick break for a drink of water. Lee takes the controls while I fish out the water bottle tucked in the airframe next to my hip. I mention that I'll use the opportunity with Lee flying to snap a few photos with my iPhone. Lee offers to use my iPhone to do a little video of me flying. With the iPhone on selfie video mode, Lee holds the camera over his left shoulder as I fly a barrel roll to the left, then a loop, and finish with a reverse half Cuban 8. Each maneuver goes well and I'm feeling wonderful; I am definitely in my "happy place." Lee gives me the iPhone back and takes the controls while I snap a few still shots, including one of the Mustang's wing with the invasion stripes, and star and bar insignia banking over the lake below us and the requisite selfie.

Next comes my chance to learn fly a 4-point roll. Lee takes the controls briefly to demonstrate the applications of top and neutral rudder in a 4-point roll to the left with me following through on the controls, then returns control of the Mustang to me. The Mustang is so easy to fly that I nail all four points of the roll. We're both surprised and pleased with my 4-point roll. Lee jokes that he thinks it was better than his, and encourages me to try an 8-point roll. I give it a try and, again, we're both happily surprised with how well I nail it. Flying with Lee is a lot of fun. He's very low-key and personable, and his pleasure at the completion of a well-performed maneuver is often expressed by a short burst of laughter and a verbal compliment. His instruction style is terrific and I'm having a blast.

All good things must come to an end, though, and it's time to ease the power back and do some straight and level flying to let the GPS come back up so that we can return to Kissimmee.

Lee gives me vectors and altitudes to fly on our return to Kissimmee as he coordinates with the tower and has me maneuver to avoid the traffic being picked up by our ADS-B-In. We work our way beneath the Class B and around the northwest side of the airport, slowly descending until we're at 1,000 MSL and I turn to line up with Runway 15. Lee has me advance the propeller RPM to 2,700 as we approach Runway 15 to set up for an overhead break. I overfly Runway 15 at 1000 feet and Lee coaches me when to initiate the break. I roll into a 60 degree bank to the right and pull a few Gs to hold it level as we bleed off airspeed. Lee adds flaps in increments and talks me through the pattern. I'm really glad that he's handling the flaps because the flap handle is very low on the left side of the rear cockpit near the deck, and I would be very challenged to fly the airplane properly while trying to find and use that flap handle! I turn final and line up, fine-tuning to stay directly on the runway centerline, trim the rudder and elevator, and maintain 110 KIAS on the final approach. Lee says we're looking good and coaches me on reducing power as we cross the fence. I'm focusing on remaining perfectly lined up over the centerline for the touchdown. The runway is rising up to meet us and Lee coaches me to flare. I do so, but not enough – I'm not used to being that high above the runway on touchdown – and I'm caught off-guard by the mains touching down. This results in a bounce, but it's manageable. I hold the attitude to let it settle again and when the main gear touches down a second time, I start to go forward on the stick to pin it on, but Lee is instructing me not to push forward. So I maintain the stick position and to allow the tail to come down. The tail is down and we're still on centerline. But it's been over a year since I have landed a taildragger and I'm a little sloppy with the rudders on the rollout, with the result that Lee has to back me up for a few critical seconds. As we complete the roll out, Lee comments that I needed more short, little pulses on the rudders to ensure not getting out of phase and, of course I know this, but I'm out of practice and simply got behind the airplane. My brain has now caught up again and I have fun doing S-turns on the long taxi back to Stallion 51 until we are ready for the final turn onto the Stallion 51 ramp, where Lee takes over. After parking on the ramp, Lee shuts the engine down and we dismount for some photos.

Crazy Horse² is equipped with 3 cameras: one looking forward from the left horizontal stabilizer, another looking forward from the top of the vertical stabilizer, and one looking aft from the top of Lee's instrument panel. He cycles them in-flight with the coolie hat switch on his

stick. The audio from the intercom and radios is active during all 3 views. The video recording is started on the ramp just prior to engine start and left on until shutdown. As a result, my video is about 1.1 hours in length. Lee used it to debrief the flight with me, which was very beneficial.

During the debriefing, the camera view from the top of the vertical stabilizer allows you to critically judge the maneuvers and I am pleased to see that the maneuvers all came out really well, even the ones I had never tried before. Much of that had to do, of course, with the freakin amazing performance and beautiful flight characteristics of the Mustang, the bubble canopy that enables maintaining situational awareness in all attitudes, and Lee's excellent preflight briefing and in-flight instruction. The performance envelope of that airplane is phenomenal. We entered the roll maneuvers at around 230 KIAS and the vertical maneuvers at 260 KIAS. Lee reported that we were down to 54 KIAS at the top of a wingover and as low as 90 knots at the top of a loop, but up to 300 KIAS on the downlines of the vertical maneuvers, ranging in altitude from about 7,000 MSL to about 10,000 MSL in the vertical maneuvers.

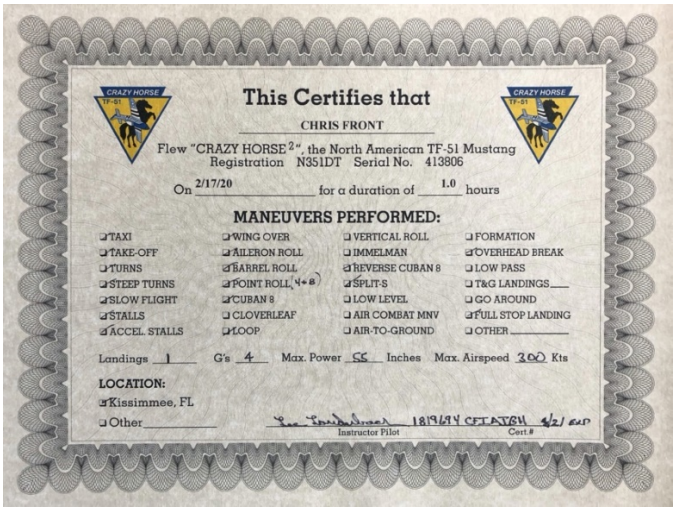
As we watch the video together, I'm happy to observe that, after the first, sloppy wingover, the other maneuvers turned out really well. I'm especially pleased with the barrel rolls and stunned by the video proof that I actually nailed the 4- and 8-point rolls on the first try. Lee makes several comments indicating that he felt I did well. I'm not sure how much of that is his standard "Atta boy" stuff to make the client happy. But then, after pointing out something positive, he noted that he doesn't usually offer to do a selfie video like that, indicating that I was doing well enough that he felt it would be safe to have both of his hands occupied over his shoulder with me flying a series of maneuvers. I take that as an indication that he's not just humoring me. And it feels great because Lee is a real master.

Then we get to the video playback of the overhead break and the landing. My only regret from the whole flight is that I wish I could have had another landing. I bounced that first one and then didn't manage the roll out well enough, such that Lee needed to come in on the rudders to help me out. I'm confident that, if I had another try, I could improve on it. Lee is judging it as an expectable, first-time mistake. But I know I could have done better, and I can't help kicking myself over that. Oh, well. I'm still a recovering perfectionist – with a lot of recovery to go.

I ended up with 1.1 PIC time in the TF-51 Crazy Horse². Lee filled out my logbooks (I brought both my hard copy and ForeFlight electronic logbooks for him to sign). He also filled out a Stallion 51 Certificate and signed a photo of Crazy Horse for me to memorialize the flight. Finally, to my surprise, he presented me with a copy of "The Gathering of Mustangs and Legends: The Final Roundup." It's a beautiful "coffee table" style book documenting the event that took place at Rickenbacker Airport in 2007 when 77 P-51 Mustangs and 51 legends from WWII who flew and maintained them gathered together. Lee was the driving force behind the event and wrote the forward for the book, which is packed with outstanding photography as well as great stories.

Despite my high expectations, the experience of flying Crazy Horse² with Lee Lauderback at Stallion 51 exceeded my expectations. I hadn't expected to get to do all of the taxiing, all of the flying except for the takeoff, and even the landing. I had a total blast! Lee appeared to have a good time, too. And I'm delighted to have a good audio-video recording of it so that I can re-live the experience time and again.

Overall, I'm pleased with how I flew and have absolutely no regrets for spending that chunk of my "airplane purchasing fund." I now know what it feels like to fly the Mustang – the premier fighter of WWII and one of the most revered and beloved warbirds of all time I will forever cherish that time spent briefing, flying and debriefing with Lee. What an absolutely wonderful experience!


CRAZY HORSE TF-51

This Certifies that

CHRIS FRONT

Flew "CRAZY HORSE²", the North American TF-51 Mustang
Registration N351DT Serial No. 413806

On 2/17/20 for a duration of 1.0 hours

MANEUVERS PERFORMED:

☐ TAXI	☐ WING OVER	☐ VERTICAL ROLL	☐ FORMATION
☐ TAKE-OFF	☑ AILERON ROLL	☐ IMMELMAN	☑ OVERHEAD BREAK
☐ TURNS	☑ BARREL ROLL	☑ REVERSE CUBAN 8	☐ LOW PASS
☑ STEEP TURNS	☑ POINT ROLL 4+8	☑ SPLIT-S	☐ T&G LANDINGS
☑ SLOW FLIGHT	☑ CUBAN 8	☐ LOW LEVEL	☐ GO AROUND
☑ STALLS	☐ CLOVERLEAF	☐ AIR COMBAT MNV	☑ FULL STOP LANDING
☑ ACCEL. STALLS	☑ LOOP	☐ AIR-TO-GROUND	☐ OTHER

Landings 1 G's 4 Max. Power 55 Inches Max. Airspeed 300 Kts

LOCATION:

☑ Kissimmee, FL

☐ Other

Lee Lauderback 1819/94 CFI/ATP/SH 4/21 exp
Instructor Pilot Cert.#

A Final Bonus

To top it all off, after the flight, I hooked up with my old Navy flight surgeon buddy, "Doc" Bill Busch. Bill is a Senior Aviation Medical Examiner (AME) and has his office located at Stallion 51, so a visit with him after flying was a no-brainer. Bill is a real character, and visits

with him are always a kick. He started off as a Naval Aviator flying S-3B Vikings before becoming a physician, flight surgeon, and ophthalmologist. He's owned a bunch of warbirds over the years, including a Boeing PT-17 "Stearman," a Naval Aircraft Factory N3N, a North American AT-6 "Texan," a Grumman F4F "Wildcat," and even a DeHavilland DH-100 "Vampire" jet fighter. Bill took me to lunch at a local barbeque joint, then showed me his latest airplane – a North American T-28C "Trojan." Bill has a soft spot for T-28s because he learned to fly in them as a student Naval Aviator. The Navy had just decommissioned the fleet of piston powered Beech T-34s in anticipation of replacing them with the new turboprop T-34Cs. But there was a delay in receiving the new models, resulting in Bill's class received their primary flight training in the T-28C advanced trainer. So, believe it or not, the very first airplane that Bill ever flew was a freakin T-28C! Imagine that!

After showing me his T-28, Bill gave me a tour of the Stallion 51 maintenance hangar and introduced me to Lee's twin brothers, Peter and Richard Lauderback, who run Stallion 51's maintenance operation, including performing P-51 restorations. They are currently in the process of restoring a rare P-51C model.

Flying the Mustang was an extraordinary experience, almost surreal. Having the opportunity right afterwards to get lunch with my old Navy buddy Bill – talking about the flight with another pilot who really understands – was a perfect transition back to "reality." It was the icing on the cake, so to speak. This was truly one of those once-in-a-lifetime, extraordinary days. I'll never forget it.