

First and last flight in a CT-133 Silver Star, airframe number 423



CT-133 “423”, as flown by David Leier, RCAF, first and last T-bird flights, both on 423; first T-bird flight: September 1967; last T-bird flight: February 1988

My first encounter with the Canadair CT-133 Silver Star (Canadian designation for the Lockheed T-33 Shooting Star) was in advanced training at 1 CFFTS Gimli, Manitoba. I was fresh out of basic training with the CT-114 Tutor. Full of anticipation of a “new” aircraft, I got my first indication that this aircraft was like no other. Being used to the responsive controls of the Tutor, where it would respond to the slightest control input, I got my rude awakening as many other pilots had in the past. Movements of the controls in flight, was like sending a telegram to the control surfaces to move the aircraft. Welcome to the world of the T-33!! Flying at altitude on a long-range trip was like balancing on top of a beachball for 2.5 hours! Control inputs to keep the aircraft straight and level were endless. That said, and as time went by, one gradually got used to the rather loose controls and began to actually enjoy this marvellous old bird. The CT-133 served the RCAF for many decades as a reliable utility aircraft for many squadrons. One in particular was with VU-33 in Comox. We got to tow radop targets for the Navy ships to practice live fire exercises. These targets were towed many thousands of feet behind the aircraft, far enough so as not to become a statistic! The Navy ships were actually quite accurate. One could feel the jolt after a direct hit.

I flew the CT-133 on and off for 20 years and I just noticed in my log book that my first flight was in airframe 423, and my very last flight was also in 423! Odd coincidence.

Once again, I would like to acknowledge Gilles Pepin for building this magnificent model. His attention to detail is remarkable! He truly is a Master Modeller. He phones me to make sure the all the details of the build are to my liking. Along with his CT-114 Tutor, airframe number 093, in 1:48 scale (same scale as the CT-133 model), Gilles is also building 2 more models for my “Man Cave”, both in 1:32 scale: the CL-13 Sabre (Canadian designation for the North American F-86 Sabre) and, of course, my all time favourite, the Canadair CF-104 Starfighter.

David Leier, March 29, 2021

Great Wall Hobby T-33A, Early Version, L4819



CT-133 in "Red Knight" livery, RCAF/CAF aerobatic team, 1958-1969

This 1:48 scale kit translates well to a CT-133 Silver Star; only slight modifications (and omissions) are required; the most noticeable addition, right behind the nose landing gear cavity: the UHF antenna. Great Wall Hobby, a relative new kit manufacturer, has, in my opinion, delivered the goods on this particular subject. These molds date from 2016, and the kit did not come with the PE frets (an addition to the kit in 2019). The model will be a tail-sitter unless you insert weight in the nose section as step 4, fuselage assembly; I inserted as much playdough as I could in the nose section in front of the cockpit tub (does the trick), and used wood screws as temporary landing gear (see below). The kit provides excellent fit, and finely scribed panel lines, among other qualities. I used Belcher Bits decals BD-22 (Canadian T-33 Silver Star 1/48); they are thin, superb, relatively inexpensive, and a must; however, I suggest the purchase two sets, as Belcher Bits crams its decals on one almost continuous film sheet; this way you can cut through the decal next to the one you need and scrape the unwanted residual portion off; the accompanying data stencil decal's location sheets are exhaustive and deadly accurate.



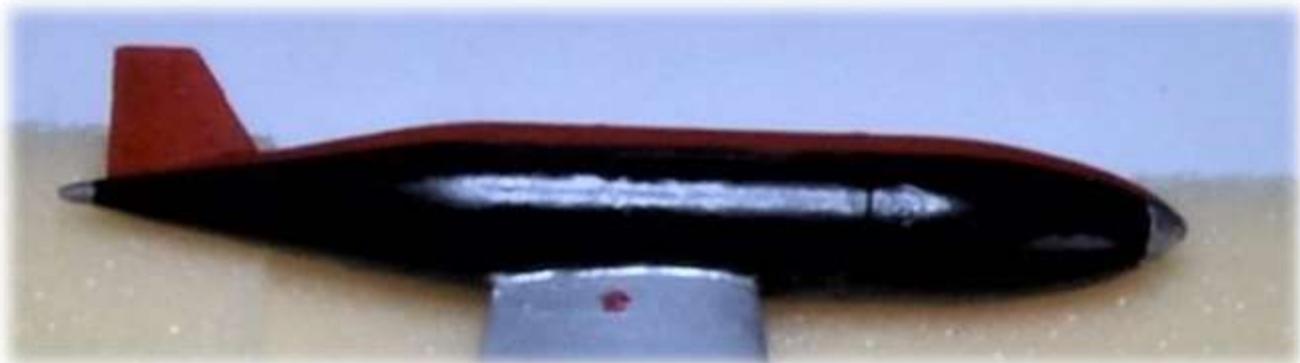
I primed the model with Tamiya Grey fine surface primer, and airbrushed a paint mix consisting of Vallejo Acrylic Metal Color Chrome 77.707 (four parts) and Dull Aluminum 77.717 (one part), slightly diluted with Vallejo Airbrush thinner 71.361. I purposefully did not dull-coat the black of the anti-glare portion of the wingtip tanks and upper nose section, after consulting,

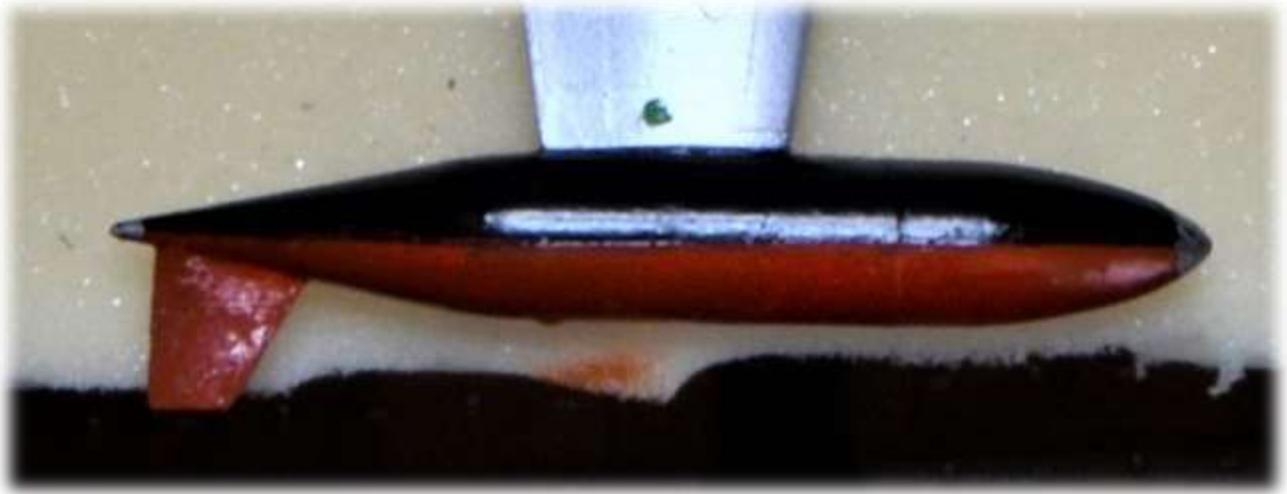
with the recipient/pilot, the many excellent color photographs available online. I airbrushed Future wax to seal the paint and the decals. Please consult the photographs in the Gallery below. And, yes, each model has three #6 1.5" wood screws inserted into holes judiciously drilled in the wheel wells, which were puttied before final assembly.

Photographs of some of the details of the build



The cockpit is covered by aluminum foil, cut precisely 1/8" larger than the cavity and held in place by Pébéo drawing gum, both easily removed once the main paint job is done. The wingtip tanks were an adventure in masking; white flexible Tamiya tape: the only way to fly. Note the painted navigation lights, next two photographs





The kit-supplied seats are excellent, once painted and dressed-up with 1:48 seat belts

Belcher Bits data stencils and decals installed; note the wingtip tanks data stencil decals



Data stencil location drawing underneath the model

Almost done



Model finally on its legs



A Silver Star is born



Note: the boarding ladder was on the starboard side on “Canadian T-birds”









Below and following page: with CT-114 Tutor in RCAF livery





Heritage Model Aircraft



Website: <https://www.heritagemodelaircraft.com/>
Gilles Pepin, MBA
gfpepin@sympatico.ca