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X-Plane Crashes

 Posted by [Guy Norris](#) 3:05 PM on Nov 11, 2008

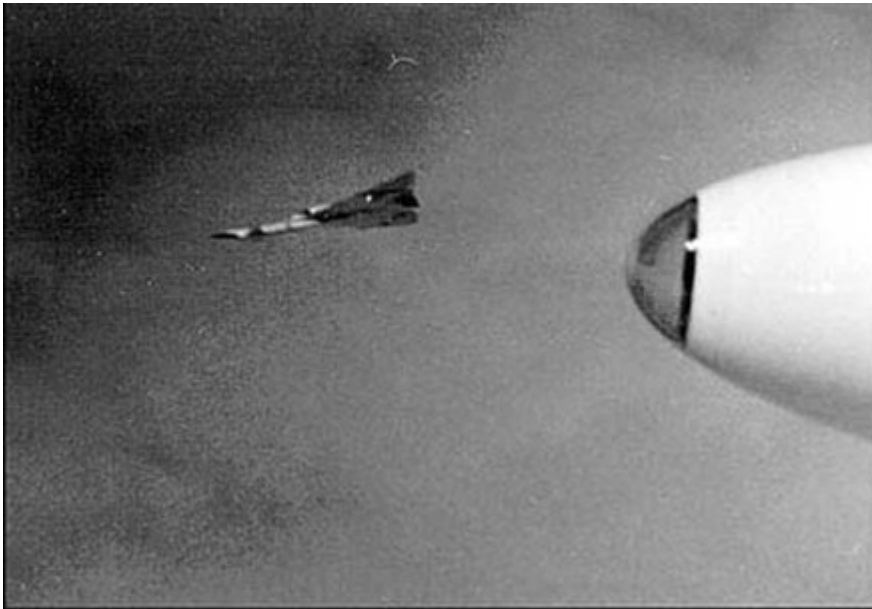
Aviation historians Peter Merlin and Tony Moore have joined forces to produce a tour-de-force of the aerospace archaeology of California's high desert and its unique X-plane heritage. The book is inspired by their collaborative work as the 'X-Hunters', a group dedicated to re-discovering long lost crash sites of historic (and some not-so-famous) research and development aircraft. Lavishly illustrated throughout with archive and contemporary photos, graphics and some maps, the book takes the reader on a detailed journey through the background to the flights, the accidents and the detective work to find wreckage. Though journeying far and wide to Texas, and the fringes of Nevada's Area 51, the bulk of the crashes covered are around Edwards AFB, California's hallowed flight test site for more than 60 years.

Highlights include chapters on the Northrop flying wings and particularly the crash of the YB-49, finding tell-tale remains of the X-1, X-2 and X-15, as well as the awesome XB-70 which gets its own chapter "The blackest day in the history of Edwards."

Pop




Disaster strikes as a F-104N Starfighter in the formation explodes in a fireball after hitting the tails of the XB-70. (all photos: USAF)



Within seconds, doomed and out of control, the XB-70 goes inverted.

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Fuel starts to stream from the broken wing as the XB-70 plummets earthward. Test pilot Al White would eject, but his colleague Maj. Carl Cross remained trapped and died in the crash.

Black world accidents also get their own section which includes fascinating accounts of early U-2, A-12, YF-12A and F-117A crash site discoveries. The chapter also includes finding the remains of a particularly rare D-21 reconnaissance UAV developed in the 1960s to piggy-back on the M-21, a variant of the A-12.

Also included is a potpourri of crash sites including the Hughes XF-11 reconnaissance aircraft which came down, with Howard Hughes at the controls, in the plush suburb of Beverly Hills, the X-10 drone and XB-51 prototype bomber. One of the most unusual is the story of finding traces of an F6F-5K Hellcat drone which caused havoc when it went out of control over the Pacific and flew inland over Los Angeles in 1956. The ensuing failed attempts by USAF F-89D Scorpions to shoot it down sent salvos of Mighty Mouse rockets raining down over open countryside, the town of Newhall and even Palmdale itself. Amazingly no one was killed, but it took 500 firefighters two days to bring the subsequent wildfires under control.

Publishers: Specialty Press (www.specialtypress.com).

Price: \$29.95. ISBN 978-1-58007-121-5

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