

# 'Tsunami' To Make A Comeback?

## Daughter Of Late Owner Wants To See Father's Plane Flying Once More

**S**haron Sandberg, daughter of the late John R. Sandberg, has a plan to restore her father's radical air racer "Tsunami" to flyable condition in his honor.

"The 25th Anniversary of Tsunami's first flight is August 17, 2010 and our first goal by that date is to know that Tsunami is on its way to a flyable condition," Sandberg said. "My hope is that all the pilots and aviation enthusiasts who marveled at the speed and sheer beauty of Tsunami will want to be part of our effort to have Tsunami fly again."

Sandberg estimated that approximately \$600,000 will need to be raised to rebuild the sleek aircraft. Once flyable, she said, the initial plans call for Tsunami to make a tour of various aviation events and museums before settling into a permanent home at an aviation museum.

### HISTORY

When it was first introduced to the air racing community at the 1986 Reno air Races, builders Sandberg and Bruce Boland noted that Tsunami was the first unlimited homebuilt to race for the gold since Roscoe Turner did it in 1939 in a Laird-Turner.

The two men had been working on Tsunami since they formed an agreement in 1979 to build a small, lightweight superfast air racer that, they estimated, would circle the pylons at 500 mph. That was a time when the winning speed in 1985 was 438.186 mph, set by Steve Hinton Sr. in a Super Corsair.

They picked Hinton to fly the new Merlin-powered plane only a month after it was finished and he qualified at 435 mph but the plane DNF'd. In 1987, Hinton again took the yoke, qualified at 464 mph but again did not finish.



**THE UNLIMITED** experimental known as 'Tsunami' before she was repainted red for her last race.

Hinton finished third in 1988 at only 429.9 mph and in 1989 the plane was fifth and retired after only seven laps, Hinton driving.

It raced through 1991 but its best year was 1990 when it came in second at an average of 462.999 mph with test pilot Skip Holm at the stick (Hinton was involved in an accident in a Miles Atwood replica and in a body cast). The winner that year was the F8F Bearcat "Rare Bear," owner Lyle Shelton flying and turning in an average speed of 468.620 mph.

Tsunami flew again in 1991, Holm driving and coming in third at 478.140 mph behind winner Shelton

who blasted around the pylons at an average speed of 481.618 (in fact, he had one lap of 489 mph).

But on its way home Sept. 25, 1991, with Sandberg flying it home to Minneapolis, something happened as he was preparing to land at the Pierre, S.D. Municipal Airport. NTSB investigators speculated that one of the flaps added after the original design was built may not have deployed at the same rate.

The airplane was observed to "suddenly roll rapidly to the left, go inverted, and then pitch toward the ground," the NTSB said, killing Sandberg instantly.

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