

Although not as glamorous as some of the warplanes used during World War II, the “L-Birds” were instrumental in the ultimate victory of the Allies. Equipped with no weaponry other than the firearms carried by their crews and fitted with no protective armor plating, the Grasshoppers were easy targets for enemy ground fire or enemy aircraft. As a result, L-Bird pilots were considered among the bravest pilots of the war. They continued to bring back vital information despite their vulnerable position.



The first military version of the famous J-3 Cub was known as the O-59, and it entered service in September 1941. For a base price of \$2100 to \$2600 per copy, the Army Air Corps took delivery of thousands of these light planes in no less than 11 different models of militarized Cubs. In the field, the L-4 proved to be remarkably adaptable. Some L-4s were fitted with bomb shackles modified to hold 10 hand grenades which were released by pulling a cable from the cockpit. Other L-4s were even fitted with six “Bazooka” rockets. One such equipped L-4 was credited with destroying five German tanks! Finally, like the L-3B, some L-4s were modified to be unpowered glider pilot trainers (the TG-8).

The U.S. Navy and the Royal Air Force also used the L-4. In the U.S. Navy, the L-4 was known as the NE, HE or AE-1. The NE-1s were stock J-3s taken from Piper's inventory and pressed into service as primary trainers. The HE and AE-1s were used as aerial ambulances. The “H” in HE-1 stood for “hospital,” and the “A” in the late

