

ML.103. Another Use for a Broom Handle

[The P2V Neptune was an interesting aircraft with an interesting history. Initially intended as a patrol bomber and first flown in May 1945, it was launched successfully from aircraft carriers and enjoyed a long life due to its ease of manufacture and maintenance. It was the first aircraft fitted with both piston and jet engines. To save weight, the jet engines burned Avgas, and long-endurance missions used piston-engines alone.]

In 1954 under Project Cherry, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) obtained five newly built P2V-7 and converted these into P2V-7U/RB-69A variants by Lockheed's Skunk Works at Hangar B5 in Burbank, California, for the CIA's own private fleet of covert ELINT/ferret aircraft. – ed]

Navy brooms are not just for a 'clean sweep fore and aft.' P2Vs were flown by the NAVY as part of our combined collection efforts in '58-'59, and on one particular Neptune the nose gear would not retract so they fashioned a broom handle, which the crew chief used to retract the gear after take-off.

They were 'detached' from Rota and resupplied regularly by the 'Whale,' the NAVY nickname for the WV-2 Lockheed Constellation.

- Reg Urschler

