

# AirshowStuff

Magazine



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October 2012

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# AirshowStuff Magazine

October 2012

## Cover Photo

Hot air balloons rise into the evening sky at the Great Reno Balloon Race in Reno, NV. Photo by Eric A Rosen. For more, see page 82.

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Mark Hrutkay

### See yourself here!

If you are an airshow enthusiast, we want your help! Everything you see in this magazine is created and submitted by people like you. All it takes is a simple e-mail each month with photos or articles you would like to submit. We may even be able to help you get a media pass if you cover a show for us! If you would like to join our team, please drop us an e-mail at [RS@AirshowStuff.com](mailto:RS@AirshowStuff.com)

We'd love to talk with you!

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# STEALTH FIGHTER

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF AN F-117 PILOT

Lt. Col. William B. O'Connor, USAF (Ret.)

Review by Alan Barbor



I must say when asked to read *Stealth Fighter: A Year in the Life of an F-117 Pilot*, a book about the thoughts and experiences of Lt. Col. William B O'Connor, USAF Retired, I was thrilled at the opportunity. As an avid aviation photographer and aviation enthusiast, I had witnessed the aircraft on several occasions, including its first airshow appearance in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. Through the years, many of us in the aviation community have grown to love this aircraft in its demonstration role, but never have we been able to go inside with the perspective that Lt. Col. O'Connor delivers. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Lt. Col. O'Connor, and all of the men and women who have sacrificed, and are sacrificing every day to give us the freedoms we enjoy.

In reading the book, I got the distinct feeling of being in the cockpit

and what it must have been like. In addition to showing the reader the ins and outs of one of the most advanced aircraft in the United States' military arsenal, you get to know Lt. Col. O'Connor, family man and patriot. After 6,000+ hours of flight and tours of duty fighting in several conflicts, this man has served our great nation for 26 years.

Lt Col. O'Connor shares his thoughts with the higher brass, day to day life in the military, split decisions at war, and other topics. The list goes on to include his flying active duty missions over Kosovo and the thoughts going through his head are gripping. It left me thinking that being fired upon must be horrifying. One quote in the book that sticks out in particular: "Whoever said that the pen is mightier than the sword obviously has never been shot at."

Perhaps the most interesting parts of the book are his personal accounts of flying the F-117, such as the difficult task of refueling with a tanker, made harder because the "black jet" was not made to fly at those speeds. One particular passage on the overbearing darkness of night flight made a feeling of loneliness and fear wash over me even in my own living room.

In closing, I absolutely recommend this book to all of my aviation friends. Although perhaps a bit intimidating due to the technical nature of the aircraft, *Stealth Fighter* is an easy read, much to the credit of Lt. Col. I think most would find this a fascinating in-depth look into what we as taxpayers are paying for and why our weapons are supreme. At the same time, it is a wonderful window into the mind of one of America's front line warriors. **AS**



# Manfred Radius

GLIDER PILOT EXTRAORDINAIRE!

*Article and Photos  
by Jean-Guy Pitre*

Picture yourself over a mile up in the air. The sun has set and you are 3.5 miles from the airport with a town of 15,000 people in between. Suddenly, things change. The sound of an airplane's propeller has silenced and you feel your momentum slowing. All you hear is the wind whistling past your canopy. What do you do? If you're Manfred Radius, you start your nighttime glider demonstration over Summerside, PEI. In Manfred's own words:

"I made the three and a half miles easily back to the airport, with some height to spare. Power pilots would be sweating if their fan in front of them had stopped and they had to fly three and a half miles over the town to the airport. But I am flying a sailplane, designed to glide long distances. This was a short distance to glide."

So who is Manfred Radius? Manfred is a 68 year old, friendly, unassuming immigrant to Canada who grew up in post war Germany. He is also a retired cabinet maker. But most of all he is a man who for 25 years has been taking his H 101 Salto ("Loop") aerobatic sailplane into the skies over



airshows around North America and putting on a show that brings to mind what John Magee meant in his immortal poem "High Flight."

I first had the privilege of meeting Manfred in 1988 when I was part of his ground crew in Vanderhoof, BC, which included holding the poles for his grand finale ribbon cut. As a recently trained glider pilot myself, I was in awe of the whole air show environment, let alone an aerobatic glider pilot! Since then, I have seen him many times, and always been impressed.

Manfred first started his trip to the skies in 1961 at 17 years old when he spent 10 German Marks for a flight in a glider at an airport near Hamburg. In 1969, he came to Canada and continued his path of flight. He moved from being a pilot, to an instructor in 1972, and becoming an aerobatics instructor in 1977. Some of his other achievements include flying more than 375 miles over the Appalachian Moun-


tains in May of 1986, an unpowered flight of 8:45 hours. His maximum altitude reached in his sailplane was 35,000 feet in 1974! When I asked him if he ever thought about flying powered aircraft, his response was that he got his licence in a Cessna 150 fifteen years ago but let it lapse because of the cost to stay current.

Manfred usually gets a lift into the sky behind a tow plane used by Air Cadets for their training flights. In Summerside, it was a venerable L-19 Birddog. After a 15 minute climb to altitude, usually 6,000 feet, Manfred releases the tow rope. He then fires the smoke canisters on each wing tip, the only alteration to his stock glider, and starts a 5-10 minute display of grace and beauty, choreographed to symphony music. Manfred swoops, soars, stalls and rolls in his graceful white sailplane that weighs around 400 lbs! When he gets low enough, you can hear the sound of the wind across his wings.

The grande finale is what Manfred terms "The Inverted Ribbon Cut Attempt". Manfred flies down the runway inverted and cuts a ribbon stretched 30 feet in the air across his path with the tail of the sailplane. Although a fairly common maneuver for the powerful Extras and Pitts' of the airshow world, this always challenging proposition takes on a whole new level of difficulty in a glider! The maneuver is set up with a high speed dive of 165 mph, near the top speed of 175 mph. It is then followed by a tail slide and the cut attempt. After the cut, he still has to climb to get enough altitude to safely roll upright and then land. Everything must be perfect on the setup, and there are no second chances with a sailplane! Manfred occasionally skips the attempt if the wind is not favorable.

After the show, Manfred, with only one person helping, can have his 44 foot wide sailplane disassembled into five pieces and loaded into

his trailer in a little more than an hour, ready for the drive to his next adventure. For any of you glider pilots out there who want to follow in his footsteps, his advice is clear and straightforward:

"Develop a good look out procedure and always do a good look out. Always fly at the right speed. Although as glider pilots we do it as a sport or hobby, and therefore we are amateurs, treat it seriously. Don't fly like an amateur. When flying and when on the ground at the gliderport, always make safety your first priority!" Sounds to me like advice you can use in all parts of life! 



# *The Museum of Flight*

Article and Photos  
By Anthony Richards



A lot of history has happened at Boeing Field just south of Seattle, WA. It was home to the first Boeing factory, the test site for the legendary Boeing bombers, and currently serves as a testing center for all of Boeing's new commercial aircraft. From the north end of the runway where the Boeing ramp and paint hangars lie, further down towards midfield where the King County International Airport terminal and Clay Lacey hangars reside, past the general parking for the many civil and corporate aircraft that call KBFI home, is a world-class museum where a lot of the local history is preserved and available to tour; the Museum of Flight.

This extensive and beautiful museum had an interesting beginning in 1965 when a group founded the Pacific Northwest Aviation Historical

Foundation to recover and restore a Boeing Model 80 from 1929 that had been discovered in an Anchorage, AK landfill. Though the restoration would take 16 years to complete, the group began planning for a future facility to store the aircraft and others in what would be called the T.A. Wilson Great Gallery. Not too long after its formation, PNAHF began going by the name "Museum of Flight" and in 1975 the museum acquired the William E. Boeing Red Barn, the original factory, from the Port of Seattle for \$1.

Since then, the museum has acquired hundreds of artifacts and aircraft of significant aviation history and local heritage. In the Great Gallery, visitors can see a rare M/D-21 drone/mothership variant of the legendary Lockheed A-12, better known as the SR-71 Blackbird. The

museum's M-21 was the second aircraft built for Project Tagboard, a CIA operation to use unmanned, high-altitude drones for reconnaissance over denied areas. The M-21 was also the camera ship that recorded the failed launch of a D-21 from its sistership that resulted in the drone colliding with the launch aircraft, causing both of the crew aboard to eject safely, though one, Ray Torrick, drowned at sea.

Another interesting aircraft in the Great Gallery is the Lockheed RQ-3A Dark Star, the museum's being the second-built prototype. The RQ-3 was designed as a high-altitude endurance UAV that was passed up for production by the United States Air Force in favor of the RQ-4 Global Hawk because the RQ-3 was too stealthy to allow into enemy hands should something go

wrong. However, highlighting the collection is the restored Boeing Model 80 that started it all. According to the Boeing family, the Model 80 is considered the most important Boeing aircraft built due to it propelling the company into the air mail industry where Boeing got its start.

The museum has added a few new facilities and galleries that branch from the Great Gallery, such as the Personal Courage Wing where visitors can see vintage WWI and WWII warplanes and artifacts, including a Yak-9U, FG-1D Corsair that was pulled from Lake Washington in 1983, and a surviving Caproni Ca.20 from 1914 that was stored for 85 years by the Caproni family in Italy, finally finding its way into a monastery where it was recovered from and shipped to and carefully rebuilt in the PCW by museum staff.

The Red Barn is open to tour where the history of the Boeing Company and early aviation are illustrated and brought to life through original documents and historically-accurate reproductions of early manufacturing tools and equipment that would've been seen inside the barn during the early 1900s.

Outside and across the street to the west of the museum is the Airpark and the newly built Charles Simonyi Space Gallery that will house the Space Shuttle full-scale fuselage trainer. Inside the Airpark are commercial aviation relics and legends such as the British-built Concorde, the first 727, 737, and 747, and VC-137B SAM 970, a modified Boeing 707-120 that became the first jet to serve as Air Force One. The Concorde and Air Force One are open to tours throughout the day where you can walk down the aisles of both and compare and contrast the differenc-











es between modern commercial air travel and both executive Chief of Staff travel and comfortable travel at supersonic speeds.

Though the Airpark is completely open to the natural elements, which shows on the weathered airframes of the aircraft, the museum plans to build a structure around the Airpark to shield the aircraft from further damage and to restore past damages from weather exposure. Currently the new Raisbeck Aviation High School campus is being built just north of the Airpark where students from local surrounding schools and districts can learn aviation-themed courses to prepare them for further aerospace education in college. Started in 2004 as a part of the Highline School District, Aviation High School was the first college preparatory high school of its type in the nation.

Away from the main campus of the museum at Boeing Field, the restoration center, located at Paine

Field outside of Everett to the north of Seattle, houses many donated and loaned aircraft that will become exhibits in the future when the museum can allocate space to display them in. Keeping true to the attitude towards preservation of aviation history that began the museum, many unique and historic aircraft currently sit within the center's hanger walls such as the Vought XF8U-1 Crusader prototype, famed test pilot Tex Johnson's personal Lockheed Jetstar CL-329, and a Piasecki H-21B Workhorse helicopter. Though many of these aircraft will be spending many more years in the hangars of the center, the museum's DeHavilland D.H. 106 Comet Mk. 4C and Boeing 247D are expected to be moved into a new commercial-themed exhibit in a planned structure behind the Airpark.

On any given day of the week, the Museum of Flight is an excellent place to visit and tour for all ages

and interests. The many different events held at the museum make it that much more attractive to visitors, such as the hosting of the Blue Angels during Seafair weekend, the Hops & Props craft beer tasting event, and multiple warbird visits and panel discussions throughout the year. I fully recommend visiting this stellar collection to anyone within the Pacific Northwest, resident or traveler, and to those who are looking for an extra treat, visit the restoration center for a tour of the facility and current projects; the teams there are incredibly knowledgeable. Just remember to tell them AirshowStuff Anthony sent you. *AS*

A special thanks to Julia Cannell for the access and John Little for the fantastic tour. For more information on upcoming events and collection pieces at the Museum of Flight, check out:

[www.MuseumOfFlight.org](http://www.MuseumOfFlight.org)





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# Fangs Out

at the  
FORT WAYNE AIR SHOW



Article by  
Patrick Barron

Ryan Sundheimer



Ryan Sundheimer

Ryan Sundheimer

I've always enjoyed Air National Guard base shows. In a year plagued by military budget cuts, the military feel came right back at Fort Wayne International Airport, home of the 122nd Fighter Wing "Blacksnakes", this past Labor Day weekend. Once home to B-26 Marauders and C-47 Skytrains, the base recently saw the unit transition from the F-16 Fighting Falcon to the ground-attack A-10 Thunderbolt II.

A number of USAF aircraft were present at the show, including A-10s, F-16s, a KC-10, a C-5 Galaxy, and of course the highlight act, the F-22 Raptor. The lineup also included a rare F-100 Super Sabre, John Mohr, the Golden Knights, Otto the Helicopter, John Klatt, and many others. This was the first Fort Wayne airshow in many years and they were not looking to disappoint.

We were directed to park outside the main area of the base and bussed in through the main gate. We were immediately greeted by an A-10 sitting on display, a welcoming sight, but not what I had my mind set on seeing. I walked past the many A-10s, briefly glanced at the C-5, gave a nod of the head to the KC-10, and headed straight for the silhouette of two slanted vertical stabilizers peaking over chalet tents in the distance. One of the reasons I made the trip to see this show was because I promised myself at the start of the year that I would see an F-22 Raptor this summer.

And there they were in all of their glory. It had only been two years since I had last seen a Raptor, but I acted like I had never seen one before. They sat in front of everyone at show center as eye-candy. Even-

tually I decided that it was time to look at more of the static displays.

Of course there was more there than just the F-22s. The behemoth C-5 Galaxy was a wonderful sight, particularly when it started raining and everyone needed to find a place for some cover! The B-25 "Panchito" made an appearance, as did the P-51 Mustang "Moonbeam McSwine" and the F-100 which sat on the hot-ramp but not too far from the public.

The show kicked off with the Golden Knights and a pair of home-based A-10s that did some flybys. The overcast day kept the Knights low, but they still put on a great display. John Klatt went up next as the Golden Knights taxied back. One event that really stood out to me was the jet-powered port-o-potty putting on a full performance right



Ryan Sundheimer

in front of the Raptors. Never before did I think that a port-o-potty would be spitting flames in front of the backdrop of the USAF's most potent fighter jet, but I was proved wrong. Next was John Mohr's breathtaking barnstorming performance. I knew that not everyone around me was

part of the airshow scene because the lady in front of me nearly had a heart attack when John Mohr's engine cut out during his slow roll. I quickly explained to her that it was supposed to do that and she was happily relieved. Next up was Steve Oliver's Skydancer followed by



Ryan Sundheimer



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Patrick Barron



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Michael Misorski





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Michael Misorski



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Michael Misorski



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Ryan Sundheimer



Patrick Barron

Grayout Aerosport's eye-opening airplane-motorcycle race. While all this was going on, the clouds began to roll in and it was clear that it was going to rain. I began to ask myself if a Raptor could fly in the rain, out of fear that it might be cancelled.

A Huey began to power up next to me for one of the show's most exciting acts: a search and rescue demo featuring close air support from a pair of home-based A-10s. Several people were out in the field waiting to be picked up by the Huey as the two A-10s simulated attacks on nearby "targets". The event featured pyro and drew the attention of everyone in the crowd. While all this was going on, the roar of the F-22s slowly came to life as the engines powered up. The Huey accomplished its mission, the A-10s were doing victory rolls, the Raptor was warming up, and the rain was beginning to sprinkle. I had heard earlier that they would fly the F-22 sooner if there were reports of rain, and that's exactly what was happening.

It was a heart-warming event to finally see the F-22 takeoff again. Something that I had waited so long to see was finally happening. The P-51 powered up as well, but would not fly because of rain. Curiosity arose among the crowd



Michael Misorski

as the Raptor hovered a few miles from the airport. Some speculated that it was waiting to see if the rain would be calm enough for it to do its demo, but in reality it was waiting for a commercial plane to clear the airspace. Once that happened, the USAF F-22 Raptor was ready to begin the demo. Because of the clouds and rain, it was not able to do a complete high show. However, it still did the basic routine. Because of the weather, the vapor was spectacular. On high-speed passes, a full cloud would engulf the aircraft. It was a beautiful sight indeed. Once it landed, it taxied back in front of the crowd with a spectacular wall of fire behind it. I thought to myself "wow, that would have been a really great

picture" because I did not have my camera ready. Dang.

The show was over at that point because of the weather, which had turned into a full drizzle. As a result, the F-100, P-51, Jet Powered School Bus, Otto, Panchito, and the MiG-17 were not able to perform. This was disappointing because in the nicer weather of Friday afternoon, a very unique performance took place that deserves a mention. In a nod to the 122nd Fighter Wing's rich history, a 'Family Flight' of different types to serve with the unit was planned. This consisted of the P-51, the F-100, and an A-10 flying a race track together. Not something you see every day! The flight was also originally planned to include an



Ryan Sundheimer

F-86 Sabre and F-16 Fighting Falcon as well, though they were not able to participate. In a time when most military units put up only a token display of their aircraft even at their home show, the effort of the 122nd to showcase their aircraft and history in such unique ways was refreshing, and hopefully an inspiration for other shows to think creatively.


Also deserving a mention is the awesome opportunity that ASM Editor in Chief Ryan Sundheimer was afforded; to ride in the Indy Boys' jet powered school bus, a 300mph monster that screamed down the runway straight towards John Klatt's airplane. Jet powered vehicles have become a staple at airshows all over North America, and the 'School

Time' jet bus is among the best known. The chance to ride in it really gives a whole new perspective on the speed and power these vehicles possess!

Before leaving, I walked around the static aircraft one last time, admiring all of the A-10s they had on base. I waited patiently for a bus to take me back to the parking lot, and encountered the most frustrating part of the day, which was trying to leave. The parking lot was solidly lined up. But as all airshow fans have learned to do, I did not let this hamper my day. I accomplished my goal and was eager to go home and see the pictures I had taken.

The show was exceptionally well organized, especially considering

it was the first show in such a long time. The lineup was solid, the people were nice and helpful, and the problems were minor. Unfortunately the show had to contend with the remnants of Hurricane Isaac, which severely dampened the action. All in all, the Fort Wayne Airshow was one of my favorites of 2012. National Guard shows that put an emphasis on military displays can always draw a large crowd and they did not disappoint. I look forward to returning for the next show, which I expect to only get bigger and more exciting!

A huge thanks is due to MSGT Darin Hubble, as well as Paul and Therese Stender for the wonderful hospitality and access! 



# GONE DIVIN'

WITH THE **GOLDEN KNIGHTS**  
AND THE CLEVELAND NATIONAL AIRSHOW





Mike Keaser



Mike Keaser

*Article by  
Mike Keaser and Chris Post*

At the Cleveland National Airshow, we were provided the opportunity to ride along with the US Army Golden Knights on their C-31A troopship as media representatives. After meeting a few other media individuals at the media tent at 8 am Sunday morning, we took a short golf cart ride out to the airplane where we were briefed by SSGT Shaun. Shaun asked a few questions and reviewed safety regulations and soon we were good to go! However, first we had to welcome a very special VIP. We would meet David Holman, a US Army father whose son, SSGT Eric Holman, a former Golden Knight from the Pittsburg area, was killed in action in Afghanistan by an IED less than a month earlier. Eric was 39. The situation put us at a loss for words. Face to face with a man who has lost his son, sorry seems

shallow. It is a struggle to write this now. We both have sons we love. We knew this was going to be a special flight - or so we thought. The rain began to pour, and after a delay, the morning flight was cancelled. A no go. We returned to the media tent. Luckily, Cleveland is held on Labor Day weekend so there are three days of flying. We checked the Monday flight and there was an opening. The rain slowly came to a halt and the rest of Sunday's air show resumed under low clouds.

The Golden Knights normally do a morning and afternoon performance. I am glad to report the Golden Knights were able to honor SSGT Eric Holman with the afternoon performance. The Knights had secretly arranged to work with the air show announcers and David's wife, who shared Eric's story with the Sunday crowd before David was called to the announcer's stand. There, the Golden Knights presented David

with the baton that was passed in freefall by the members during the afternoon aerial demonstration. A small token of gratitude for a fallen Golden Knight and American hero.

On Monday morning the Cleveland skies were "severe clear", as Chris likes to say. Repeating the same procedures, we were ready to go. Mike drew the window seat since he had a camera. Thanks to some friends who had prior experience, we were warned of the conditions at 12,000 feet. You see, the temperature is 40 degrees colder at altitude and the 120 mph wind blast whips around the cabin thanks to the very large open doors on each side. Dress for warmth!

The views out the open doors were fantastic as the troopship made climbing spiral turns. Cleveland spread below in the shining sun and we could see down into Browns Stadium and Progressive Field. We saw I-71 going south out of view,



Patrick Barron



Mike Keaser

Cleveland State University, and massive Lake Erie. Back in the plane, the Golden Knights were busy at work looking out of the open doors for a yellow X on the airfield. On one pass, the Knights throw out streamers to gauge wind speed and direction and then quickly calculate the variables to direct the troopship via hand signals for the correct jumping position. Next, is the money run or what they called the “hot run.”


We have watched the Golden Knights from the ground for many years at various airshows. We have seen them so much; we have begun to take them for granted. We now know how much work goes into a “team” jumping out of an aircraft. Each member develops trust with the other. Several team members have thousands of jumps and the team has won many gold medals in skydiving competitions. In fact, the Golden Knight women’s team recently won the World Championship in Prostějov, Czech Republic. The part of the Golden Knights that airshow fans see every summer are the two demonstration teams, the Gold team and the Black team. Cleveland had the Black team, whose members are the best according to Black team member SGT Jonathan Lopez. We looked at each other and decided we did not want

Ryan Sundheimer



to enter that debate.

We watched as the Golden Knights lined up by the door during the hot run. It is a weird feeling to see a man standing a couple of feet beside you and then disappear into the blue. This is repeated and Mike is able to get better pictures as he learns the timing. Suddenly the back of the plane is empty; the four media representatives are by themselves. A rapid descent begins and everyone starts swallowing to try and keep the ear canals clear. The air temperature rises quickly and the humidity returns. Sadly, Mike’s camera lens fogs up so there will be no pictures of the crowd while landing. The troopship returns to its staging area, the propellers stop

spinning, the seatbelts are undone and the outer garments are shed. The fantastic trip for two air show fans is over, however the adrenaline is still going and we are very excited to have experienced this ride with the Golden Knights. The ground crew collects the jumpers and returns to the troopship where we thank the returning paratroopers with high fives and handshakes for allowing us to be with them. After the experience of riding along with the Golden Knights, the 2012 show is one we will remember for a long time. 

Check out the Golden Knights’ website for more information on the team:

[ArmyGK.ArmyLive.DODLive.mil](http://ArmyGK.ArmyLive.DODLive.mil)  
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Michael Pentrak

# RETURN OF THE RENO AIR RACES

POWER, PYLONS, AND PLANES





Matt Shinavar



Matt Shinavar

*Article by  
Mark Hrutkay*

Air racing is a true American sport and nothing else comes close to it. No other country has had a series of air races like the ones held in Reno every year since 1964. Air racing is also the fastest sport there is; even the slowest racers are faster than the fastest NASCAR or Indy cars. While there are many classes of racers, the Unlimited class is definitely the one that keeps bringing everyone back. Each racer has a group of fans and it's interesting to see the fans and the planes in action.

The races this year were far from a sure thing after last season's crash. If there were ever

hurdles to get past, the Reno Air Races have seen them. They had to come back from the worst air racing disaster in the USA, as well as the second worst airshow disaster in this country (the worst was the September 1972 F-86 crash in Sacramento that killed 22 and injured 28). Mike Haughton, the President of the Reno Air Racing Association, had to get through a gauntlet of procedures from the FAA, the National Transportation Safety Board, the county (to get a "license" to use the airport for the races), and the insurance company to continue to host the races. The crash was investigated, the course was changed slightly, and other safety measures instituted;

the county issued a license for the races; and insurance was even available (in a situation like this insurance may simply not be available at any price). The insurance premiums went through the roof, and Mike went out and raised the money to pay the bill. The National Championship Air Races were on.

Ticket sales were expectedly slow in the beginning; after all, who is going to buy a ticket for an event that is scheduled but may not happen? Once the pieces were together and the races were a go, the tickets started rolling out the doors. Sales and attendance were said to have been at about the same level as last year; things were looking good.

The people who come in for the races are amazing. I may well have met the youngest one while I was there. Five year old Cole was running around the pits with his mom and his sister. He was wearing his flight suit, dog tags and shades. While a lot of five year olds know a lot about a lot of things, few know a lot about air racing. He identified airplanes, spouted off pilot's names and knew about as much about the Unlimited Class as any fan who had been going to the races for longer than he has been alive. So I arranged his dream day. He got to spend some time with Tom Camp's team working on the Wildcat where he ended up on the wing with a rag in his hand wiping exhaust stains off







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the airplane. Many thanks to Tom and his crew for making this young man's dreams come true; Cole was thrilled to say the least.

The races started out with a memorial service for the people who were lost last year. White balloons were released as each name was read by emergency technicians and other first responders. The highest point was that the Elvin family returned to the races. Last year Chuck Elvin lost his wife Cherie in the crash after 52 years of marriage. He, along with his children Bill, Brian, and Linda all lost parts of their legs. They came back to watch the races, continuing a tradition of 16 years of attendance.

The races went pretty much as usual with some high and low points. The lowest point was for Chuck Greenhill. Chuck spent a lot of money restoring "Furias", a modified R-4360 Wasp-powered Sea Fury. It looked amazing and was without a doubt the sharpest looking racer on the line. Furias' performance last year was very respectable while the bugs were being worked out. It was ready to be the fastest gold racer this year, but it wasn't in the cards. On Tuesday the right main gear wouldn't lock down and the ensuing landing resulted in the other gear collapsing during the ground loop at the end of the rollout. The airplane was further damaged during the recovery. Sorry Chuck, hate to see it happen to a good guy like you. Furias showed real promise at a speed of 467 mph, which would have gotten him a second place on Sunday.

To me the high was the performance from unlimited pilot Robert "Hoot" Gibson. Hoot may well have been the nicest guy in the field as well as what I consider to



be the best pilot to ever lift into the skies. In his career Hoot was a US Navy fighter pilot, Top Gun graduate and instructor, Navy test pilot, NASA Chief Astronaut, and flew the Space Shuttle home from space five times. He is also a retired Southwest Airlines pilot. Hoot flew the

Sea Fury "232" (previously known as "September Fury") for Rod Lewis, who also owns "Rare Bear". Mr. Lewis has been racing Rare Bear for quite a few years with little success. You would think that the emphasis would be on seeing the Bear win instead of 232, but it appears that

Hoot was given permission to "go for the gold". In the past, Hoot's flying skills have been hampered by flying airplanes that simply were too slow to have a chance of winning. Things changed this year. In the first qualifying heat, Hoot wasn't running really fast. The next

heat, Hoot locked 232 on Drednought's six and Dennis Sanders couldn't shake him. It was great to see him flying like that and really foreshadowed things to come. The biplane class win went to Tom Aberle, who has dominated the biplanes for the past five years

in a row with a total of seven wins in his career. His highly modified Mong Sport "Phantom" averaged 246 mph, which was an astonishing 40+ mph faster than the second place finisher. Watching Tom on the course was interesting, and probably the best part was trying to



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figure out how he managed to turn those laps so fast and not run anyone over.

In the T-6 races, Nick Macy in his "Six Cat" set at record at 247.317 mph, taking the win from defending champion Dennis Buehn of Car-

son City. The jet class was won by Rick Vandam of Reno flying the L-39 "American Spirit" at a speed over 490 MPH. His margin of victory over Phill Fogg in "Fast Company" was slim at 4/100s of a second.

The Unlimiteds are always the

class to watch. They have been the main drawing card for the races since 1964. This is the first time in three years there has been an Unlimited Gold Race after 2010s race was cancelled because of high winds and last year's fatal accident.

The win was given to Steve Hinton for having had the highest qualifying speed.

There were four planes on the course that made it a race. First is Tiger Destefani's P-51 "Strega", which he piloted to victory in seven

national titles. It would win several more times being flown by Steve Hinton Jr. As mentioned, Rod Lewis had two planes in the race, the Bearcat "Rare Bear," piloted by Stewart Dawson, and Sea Fury "232", flown by Hoot Gibson. The

last truly competitive racer was the Sanders family's Sea Fury "Dreadnought". This a relatively stock two-seat training Sea Fury powered by the first R-4360 conversion ever done. It's very reliable and very fast. If the others had skipped a beat in the race, Dreadnought could well have won.

Qualifying speeds were fast. Strega turned 493 mph, faster than the speed of the winning L-39 jet; Rare Bear had a lap of 490 mph; Dreadnought made a respectable 439 mph, and 232 a conservative 402 mph (with speeds in the 450 mph range in other races). Of course as any racing fan knows, qualifying speeds and race results may vary considerably.

The race was Steve Hinton Jr.'s from the start. In all the qualifying and heat races, he'd get the jump on everyone at the start and pull into an early lead, running fast in clean air, showing no sign of slowing down. The initial dive onto the course is probably the place where the P-51 has a real advantage. Strega's jump into the lead at the start is hard to beat, as was the case this year.

The race for second place was between teammates Dawson in the Rare Bear and Gibson in 232. The Bear had problems with overheating during with week with rumors suggesting the top cylinders were running hot. There was an additional discrepancy between the readings on the cockpit gauges and the telemetry data sent back to the ground crew. Apparently the crew had parts flown in and they spent the night working on it replacing the system in the airplane. The problem looked fixed, but as often happens in complex machines, it didn't work, dooming Rare Bear to another year





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Matt Shinavar



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of not placing in the races.

During the race, the Bear was running fast, but never really closed in on Strega. Dawson was eventually forced to pull out of the race with indications that the engine was overheating. Hoot Gibson was running 232 very aggressively and he closed the gap quite a bit, running 456.746 mph and a time of 8:27.111. Hinton Jr. and Strega turned 477.523 mph and a time of 8:05.046, winning by

about 22 seconds. Dennis Sanders in Dreadnought turned in 417 mph and a time of 9:15 for 3rd place.

In the end, the 25-year-old kid from Chino Steve Hinton Jr. won his 4th victory in the Unlimited races. Of course the owner of Strega is talking about retiring the airplane for their 50th year on September 11th to 15th of 2013. Will Strega

be back? We probably will not know until sometime this upcoming spring, but it goes without saying that next year should be interesting to say the least. Start making plans, and if you've never been before, it's an amazing event and an unforgettable experience.

I would like to thank Valerie Miller, Director of Marketing of the Reno Air Racing Association for making this story possible. 

Mark Hrutkay



Jeremy Hampton



# REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

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