

AirshowStuff

Magazine



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Dale 'Snort' Snodgrass performs in an F-86 Sabre at the Titusville Airshow. For more, see page 22. Photo by Mark Hrutkay.

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April 2009

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Thanks to those who submitted to this issue!

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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. If you would like to join our team, e-mail us at RS@AirshowStuff.com

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Monthly Photo Contest

If you are a photographer, pick your best shot and enter our monthly photo contest! Just take your photos at an airshow or airport and send them in to RS@AirshowStuff.com!

Photo Contest Rules

- Two entries per person.
- All entries must be your own work.
- All photographs must be submitted by the 25th of the month they were taken in.
- If a show happens after the 25th, you can submit them for the next month.
- Photos must be at least 1800 pixels on their longest side.
- The photographer retains all rights to the entered images.

We will review all of the entries and pick one winner and three runners up to get published. The winner will receive a free DVD set of their choice from AirshowStuff.com. If you don't win, try again next month! Good luck!



Welcome!

Greetings, and welcome to the new AirshowStuff Online Magazine! I am glad you decided to check us out. This is the first issue of what will be a monthly publication. Right now, we are planning one issue coming out at the end of each month from April (this issue) through November, and one off-season issue coming out in January.

I started this project with the goal of giving people a place to show off their work, and I hope it will serve this purpose in the months and years ahead. A lot of great airshow photographers and writers have joined together to get the ball rolling, and now it's open to enthusiasts like you. If you're a photographer, send us your photos! If you're a writer, contact us and we'll plan an article with you!

As the year progresses, we plan to bring you more than just reviews and news stories. We want to bring you behind the scenes stories as told by airshow professionals themselves, so that you can get a better appreciation of the shows and acts we all go crazy for. Since all of us are photographers, we will also be sharing a photography tip each month. You can use these tips to improve your photos, and then win an award with them in our monthly photo contest!

We are all very new to this magazine, and obviously some things are a bit rough at the moment. We realize this and hope you will bear with us as we learn more and do more to improve everything you see here. It's going to be a fun ride!

Ryan Sundheimer
Editor

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Jenny's Journal



Winds of Change

Article by Jenny Forsythe - American Barnstormer Wingwalking Team
Photos by Chris Adolor

Change is something many people are afraid of or simply don't look forward to. However, I've found change to be refreshing and inspiring. Though I was a bit concerned when I learned in late December that we would need a new wing walker for our American Barnstormer Double Trouble team, I put my faith in prayers and those prayers were answered. Our initial search list consisted of females only, since that's all that Walt has ever hired in his 41 years as a wing walking pilot. But, after much consideration, and many people pointing

to a particular male who previously expressed interest in wing walking, we ended up with one gem on the list that stood out above all others: Tyson Rininger.

While we receive numerous e-mails throughout the year from wing walker 'hopefuls', I just couldn't imagine training a complete stranger to stand across the nose of Ol' Smokey from me. As more people suggested Tyson to me, I began to recall speaking with him at the ICAS convention a couple years ago and his attitude is what stuck with me... rather than being boastful and

telling me how great he thought he'd be at wing walking (like most of the e-mails we get), he was humble and seemed to have a true appreciation for the art. Once I contacted him this winter, he still showed humility and the utmost respect for wing walking. He had an understanding of the time commitment it would take to train and continue performing with the team throughout the year (again, something most 'hopefuls' don't seem to have a good grasp on). Though I anticipated some hesitation from Walt as far as asking a guy to come on

board, Walt quickly agreed that Tyson was the right choice.

Training could not have gone better in mid-February. With Tyson's previous aviation experience, we were able to train him in a much shorter period of time than it would have taken us to train just about anyone else. One day of ground school and three days of flights, two flights each day, brought success and the complete training for our Double Trouble routine. While training week was rather brutal on Tyson, our first performance proved to be the real training grounds.

Crosswinds raging at 20-30 knots were the order for the weekend at the Florida International Air Show in Punta Gorda, March 21 & 22. Friday's practice show went smooth, as the winds had yet to pick up, but Tyson's very first performance in front of an air show crowd (of approximately 30,000+ spectators) took us all for a ride we won't soon forget. Needless to say, Tyson has been initiated as a full-fledged team member. All three of us learned a lot on Saturday about performing in extreme conditions – it was the most wicked ride I've ever experienced in my six years of wing walking. Experiences like this one can sometimes make or break a team – in our case, it cemented our trust in our teammates' abilities, experience,



and judgment. While Sunday's weather really wasn't much better, it was obvious we all learned and grew from Saturday's experience – even with the crosswinds still raging, we nailed our performance on Sunday with far more grace and precision. And, on top of it all, Tyson has showed incredible showmanship by being able to hop off the plane at the end of the routine and go right into speaking with announcer Danny Clisham on a microphone in front

of his fans.

Tyson Rininger is the real deal – talent, brains, incredible showmanship, and a commitment to the aviation & airshow industry that is tough to beat. These winds of change certainly blew in our favor and we feel blessed to call Tyson our newest American Barnstormer!

www.AmericanBarnstormer.com

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Robert Baranaskas Killed in Crash

The entire warbird and airshow community was saddened to learn that Robert Baranaskas died in an unfortunate accident on April 5, 2009 at Mastic Beach NY. He was flying his P-40 practicing for an upcoming show. He impacted the water a short distance off shore.

Bob and his son Chris were regulars at east coast air shows for many years. Bob flew the P-40E "The Old Exterminator" and Chris was in the P-51D "Glamorous Gal". Both are real gentlemen and Bob will be greatly missed by the warbird community. Our prayers are with his family. Godspeed Bob.

Article and Photos by Mark Hrutkay



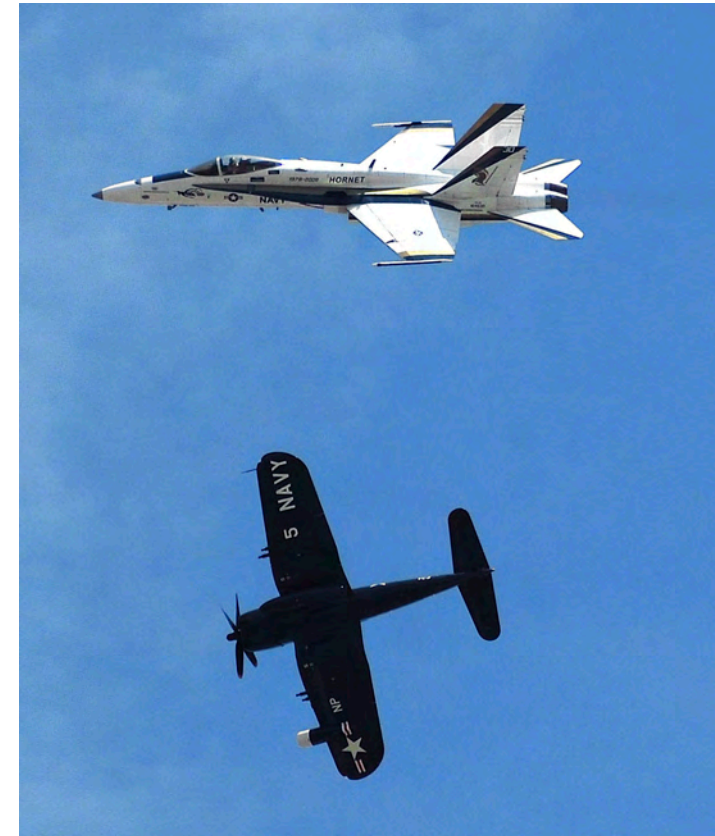
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Special Paint Scheme for Hornet East

Watch out this year on the airshow circuit for a specially painted F/A-18C Hornet. The special paint is to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the F-18 Hornet in the Navy fleet, and mimics the colors worn by the prototype F/A-18. The aircraft will be used by VFA-106, based at NAS Oceana in Virginia Beach, VA as the primary aircraft for all of their Hornet demonstrations.

Though some nations are well known for the special paint schemes worn by their demonstration aircraft, it is a rare treat to see a US jet in anything but standard gray. Putting a damper on this excitement, however, is the news that the Navy is significantly cutting the number of demonstrations. The single ship demo teams have canceled a combined 40% of the shows that were originally on their schedules.

Article and Photos by Ricky Matthews



[Click to turn the page](#)

El Centro Thunder: Blue Angels Winter Training



Article and Photos by Nathan Addison

It's another brisk winter morning in the Imperial Valley. The California sun is just beginning to make its climb into the sky. There is a cold wind blowing out of the north, across the Salton Sea and the arid desert landscape, common conditions this time of year. But the mornings in El Centro don't stay cold for long, even in the dead of winter.

The wind carries with it a familiar aroma, one that other parts of the country won't be enjoying for months. It's the smell of jet exhaust. One might mistake this smell for diesel exhaust, but the cause of the aroma soon becomes evident as a blue and gold F/A-18 tears across the open desert landscape.

Many parts of the country are snowed in, their cameras, sun-

screen and folding chairs packed away. Air show season is a distant memory for many of these folks. But while the snow drifts pile up, and air show fans across the country can only daydream about the upcoming show season, the blue and gold jets belonging to the United States Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron are far from being in hibernation.

For the Blue Angels, the coming of a new January involves packing their bags and heading west. Their destination is sunny El Centro, California, a border town just a stone's throw away from Mexico. Naval Air Facility El Centro is a small installation with a big workload.

Navy and Marine Corps squadrons from around the globe travel to El Centro for training sessions

over the many desert bombing and aerial gunnery ranges that belong to the base. NAF El Centro has many square miles of uncongested military airspace at their disposal, and near perfect weather year round. This is why, decades ago, the Blue Angels began to hold their yearly training at the base.

I was on hand when the 2009 Blue Angels arrived from Pensacola on the 5th of January. The five hour round trip drive did not deter me, even though I only got to see the Blues in the air for less than five minutes. I felt drawn there, like it was something I had to do. If you're not an airshow fan, you probably think I'm nuts.

Luckily, I was able to see much more flying over the next two and a half months, culmi-

nating in an incredible surprise visit by the team that almost left me speechless. Boss McWhorter led the team out to meet a small group of fans who had been watching their flying from the end of the runway. Equally amazing was the fact that the team skipped their flight debriefing (something that generally is done as soon as possible) to do so, riding over in a van as soon as they climbed out of the blue jets.

Knowing that their day to day routine involves little to no spare time made this gesture all the more touching for the fans that they met. Even better, the team was just as excited about the meeting as we were. This says a lot about the Blue Angels; they have incredible personalities that match their skill as Navy and Marine Corps aviators. Each one of them is a genuinely friendly person and great to talk to. Getting to speak to them one on one was a great experience.

So go see your 2009 Blue Angels at a show near you. Or at a show not near you. It's the greatest show around, and the 2009 team is lookin' sharp. Don't forget to stick around for autographs. You'll get to talk to a person in that blue suit that understands you and doesn't think you're nuts!



Liftoff!

Spotting a Space Shuttle Launch



Article and Photos by Mark Hrutkay

On Sunday March 15, 2009, a couple of hours after the TICO air show there was an aviation event that really defies words. The launch of Space Shuttle Discovery Mission STS-119.

For those of us middle aged or older, there is something still magical about space. The younger generation looks at a rocket launch as something "routine". As Tom Hanks said in Apollo 13, "there is nothing routine about flying to the moon". Ask Hoot Gibson about Atlantis Shuttle Mission STS-27 back in 1988, suffering damage to 700 tiles and losing one. The worst thing was

that it was a secret military mission so there could be little help from the ground. Hoot brought it back intact, a few parts melted, and did what may be some of the best flying of all time. He saved the day. There's nothing routine there, nothing at all.

I had never seen any space launch until about a year ago. I was addicted after my first launch. The Shuttle is supposed to be retired by the end of 2010 and has less than 10 launches to go. It's an event well worth watching. When the Shuttle launches local traffic stops on Highway 1 that runs parallel to the Indian River

through Titusville, just so people can see it. Tourists come just to watch it roar into the heavens; it's an event that makes everything else in aviation pale in comparison.

For me, I came to Florida over a month earlier for the STS-119 launch when it was originally scheduled. I actually lost track of the number of times it was rescheduled. But rescheduling is part of the whole experience. NASA wants to get it right, wants it to be safe. And I think that every American would agree that is the top priority. Air shows run on schedule, Shuttles fly when they

are completely ready.

When it looked like it wasn't going to launch on the first trip, I headed back home to West Virginia. I kept an eye on the NASA website to see when it would go. A few weeks passed and it was time to go back to Florida.

There is no really bad place to watch a launch from. If you are on the east coast of Florida somewhere near the center of the state, you can see it. But just like some women are prettier than others, some viewing locations are better too.

When I got there it was delayed a few more days. I really wanted to see it go without another 800 mile trip back home. Why keep coming back? There was a reason. It's called a "Turn Basin Pass".

I have a lot of friends, and one friend in particular works for NASA. He got one of the passes that gets you into the Cape area in front of the Vehicle Assembly Building. This area is known as the "Turn Basin". The Turn Basin is a large pond or small lake where they barge the external fuel tank for the Shuttle into. If you think back to news media coverage of any launch, there is a countdown clock that is in the video shots. That clock is about 300 yards behind us. NASA will let spectators as close as three miles to the launch. I was at three miles and

15 feet.

To put this into other terms, my first launch where I watched it from the banks of the Indian River in Titusville was 12.25 miles away. Now I was close. How close? Compare it to watching the Thunderbirds perform from the backseat of Thunderbird 7 in the formation; or maybe watching the Rolling Stones play while



standing on stage between Mick and Keith. It's a good seat. The only better seats were three miles away, 170 feet in the air inside Discovery.

The only people in front of us were the crew that did the final check on the Shuttle and some guards complete with guns and no smiles. Security was as tight as you might guess - the men at the gates where we came in were carrying loaded MP-5 submachine guns.

The launch was at twilight, much brighter than the prior one, which was the last night launch. I was there for that one too. If you have a pass, you need to be there about three hours early. If you are watching from the Visitor's Center, you need be there 8 hours early. People watching along the public roads and causeways may stake out choice locations and set

up camp in motorhomes a day in advance.

There is a well behaved carnival atmosphere at the Turn Basin waiting for the launch. People bring snack food and sit on folding chairs, a vendor sells hotdogs and drinks out of a trailer. There are probably 3,000 people in this area and they are all having a great time. All are NASA employees, contractors, family and friends. For them it's a validation of why they come to work and

how they are contributing to the program.

The loudspeaker announces the countdown, the planned holds, and safety information. It sets the tone and pace of the launch. As time gets short, the excitement grows.

With a few minutes to go, everyone is on their feet and watching. Ignition and steam comes out of the flame trenches that were

filled with water to protect the pad. The Shuttle comes off the pad and clears it in less than two seconds. It's an amazing sight.

The Shuttle is 185 feet tall and it must have 350 feet of flames coming out of the back of it. This isn't the tight cone of an afterburner on an F-15, the Shuttle is literally outrunning a fire. It does it well too, rapidly accelerating past the speed of sound. The rate

of climb is impressive. It reaches 150,000 feet in 2 minutes. It is at this point where the Solid Rocket Boosters separate. That's about the last you can see of it. From that time on it's out of sight.

As long as it took to prepare the Shuttle for the flight, as much time as the spectators put into being there, it is over in four minutes. You say goodbye, chairs are folded, people are streaming to their cars and they are on the way home.

More experienced viewers relayed that the Saturn V that lifted Apollo was slower and more majestic than the Shuttle. When they launch the Shuttle, it goes. TV and surround sound can't relate the experience, not by a long shot. That is something you need to view in person.

To photograph it, I used a Canon 1D Mark III with a 500mm Canon lens and a 1.4x converter on a tripod with a Wimberly Head. I thought up what settings to use well in advance, because there is no time to play with it when the launch happens. You get one chance at it and in three seconds it's out of range. When the smoke starts it's going to be over pretty fast.

I quickly took my camera gear apart, packed it and headed to the car. As I was walking, NASA's UH-1H Huey came back from patrol, with a door gunner on each

side manning a 7.62mm machine gun. It landed on its pad a few hundred yards away.

After I got home a friend sent me the pictures of the "space bat". It seems as though there was a Free Tailed Chiroptera Bat that attached itself to the external fuel tank and was picked up by NASA cameras.

Biologists concluded it had suffered some shoulder injury. He hung on during launch. The official NASA statement was that he "likely perished quickly during Discovery's climb into orbit". Maybe he knew his flying days were over and wanted to go out in a blaze of glory. I hope he held on past Mach 1, but I know when he came off, he was incinerated in a split second. Godspeed Space Bat.

If it happens that you are headed to Florida and if the timing is right, head on over to see a Shuttle Launch, or at least the Visitor's Center. That is a stop worth making and with less than 10 launches left, one you can't put off.



Spacebat rides into the heavens. Photo by NASA



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Photo Tip Of The Month



Opposing Passes

Article and Photos by David Jacobson

“Now ladies and gentlemen watch as the solo pilots come from behind and overhead to execute the breathtaking crossover break!” During an airshow performance there are few things that put an audience on the edge of their seat like an opposing crossover pass, with the illusion of a near miss by two (or more) speeding aircraft. It is often one of the most sought after shots by airshow photographers because of it’s dramatic look and impression of speed. Even with a top of the line SLR camera that will take six plus frames per second, catching a cross is not guaranteed, but

practice and a technique that works for you will allow you to catch a cross more often than not. While I don’t claim to be a master of catching opposing passes, a few years of practice and receiving great tips and tricks from friends has given me a solid knowledge base and here I’ll share my information with you.

The first thing is to figure out which aircraft you want to follow. Many times I’ve gotten a decent shot with both aircraft in the frame but the aircraft I was following and had in focus was obstructed by the aircraft streaking the other direction, leaving a

photo of just a blurry aircraft.

There are many different theories about how to track the aircraft best. One theory is to simply get one aircraft in the view finder, follow it until you think it’s near show center, shoot off a burst of photos, and hope that you caught both aircraft in frame.

Another technique is the both eyes open method. Here you track your main aircraft (the one you want in focus) with your camera while watching the other with your peripheral vision. As you see them almost cross, snap off a few shots.

The third method for catch-



ing a cross is simply keeping your camera aimed at center point and fire off a burst right when you feel the aircraft will pass show center. While this method isn’t exactly my favorite, it can (if timed right)

create some interesting looking photos, if that’s what you’re after.

A fourth, and very different method, is to hook up a remote shutter to your camera and have a friend hold the release trig-

ger while you track the aircraft through the viewfinder. When the two aircraft pass each other your partner clicks the remote, hopefully catching the cross. This method seems odd but certainly has the potential to produce some good results.

Of all the methods mentioned I’ve had the best luck with the two eye method, but what works well for me may not work the best for you. I suggest trying all of them out and seeing which nets you the best results. Unfortunately, just knowing the method usually isn’t enough and practice will definitely be needed as well. If there are no airshows around and you’d like to practice, you can always track cars on the street and try to capture a “cross” when cars pass each other. It’s decent practice and a good stepping stone, being that the cars are only going 30-45 mph, compared to 300+ mph.

Did you find this tip useful? Show us! Send any opposing pass shots you get to RS@AirshowStuff.com and they will be featured in next month’s issue!

FIAS '09



Small Community, Big Effort...

Article and Photos by Chris Adolor

With the economy in its current state, air show coordinators around the nation are scrambling to come up with creative ways to stretch budgets, maintain show sponsorships, and even secure performers to avoid downsizing or in some cases cancelling these annual events. This year's 29th Annual Florida International Air Show was no exception. However, this event has a leg up on many others with the amazing effort of local residents, business owners, and an all-volunteer committee and workforce who together skillfully orchestrate one of Florida's premier aviation events. This is

not only one of Florida's great air shows, it is also one of its most successful fund-raising events that has contributed nearly 2.3 million dollars for southwest Florida charities over the years.

The show's Board of Directors, led by Chairman Fred Buckingham, Bucky McQueen, and a team of volunteers have created a model which engages the residents of Charlotte County Florida, local business, and area show sponsors to join efforts in what essentially becomes a weekend of celebration, fund-raising, and great flying.

I arrived at Charlotte County

Airport on Friday morning hoping to catch some practice day flying, talk to some of the show's event staff and take some photos of the show's great static displays. Many of the performers, such as Mike Goulian, Matt Chapman, American Barnstorming and the Blue Angels, took advantage of the practice time to tighten up their early season demonstrations. I quickly found that the real show on this day was performed on the ground. I observed a tightly coordinated effort between the hundreds of volunteers, local sponsors, Charlotte County Airport Authority and the TSA, as they

turned this former WWII Army Airfield into a grand stage for the airshow with mathematical precision. By day's end, Charlotte County Airport was ready for the records crowds which were about to converge.

FIAS 2009 was headlined by the US Navy Blue Angels, marking their 11th appearance at Punta Gorda since 1981's debut event. This would be the Blue Angels' second performance of the 2009 season, fresh from their first official demonstration of the season at NAF El Centro where they concluded their winter training just a week earlier. The lineup included Christine "CC" Gerner's high adrenaline Extra 300L aerobatic display, the energy filled display of Mike Goulian in his gorgeous

green and white Castrol Aviator Extra 300SHP, World Aerobatic Champion Matt Chapman in his Embry-Riddle Eagle 580, and Air Show Hall of Fame announcer Danny Clisham.

While the skies were blue and the weather appeared perfect, punishing crosswinds developed over the weekend, grounding the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) Parachute Team both Saturday and Sunday. Veteran air show performer Dan Buchanan, in a slightly modified routine due to the conditions, wowed the crowd with his graceful hang glider demonstration.

The considerable crosswinds also made the debut performance of air show photog-



rapher-turned-performer Tyson Rininger a memorable one. Saturday was Tyson's debut performance with the American Barnstormer Double Trouble Team. Pilot Walt Pierce masterfully navigated "Ol' Smokey," his 1945 Stearman, through the punishing crosswinds while Tyson and veteran wing-walker Jenny Forsythe delighted the crowd.

Greg Koontz dazzled with his solo routine in the shiny red Super Decathlon and followed later in the show with his "Alabama Boys" comedy-flying routine in a Piper J-3 Cub which concludes with a daring pickup truck landing while racing down the runway. The pickup truck landing is a challenging routine in normal conditions, but Greg executed the landing perfectly.

John Mohr and his beautifully restored 1943 stock Stearman biplane left the crowd in awe. Mohr's routine is like no other in the air show business. His low-level aerobatic routine is graceful yet exhilarating and displays almost unimaginable control over this aircraft.

The F-15 West Coast Demo Team and Viper East F-16 Demo Team provided the heart-pounding rush with great single-ship performances followed by the Heritage Flight with Lee Lauderback in the P-51D "Crazy Horse."

"Panchito," the North Ameri-

can B-25, twin engine medium bomber flew both Saturday and Sunday and has become one of my favorite aircraft to photograph both on the ground and in the air. Panchito travels to airshows nationwide to raise awareness for the Disabled American Veterans program which serves disabled veterans in communities throughout the country. Flying alongside of Panchito was the Commemorative Air Force Curtiss-Wright Helldiver, the only SB2C still flying today, and "Scooter" Yoak in the P-51D "Quicksilver."

The Blue Angels were able to perform a high show on Friday but battled through some mechanical issues, repeated several maneuvers and worked out some early season kinks. By the time Saturday's 3:00 PM performance arrived, kicked off by a JATO take-off of Fat Albert, the Angels were in mid-season form displaying an extremely tight diamond formation and sensational timing for an early season performance.

With crowds estimated at 65,000, the 29th Annual Florida International Air Show had it's highest ever attendance and was a "huge success" according to Chairman Fred Buckingham. Media Coordinator Skip Hapner added, "Our show is certainly helped by support throughout the community. Our volunteers are amazing and strive to make

the next event better than the last." The Board, the sponsors, and the nearly 800 volunteers are a model of professionalism. They exemplify the success that a well-executed plan and coordination of a community effort can bring.

Planning for the 30th Annual event is already well underway. "Our board meets every month to talk about and plan the next event" Hapner explained. "We always strive to learn from each show and to make the next event great." Securing performers is always the key foundation to a great air show. Securing the support of a community and gathering nearly 800 volunteers is a much greater challenge which the FIAS organizers have appeared to master. It was very fitting that this year's theme was "Hometown Heroes" as everyone involved in FIAS '09 fit the bill.

If you are interested in becoming a part of this unique charity event, please send an e-mail through the Florida International Air Show website at:

www.FloridaAirshow.com



VAC Titusville



Article and Photos by Mark Hrutkay

The air show season has to start somewhere each year and there's no better place than in sunny Florida with its wonderful mid-March weather. In years past, the event at Titusville (hence the name TICO which has stuck), was the annual fundraiser for the Valiant Air Command (VAC) Museum and also one of the premier warbird shows in the country. The Space Coast Regional airport is situated on the middle of the east coast of Florida. It is across the Indian River from NASA's Cape Canaveral. In addition to the airshow this year had a special treat, a Space Shuttle launch a few hours after Sunday's show.

The show is well worth traveling from my home state of

West Virginia to attend. It's very unique in that the museum actually tows their entire collection from inside the hangar to an area across the field so you can have a chance to see it outside in the open. This makes for outstanding picture opportunities.

Military reenactors brought in some WWII armor and set up a military styled camp. Vendors were plentiful for food and aviation related gifts. The parking is about as close as you will ever find at an airshow.

Back in July of 2009, the VAC's C-47, "Tico Belle", suffered a landing accident while returning from an airshow in bad weather.

The Belle has been in restoration since, with countless hours of ef-

fort put into making her fly again. This year she moved under her own power for the first time, and taxied across the field to sit on the line. Hopefully it will be seen soaring over airshows next year.

The flight line was populated with some of the nicest T-6s and T-34s I've seen in a long time. One that always stands out is N92778, a former Oshkosh Grand Champion. It is a yellow T-6G that was restored by Tim Savage and Midwest Texans (MWT) in Indiana. MWT really knows how to make a perfect T-6 - several years after its Oshkosh award, this aircraft still looks like it is ready to win another Grand Champion trophy.

While this was first air show

of the 2009 season, it was also the last show for Pete Jacobs in the L-39 "Angel 7". Pete sold his Blue Angels-painted L-39 after 10 years of shows. Pete did put on a great show in a very attractive airplane. He and his routine will be missed by all.



TICO also featured some heavy metal courtesy of Tom Reilly. He is certainly the bomber man. He has rebuilt a lot of planes in his time, most having two or more engines - at least two B-17s, a B-24, several B-25s

He can also fly and did a demonstration in the B-25 "Killer B". Tom showed the crowd what the Japanese saw in April 1942 when B-25's attacked them at low altitude. He did some of the lowest flying I have seen in a B-25, it was very impressive. He was joined

by B-25 "Panchito" for some of the passes.

The schedule showed Doug Mathews flying acrobatics in his P-51 "The Rebel", but when the show started he was in his Corsair instead. After the performance,

Doug taxied in front of the crowd, pointed the airplane at them and cycled the wings. The show was precise and well done and it was certainly a crowd pleaser.

The fastest part of the show was the Starfighter F-104 Demo. in the CF-104D N104RB. The Starfighters Team is based at Cape Canaveral, a few miles from TICO. Demo pilot Rick Svetkoff really knows how to fly a fast show. Each day he put on two flights. The first was before the show officially started to warm up the crowd. The F-104 made several low, fast passes. Fast is a relative term, but let's just say the F-16 would have been pressed to keep up! It is truly challenging to swing the camera fast enough to get a shot as he comes by. Later in the show, the F-104 was doing a full range of turning and burning maneuvers, and it really kept the crowd's attention. When the F-104 flies, people watch it.

John Black flew his acrobatics in the Super Decathlon. John is a guy who grew up with aviation in Dayton, Ohio. He says he still remembers his first time upside down like it was yesterday. He's a full time Florida ANG pilot flying F-15s. His aerobatic display was precise, but he went a step further. John walked down the line after the show handing out photos and signing autographs for the kids. Maybe John will in-

still enough excitement in one of those kids so they start a career in aviation.

During the show there was a mass launch of T-28s, T-6s, T-34s, and many other planes; lots of formation flying and fun for all.

All of a sudden, a silver, blue, and red F-86 flew low over the field - so low that the hair on the back of my neck began to stand up. That pass is the trademark of Capt. Dale "Snort" Snodgrass (USN Ret.). Snort was originally known for his exploits in the F-14. He was (and since the F-14 is gone) and always will be the highest time F-14 pilot with 4800+ hours. Nowadays you can find Snort in all sorts of warbirds. He has put on over 500 low level performances his experience shows.

The three shot photo sequence I took of him making the pass in front of the pyro clearly shows the level that Snort took his performance to. Snort always gets your attention.

The Viper East demo team is based at Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina. They put on a demo of the F-16 and flew in the Heritage Flight with Snort and the F-86.

The kid who lived next door to me years ago joined the USAF and worked to be a mechanic on the team for one tour of duty. The last time I saw him I mentioned the Viper East Team and



showed him some pictures. He thought working with the team was the best experience of his life and proceeded to name all the tail numbers of the team's aircraft. Sure enough, two of them were at the show. Viper East is a very good recruiting tool for the USAF and in times of budget cuts, lets hope it doesn't get cut. The job that it does can't always be counted in dollars and cents.

Some families may have had an old car that a father and son restored. Not the Yoak's. They restored a P-51D from parts that came from 200+ P-51s that served all over the world during the war. The result, "Quicksilver" (N51HY), is without a doubt one of the most perfect P-51s in existence. Its probably better and more precisely built than anything North American made. That

is what made it Grand Champion at Oshkosh in 2007.

Scott flies it and at age 24 is one of the youngest warbird pilots in the country. He seems to be a very professional and exceptional pilot. I had the honor of photographing him putting on his first acrobatic performance at Oshkosh, which was world class. Needless to say Scott flew "Quicksilver" at TICO. He has a heck of a future in the airshow business as well as building parts for warbirds.

Overall, TICO was a great show, well attended, well organized, and well worth coming to. There is no better way to start the airshow season than with the Valiant Air Command on the Space Coast of Florida.

www.VACWarbirds.org



2008 Photo Roundup

What better way to kick off the 2009 airshow season than a look back at some great pictures from 2008? Here we've each picked our favorite photos from last year to help get you in an airshow mood. Enjoy!

Michael Rehbaum



Mark Hrutkay



Aaron Haase



Ryan Sundheimer



Aaron Haase



David Jacobson



Wesley Perkins



Mark Hrutkay



Ryan Sundheimer



Chris Adolor



Wesley Perkins

Chris Adolor



David Jacobson



Michael Rehbaum



Ryan Sundheimer

Reports from the Field

April's Airshows in Pictures & Reviews

Burnet, TX



Photo Credit: Wesley Perkins



Photo Credit: Wesley Perkins

Thunder in the Valley - Columbus, GA



Photo Credit: Terry Wood, Jr.

Cecil Field - Alan Henley Benefit



Photo Credit: Brian Walker



Photo Credit: Brian Walker

Thunder Over Louisville



Photo Credit: Ryan Sundheimer



Photo Credit: Ryan Sundheimer

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Click to turn the page

Tuscaloosa Airshow 2009

By: Carl Wilcox

This was the first air show hosted by the Tuscaloosa Regional Airport and it featured the Blue Angels. The organizers of the air show estimated 40,000 people would show up to see the Blues perform. This was an underestimate, as approximately 120,000 to 140,000 fans showed up for Saturdays show. This under estimation reeked havoc on parking, food and spectator space.

Bad weather entered the area overnight and the Sunday show was canceled. Rain in the preceding days had made most of the planned parking areas unusable. This added to the problems caused by such a large crowd. The crowd lines

were not organized and this caused rampant confusion as to where you could stand.

The Tuscaloosa Police Department and the many volunteers did a great job with what they had to work with but the turn out was clearly beyond their expectations. As with any first time event, unseen problems will happen and organizers can learn from errors made and make the next airshow better.

Unlike the problems with the crowds, the flying was fantastic. The day began to get better once the two KC-135 tankers flew over. Then a flyby by a B-52 and a C-17 demo dazzled the spectators. The show featured acts like the Red Eagles Pitts', Greg Koontz's Cub com-

edy act and his Super Decathlon, the T-6 Texan "Big Red" (on this Saturday it was called "Role Tide"), Michael Wiskus's Geico/Lucas Oil Pitts, the Aero-shell Aerobatic Team, 23rd Air Command's A-10 demo team, the East Coast F-18F Super Hornet demo team, the U.S. Army's Golden Knights, the U.S. Air Force jet car, a great selection of warbirds, and of course the Blue Angels.

The huge crowd didn't move from their seats until the last blue F-18 landed. The static aircraft for the crowd to walk around was outstanding; numerous planes lined the area with pilots on hand to answer questions and show off their aircraft. At this show the performers were close to the fans

which made a lasting impression on all.

After the comedy act, Greg Koontz parked his pickup, with the yellow Cub on top, in the middle of the crowd and signed autographs for the air-

show fans. Tuscaloosa has announced that in a few years they will host another airshow with the Blues as their featured act.

This year was a learning experience for all the individu-

als involved in this show. I feel that the next air show in Tuscaloosa will be ready for the large turn out.



Photos Credit: Jon Roberts



World War II Heritage Days- "Boots, Wheels, Wings, and Swing"

By: Carl Wilcox

"Watch History Come Alive" with the Commemorative Air Force's (CAF) Dixie Wing at Peachtree City, GA. Falcon Field is located just a few miles outside Atlanta but on April 18th-19th my seven year old granddaughter and I were watching young Marines on a South Pacific Island in 1944 fighting the Japanese troops. Within just a few minutes we were transported to a little town two days after D-Day where 82nd airborne troops were fighting the Germans.

Then we heard the roar of vintage aircraft, the P-51 "Red Nose" and F4U Corsair roaring over head. The crowd watched in awe as the two planes passed down the runway. On the ground



Photo Credit: Carl Wilcox



Photo Credit: Carl Wilcox

were all of the Dixie Wing's aircraft.

The list of planes was impressive, with such planes as the Kate, Soko 522 fighter-bomber, the Zero, the very rare SBD Dauntless #5, the PT-19-A, T-6 Texan (SNJ), C-45 "Bucket of Bolts", and a beautiful Harvard named "J-Bird".

Both young and old were kept busy all day with the presentations held in the

briefing hanger and the reenactments starring both men and women dressed in different uniforms of the period. The re-enactors were very knowledgeable and loved to talk about life during the war. The pilots were also quick to chat about their fantastic warbirds.

This event has grown from a one day to a two day event and it improves every year. Thanks to the many members of the Dixie Wing's CAF and the many volunteers for a great show this year. This event is a must for any history or warbird fan. As they said at the show "Watch History Come Alive" at the beautiful Falcon Field's CAF Dixie Wing.

Vidalia Onion Festival 2009

By: Carl Wilcox

The 32nd annual Vidalia Onion Festival Airshow was a huge success this year. The festival was blessed with beautiful clear skies, temperatures in the low 90's and a nice breeze. The show normally has the Blue Angles but this year the Blues were at another airshow.

The Onion Festival organizers were brilliant in recruiting such acts as; Tim Weber, Kent Pietsch's comedy act flying his Jelly Belly 1942 Interstate Cadet, Julie Clark with her beautiful T-34 Chevron Mentor, the Sky Soldiers U.S. Army Cobra helicopter precision flying team, the A-10 East Coast Demo team, U.S. Air Force jet car, a motorcycle demo team from Oklahoma City, and the headliner, Skip Stewart. Also to thrill the crowd a B-2 stealth bomber completed some nice fly-by's with the

pilot narrating the flight.

George Kline did his usual great job of keeping the show moving without a hitch. Hugh Oldham announced the show and kept the fans informed.

If you have ever seen the Sky Soldiers perform, you will agree they are awesome. The precision formation flying with four Cobra helicopters equals that of a jet team. My hat goes off to these Vietnam veterans on a job well done.

Skip did his usual great performance but had a real twist to end the show. Skip flew under a motorcycle jumping over the runway. The motorcycle flew 72 feet from ramp to ramp and gave enough room for Skip's Pitts

to go underneath. Doing this once is one thing but they did it three times.

This show was very family orientated, with a lot of fun things for the young and reasonable prices on food

and drinks. The volunteers who helped park vehicles were some of the nicest and friendliest individuals I have ever met. I look forward to going to Vidalia next year. I hope to see you there!



Photo Credit: Terry Wood, Jr.



Photo Credit: Terry Wood, Jr.



Photo Credit: Carl Wilcox

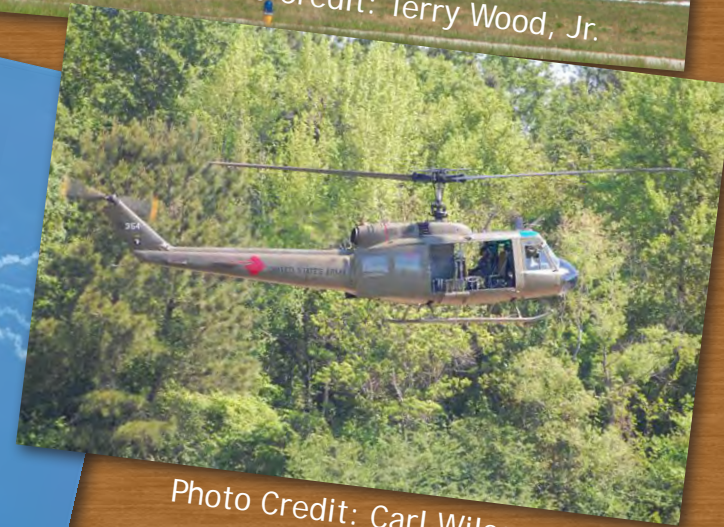


Photo Credit: Carl Wilcox

Reports from the Field
April's Airshows in Pictures & Reviews

NAF El Centro, CA

NAS Corpus Christi, TX



Photo Credit: Nathan Addison



Photo Credit: Nathan Addison



Photo Credit: Wesley Perkins



Photo Credit: Karl Rehbaum

VAC Titusville, FL



Photo Credit: Karl Rehbaum



Photo Credit: Mark Hrutkay



Photo Credit: Wesley Perkins