

# Annual Fly-In ends on high note



Kurt Ellison

Arlene Beard, of Fresno, shows her grandson, Shane Speake, 4, of Aptos, her 1928 Brunner-Winkle airplane Saturday at the 29th Watsonville

West Coast Antique Fly-In and Air Show. Beard's mother used to fly the plane and won the 1935 Cleveland Air Race in a similar aircraft.

By LARAMIE TREVINO  
STAFF WRITER

While the opportunity to own an airplane may not be available to everyone, there's no reason to pass up the chance to build one.

Children and adults alike took part in the hands-on activity of assembling aircraft parts at the 29th annual West Coast Antique Fly-In and Air Show, a three-day event which opened Friday and concluded yesterday.

Officials estimate about 20,000 people attended the Fly-In, up slightly from the last few years. But it didn't approach the 70,000-attendance mark reached in the middle 1970s when Vern Ackerman was airport manager. "They (crowds) got so big they were almost uncontrollable," he recalled.

Grand Champion honors this year went to a 1935 Speedbird owned by Buck Dodson. The red, single-engine biplane with its open cockpit was restored over a 30-year period. Fly-In director Womack said John Dodson, who worked on the plane for many years, died just as the completed aircraft was being ferried from Chico to Watsonville.

As a prelude to yesterday afternoon's air show, five World War II trainers flew above spectators in missing man formation in honor of Denny and Russ Hill, an instructional pilot from

# Crowds thrill to feats of daring in skies over Valley

FLY-IN, from page 1

San Jose who also died recently.

And even though most heads were tilted toward the slightly overcast skies where gasp-inducing stunts — especially those of the Gee Bee R-2 — commanded attention, those trying out their construction skills in the Experimental Aircraft Association complex were wrapped up in an airplane world of their own.

Particularly in the children's tent, where participants learned to make wing ribs out of spruce materials. Here, where stapling sounds nearly drowned out the roar of fighter planes, 10 pupils at a time cut, glued and penciled in their projects.

When less-than-perfect pieces resulted, as was the case with Gianna Della Maggiore, 10, of Watsonville, who sawed a little on the long side, a volunteer from San Jose chapter No. 62 readily recommended sandpaper for shortening lengths.

"They do everything themselves," said EAA club member Ray Hutchings. The EAA, who last year for the first time offered the rib-making workshop, this weekend expanded its services to displays showing how to build a composite aircraft.

Standing before the yellow fuselage of a KitFox model IV-1200, Harry Phillips seemed to have all the answers. Phillips is a factory representative with

Sky Star Aircraft Corp., manufacturers of the kit for the single-engine sport aircraft. The most common question was the length of time it took to build it (500 hours), followed by the cost (about \$19,000).

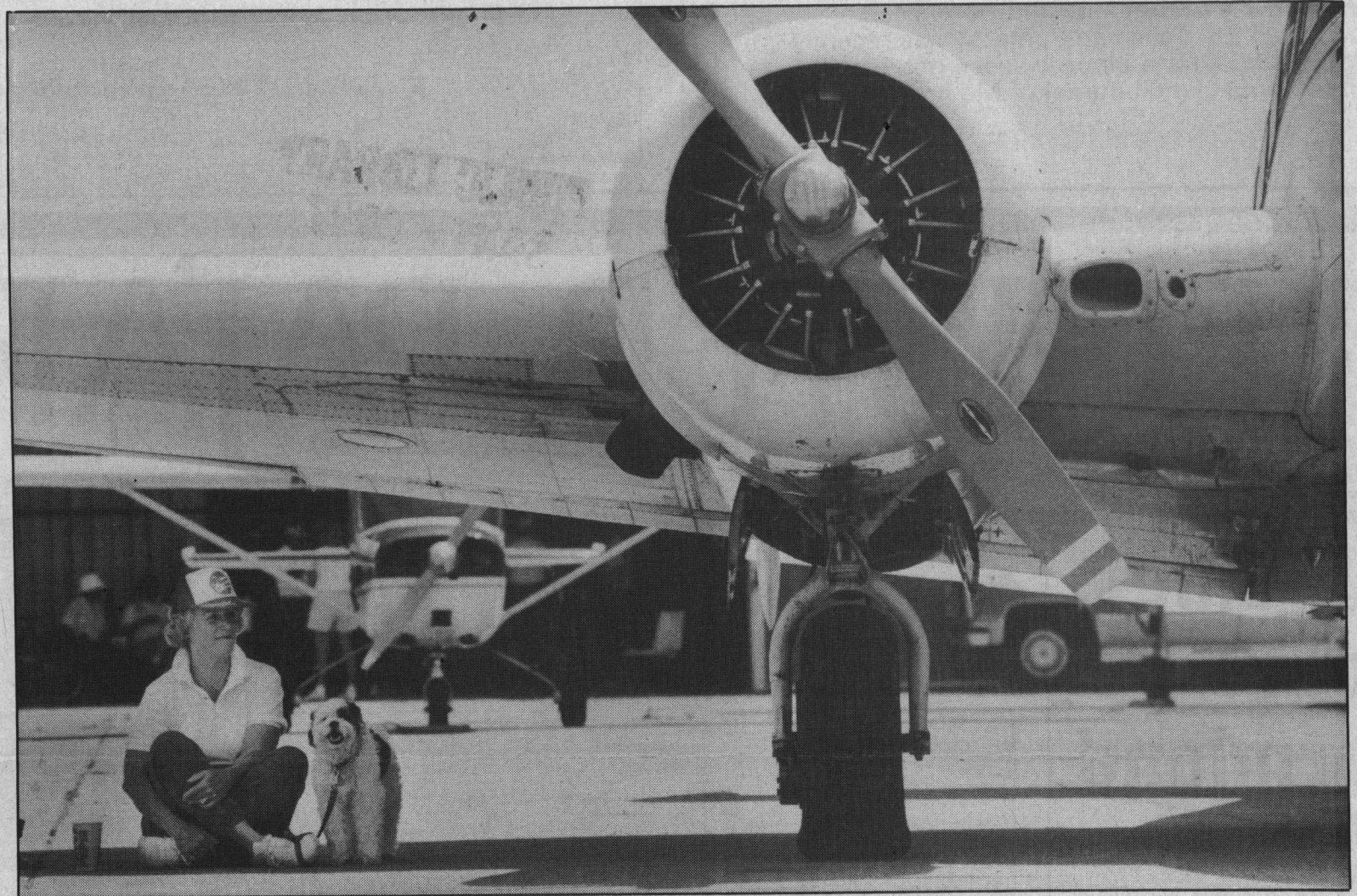
At the other EAA table, ED Moore exhibited the spars and ribs that will soon be a wing for a Wag-A-Bond, as a hobbyist pointed out the similarities with building model airplanes. "There's not much difference — it's just on a grander scale," Moore said.

Grand might be a term viewers of the dozen performers headlining the air show program might use to describe overhead action.

Amelia Reid flew upside down in her Cessna C-150 Aerobat Flight trainer until sputtering engine sounds kicked in, and Delmar Benjamin built up to a speed of more than 300 mph in his Gee Bee R-2 1932 Replica Racer in a performance that brought seated visitors to their feet.

The red and white replica "was not designed for this," the announcer exclaimed as Benjamin inverted it in flight.

Proceeds from the Fly-In, sponsored by the Northern California Antique Airplane Association, benefit the California Antique Aircraft Museum. Net profits annually range from \$15,000 to \$30,000.

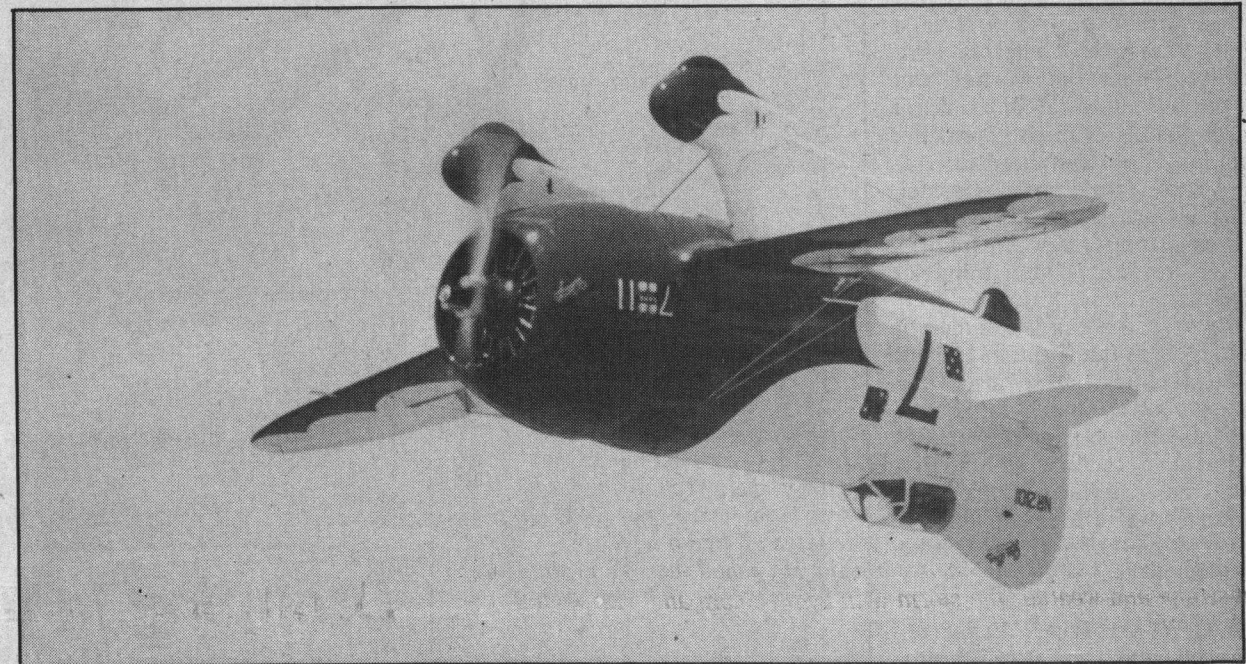


Photos by Kurt Ellison

Johnnie Ashby, of Vacaville, found some shade under a wing with pet Mr. Patches at Fly-In



Watsonville Pastor Dennis Smith enjoyed the air show with his family, from left, Daniel, 5½ months, Devony, 3, and wife, Deanna.



Delmar Benjamin, of Montana, thrilled the air show crowds with his replica 1932 Gee Bee R-2 Racer.