



Kurt Ellison

All eyes were on the heavens over the weekend at the Watsonville Fly-In & Airshow. Phil Lange, of Los Gatos, and his daughter Vanessa, 7, watched the action yesterday from the infield.

30th Fly-In soars thanks to weather

By EMILIO ALVARADO
STAFF WRITER

The 30th annual West Coast Antique Fly-in was a soaring success.

Representatives for the Fly-in said crowds on Saturday and Sunday were some of the largest in the event's 30-year history.

More Fly-In photos page 2

Fly-In officials are still compiling attendance totals, but Pam Cox, a spokeswoman for the Fly-in, said the sunny and warm weather on both Saturday and Sunday helped draw the crowds. One pilot came from as far away as Alaska. One of the oldest pilots to attend the event was 77 and one of the youngest was 14.

The event started Friday afternoon, but Sunday was the big day. The weather was perfect, with a clear, blue sky. Pilots truly could take off for the wild, blue yonder.

A large crowd inside the gates were in awe of the spectacular show, "oooh'ing" and "aaah'ing" as the planes did their stunts overhead.

This year's Fly-In featured a re-enactment of the D-Day Invasion. P-51's, B-25's, and C-47's, all used during WWII, were used to put on a pyrotechnic display in a simulation of a bombing raid, in which a bunker was destroyed. This June marks the 50th anniversary of D-Day.

Other airplanes used during WWII were also on display, including the B-24 Liberator and the B-17 Flying Fortress. A small group of WWII veterans stood next to the B-17 and told stories about these type of planes going off on raids during the war. The planes left their base under the cover of darkness and returned around 4 a.m. Some never made it back.

"It was a hell of a way to making a living, wasn't it," joked one man. They all laughed and nodded in agreement.

Another Fly-In show featured Dan Buchanan, a paraplegic who performed amazing stunts in a hang-glider. His glider was launched from a car and climbed to about 2,000 feet, trailing smoke and streamers. As it was "attacked" by a small heli-

See FLY-IN page 6 ►

FLY-IN

► From Page 1

copter, the glider launched fireworks and smoke grenades, scaring off the attacker.

There were acres of planes on display, tons of food, and booth after booth of vendors, selling everything from WWII aircraft handbooks to sunglasses.

And of course, plenty of other thrills and spills, as planes constantly flew over the crowds.

"I'm enjoying this! Are you kidding," said Ben Prichett, of Walnut Creek. "I look forward to it every year. When I get a new calendar, I circle it for the Fly-In."