

Watsonville Fly-In and Air Show gets off the runway today



A pair of Red Baron Boeing Stearman biplanes, built between 1941-43, break out of formation in order to land at Watsonville Municipal Airport on Thursday afternoon as the 40th annual Watsonville Fly-In and Air Show made preparations to take off Memorial Day weekend.

Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Ready for takeoff

By DAVE BROOKS

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

Aviation fans, get ready.

The state's longest running aviation event is preparing to touch down once more at this weekend's Watsonville Fly-In and Air Show.

This year's 40th anniversary event includes a myriad of antique planes and daredevil stunt-flying action.

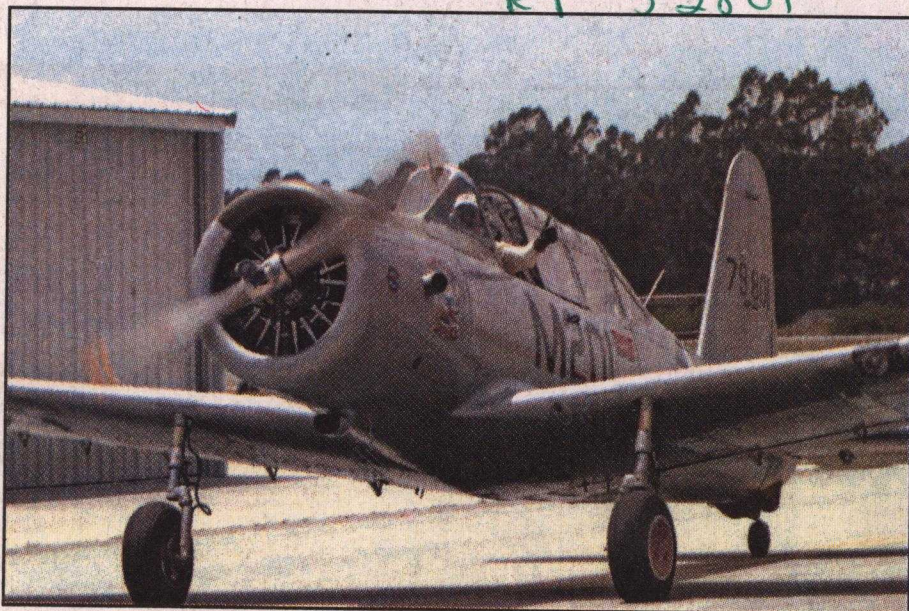
Over the last five years, the event has generated \$175,000 for local charities. This year alone, it is expected to generate \$2.7 million for the local economy.

On Thursday, Watsonville Municipal Airport was abuzz with activity as pilots touched down on the tarmac and vendors began constructing booths to sell a variety of wares including food, airplane memorabilia and other collectibles.

Aerobatics pilot Bill Stein of Aptos was one of the first performers on the ground.

"Within flight circles, this air show is

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Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Pilot Mark Klein of Pacific Grove arrives at Watsonville Municipal Airport on Thursday in his 1941 Vultee BT13 World War II trainer. The Pratt and Whitney engine has 450 horsepower.

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one of the top events in the country," Stein said. "Pilots really like coming to Watsonville. There's a real sense of hospitality and fun at these events."

This year's event also features Jacquie "Baby" Warda of Livermore, the only woman pilot scheduled to perform.

"When you're up several thousand feet in the air, it doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman," Warda said. "What matters is if you can get the job done."

This year's theme is "Salute to

Our Heroes," honoring the men and women who have served in the United States military, past and present. Besides returning acts such as Eddie Andreini and Stein, this year's event also includes new performers such as the Red Baron Pizza Squadron and the NASA Mars Rover team, and a battle between robots Galactron and Reptar.

The air show opens today at noon and runs Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages 6-12 and \$8 for military personnel. Flying today begins at 7 p.m., followed by fireworks. Weekend flying starts at noon and runs until 4 p.m. on both days. For more information, visit www.watsonvilleflyin.org.