

Flying machines ready for their close-up

By SHANNA MCCORD

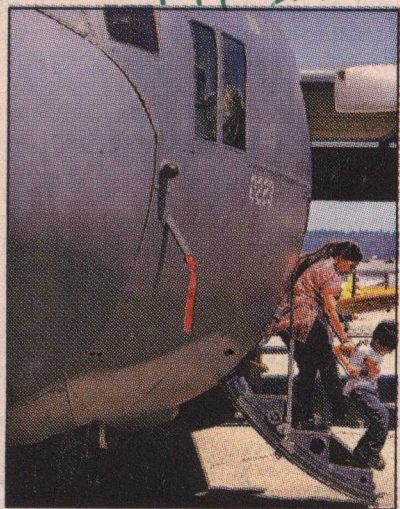
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WATSONVILLE — The tarmac of the Watsonville Municipal Airport was filled on Saturday with history buffs and those who marvel at the sight of a small plane turning circles in the sky.

The 48th annual Watsonville Fly-In and Air Show continues today with events beginning at noon.

The show started nearly five decades ago "to educate and publicize aviation history, to provide benefits to local charities and non-profit organizations and to promote the Watsonville Airport."

These days, more than anything, it gives folks a chance to



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Two spectators exit a military C-130 based at the 48th Annual Watsonville Fly-In & Air Show on Saturday.



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A spectator inspects an airplane's propeller at the 48th Annual Watsonville Fly-In & Air Show on Saturday.

SEE FLY-IN ON C7



Pilot Vicky Benzing of Watsonville performs aerobatics during the 48th Annual Watsonville Fly-In & Air Show on Saturday.

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FLY-IN

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see planes up close, and in several cases sit inside some of them.

The Marine Corps brought two CH-46 helicopters to the show and allowed children to climb into the cockpit and touch the controls.

The Air Force invited showgoers to explore the belly of a giant C-130 that's based at Moffett Field in Mountain View for search and rescue missions. Normally, the C-130 serves as a military cargo plane, Staff Sgt. Eduardo Perez said.

"We like to visit with the community and show them what we're about," Perez said. "They like to see what we do."

Historians enjoy seeing the large number of military planes from the World War I and II era parked on the tarmac.

Yuba City resident Bill



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Spectators cheer as a pilot lands Saturday at the 48th Annual Watsonville Fly-In & Air Show.

Hartman, 67, served in the Air Force 35 years ago as an instructional pilot.

After a long career as a commercial pilot when he left the Air Force, Hartman purchased

a classic World War II aircraft called the Navy SNJ.

The SNJ is an advanced

trainer plane that seats two, and was used by pilots before they advanced to front line fighting.

Hartman's single-engine, 600-horsepower plane was built in 1945 near the end of the war.

He says he takes it out about once a week.

"It's a challenge to fly in formation and that's what I like," Hartman said. "It's a great plane. Hundreds of these exist for civilians."

Dennis and Sandra Whipple of Salinas say airshows are a great way to pay tribute to military veterans. The couple dressed in military clothing from the 1920s and 30s.

Sandra Whipple wore a brown leather bomber jacket and white silk scarf with a leather hat and goggles.

Proudly, she carried her father's worn khaki knapsack from World War II.

"It's just our way of honoring those who were there," she said. "It's keeping the past alive."

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