



Todd Guild/Register-Pajaronian  
Stunt pilot John Collver stands in the cockpit of his North American AT-6/SNJ after performing for the crowd.

# Fly-In & Air Show a success despite clouds, cold

## Visitors gather for events; organizers hope show generates funds

By TODD GUILD  
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When Capt. Monica "Moose" Marusceac fired up the engines of her AV-8B Harrier jump jet Sunday afternoon, the ground shook, conversation became impossible and many people plugged their ears. When they weren't cheering and clapping, that is.

It was the moment that many of the attendees of the

45th annual Watsonville Fly-In & Air Show had been waiting for. The Harrier roared down the runway and into the sky, twice circling around to shriek by the crowd at mind-numbing speed.

On the third pass, however, Marusceac slowed the jet to hover just 50 feet over the tarmac. The Harrier was built with powerful engines to allow for vertical takeoff and land-

ing.

"Man, that rattled my fillings," said Ed Drewman, 73, who says he's been coming to airshows "pretty darn near all my life."

Drewman, who served in the Air Force, splurged on a biplane ride for a view of the ocean.

"Also, being up there reminded me of the old days," he said.

The chilly air and the low-lying clouds, which stayed at 1,500 feet for most of the day Sunday, canceled most of the planned skydiving demonstrations. Still, nearly all of the other demonstrations were on schedule, and thousands of people attended the show.

More visitors came on Saturday than the same day last

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ABOVE: Monica "Moose" Marusceac lifts off in her AV-8B Harrier jump jet at the Watsonville Fly-In & Air Show Sunday. BELOW: Four "warbirds" — training planes from World War II — fly in formation above the crowd.



## FLY-IN

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year, said Theo Wierdsma, executive director of the Watsonville Fly-In & Air Show. He also expected Sunday's attendance to help generate needed funds.

"I think we'll end up in the black, which is huge," he said.

Wierdsma said that the ailing economy discouraged some sponsors from participating in the show, but pointed out that many people have responded by putting off vacations, choosing instead to attend local events such as the Fly-In.

"The recession works both ways," he said.

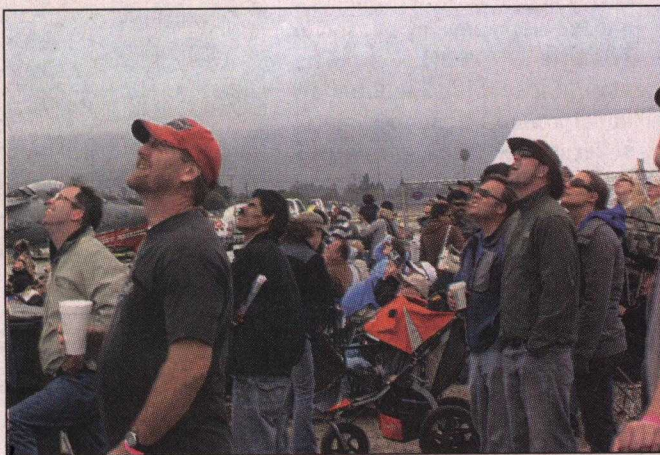
Organizers this year added a lecture series that took place in the Experimental Aircraft Association building, and Wierdsma said it was well attended.

"We're expanding in different directions, and we're doing well," he said.

Money raised through the airshow goes toward charitable events, such as the Girl Scouts and scholarships, Wierdsma said.

"We want to be able to contribute to the community," he said.

The morning began with a



Todd Guild/Register-Pajaronian  
Spectators watch as the AV-8B Harrier jump jet streaks overhead. Thousands attended the 45th annual Watsonville Fly-In & Air Show despite cold weather and cloudy skies.

half-dozen P-51 Mustangs firing up their large, loud engines and flying in formation for several passes over the airport.

Later, stunt pilot Vicki Benzing performed a series of gravity- and logic-defying rolls, twists and dives that would have torn a normal airplane to shreds.

Tim Decker and airshow favorite Eddie Andreini also dazzled the crowd with their aerobatics, their planes climbing to seemingly impossible heights, then briefly hanging motionless in the air before dropping back

toward earth at speeds exceeding 200 miles per hour.

"I thought they were going to crash for sure," said 10-year-old Jamie Cooper, who was clutching an autograph book in his hands, hoping to get as many pilot signatures as he could.

Cooper added that he wants to be a pilot when he grows up, and has already begun investigating how he can begin his pilot training as early as possible.

"I love looking down at the earth from a plane," he said. "I would love to be in control of that up there."