

Fighter jets open air show

Fly-In

RP 9.4.10



ABOVE: Pilot Ken Bohrman flies a 1945 BT-13 Vultee Valiant over New Brighton Beach in Capitola Friday on the opening day of the 46th annual Watsonville Fly-In and Air Show. The Fly-In and Air Show runs today and Sunday at Watsonville Municipal Airport. **BELOW:** Students from Freedom Elementary School get a sneak preview of a Bear 360 airplane.

46th annual Watsonville Fly-In and Air Show opens to clear skies

By TODD GUILD

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

J.B. Cox claimed a seat on the main runway at the Watsonville Fly-In and Air Show soon after it opened Friday afternoon and sat astride his electric scooter watching a handful of vintage, custom and military planes taking off and landing.

Cox, 78, said he has been taking the trip from Sacramento to see the air show for the past 30 years.

"I love old planes, I love old cars, and I love old women," he said. "I love to watch 'em all."

"... As far as planes go, if it don't have a propeller, I still don't know how it flies," he added.

The 46th annual Watsonville Fly-in and Air Show was moved to Labor Day Weekend last year after 10 years of cloudy weather hindered the performances, and organizers banked on the fairer weather that often comes with late



summer on the Central Coast, air show spokesman Theo Wierdsma said.

Low-lying fog early Friday morning briefly worried fly-in officials, but the clouds disappeared by 10 a.m.

Watsonville residents got an early taste of the cacophony that comes along with the air

show when an FA-18 Eagle jet shrieked overhead, performing a 10-minute aerobatic show before soaring into the sky. Earlier that day, an AV-8B Harrier jump jet, a military fighter capable of vertical takeoff, came in for a landing.

The Harrier screamed into the airport at breakneck speed,

which is not an unusual feat for a military fighter jet. As it approached the runway, the jet slowed to a stop and hovered about 75 feet above the tarmac, its screaming engines shaking the ground. It then slowly touched down with a bump.

Maj. David Slay, who piloted the plane, said it is used primarily for "close air support" of ground troops, meaning that he's available to drop a bomb or do a strafing run if his fellow Marines get into a bind.

"It does that job very well," Slay said.

Slay said he was a helicopter pilot before he began to fly the Harrier, and so learning to hover was not a challenge for him.

Slay said he has been in the U.S. Marines for 12 years, and became a pilot because he wanted to "shoot stuff from the sky and support the Marines," he said.



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

ABOVE: Fly-in judge Tony Gaidos of Santa Cruz inspects a Curtiss Jr. experimental plane.

FLY-IN

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"It was loud!" Joaquin Darbro, 10, said of the Harrier, who said he had no idea the jet would be landing.

Darbro bragged that he had just sat in the cockpit of a World War II B-25 bomber, which is on display on the runway. He was also excited about the shell from the vintage plane's 50-caliber cannons he had purchased.

Lisa and John Bono had taken the day off to come to the show.

"We've always wanted to do this ever since we lived in Santa Cruz," Lisa Bono said. "It's the perfect way to spend the day."

Famed biplane pilot Eddie Andreini, who will be performing in the show, said he learned to fly when he was 16, and bought his first plane a year later. He's spent his life as a pilot.

"I've flown everything, 40 or 50 different types of planes," he said.

Andreini plans to wow audiences by cutting a ribbon suspended in the air with the tail of his biplane. He said he's one of only a few pilots in the world who do the maneuver.

"It's very exciting," he said about performing in air shows. "You're doing something that not everybody does, and that people enjoy seeing. It's rewarding to do something that people enjoy so much."

Tony Gaidos, who is a judge for the vintage airplanes on display, said the show has a lot to offer for aircraft enthusiasts.

A pilot himself, Gaidos is a member of the Experimental Aircraft Association, and has



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Russ Gilmore of Arizona poses in the cockpit of a 1943 B-25 gunship bomber. Rides are available on the World War II craft. Call (408) 322-5503 for information.

taken about 260 children on flights as part of that organization's Young Eagles program.

"I just love airplanes," said Gaidos, 79. "I've been a nut

about them since I was 10."

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For information and a schedule, visit www.watsonvilleairshow.org.

Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

TOP LEFT: As an FA-18 from the 125 Rough Raiders squadron of Naval Air Station Lemoore screams across the sky, a cloud of moisture begins to separate from the craft due to the jet's intense speed. **ABOVE:** Antique planes, war birds and modern-day military aircraft are aligned at Watsonville Municipal Airport as the Fly-In and Air Show gets under way.

Watsonville Tonight