

Saturday Showoffs



"MOJAVE IS WHERE you come to drink cool jet juice," says Cam Martin, a glider pilot and external affairs liaison at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center, eyeing the menu at Mojave Air and Spaceport's Voyager restaurant. "All over this airport, there's magical stuff hiding in hangars."

Not many are hiding on this November day: It's Plane Crazy Saturday. "Everybody's got their projects tucked away in hangars, and this is the one time a month they get dusted off," says Zach Reeder, a project engineer at Scaled Composites. "We screw the cowling on, roll the planes out, and everyone

else gets to look at them."

The result is an aviation theme park. Scattered around the ramp are a pair of North American T-28 World War II trainers, a silver North American F-86 Sabre, a Grumman S-2 Tracker, vintage Cessnas, a Pitts Special, and, looking like a beached whale, a 1947 Republic Seabee amphibian—designated the Plane of the Month by Plane Crazy organizers, who decide what aircraft type will star and then put out the call for owners to fly in.

The event, which began in 2009, owes its beginnings to a provision in California's tax code that exempts

(Left to right) The Boersma family admires an F-86; a 1947 Republic Aviation Seabee amphibian holds court on the flightline; Sophia Parker sizes up a Pitts Special.

vintage aircraft from property taxes if they are publicly displayed 12 times a year. "I have volunteer DNA, so some pilots asked me to organize something to take advantage of that," says Cathy Hansen, whose husband keeps several warbirds at Mojave. She devised a flexible tradition that showcases the featured aircraft along with pilots, artists, authors and book signings, and airport tours.

Most visitors work in the area's aerospace industries, or are cognoscenti drawn by

the chance to inspect the hardware and hangar-fly with the Mojave tribe. "This is the last bastion of cowboy flying," says former test pilot Dick Rutan, an event regular. Says artist Mike Machat, "It's like coming home, sharing with pilots and people who speak the same language, who get aviation." Amanda Deng, a 20-something mechanical engineer, shows admirers her tattoos of Burt Rutan designs and the North American X-15.

At previous Plane Crazyes, Orbital Sciences has displayed the Lockheed L-1011 TriStar the company uses to air-launch its Pegasus rocket. Al Hansen rolled out his F-100F Super Sabre one month, and a MiG-21 the next. Masten Space Systems brought out its Xombie lunar lander. Last year, Scaled Composites trumped them all by rolling out *WhiteKnightTwo*—with *SpaceShipTwo* attached.

■ ■ ■ CHAD SLATTERY

UPDATE

Oh, Never Mind

When a Canadian civilian search-and-rescue team in a Cessna 172 joined a Canadian Forces C-130 in a search for the emergency locator transmitter broadcasting in the Regina area of Saskatchewan last October, the -172 pilot reported that the distress signal seemed to be moving. He returned to the -172's hangar to switch to a ground-homing search, and noticed that the signal intensified—particularly when an employee walked by with a package a courier had just delivered. You guessed it: The package contained an older ELT that lacked an on/off switch, and the sender had not removed the battery. As reported in "Lost in America" (Oct./Nov. 2011), 97 percent of ELT activations are caused by hard landings, careless mechanics, or a rough ride on a delivery truck.