

Planes of Fame 50th Anniversary Show



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The Planes of Fame Airshow 2007 was held May 19-20 in Chino, California. This was the museum's 50th anniversary show, and consisted of essentially *all* fighters and bombers. There were no trainer flights, and only one wing-walking act (Margi Stivers, who has spent about 300 hours dangling *outside* of flying airplanes) and one aerobatic routine (Rob Harrison and his tumbling Zlin 50).

Many new buildings/hangars
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have been constructed at the Chino airport since last year's show. Former grass areas are now paved over, making more room for vendors and static displays. There was also a new configuration for the "hot ramp." This was one of the coolest Chinos (weather-wise) in the past 20 years. No feet stuck in bubbling blacktop this year. Mornings and evenings were relatively cool, and showtime was just perfect.

The museum is home to one of the largest collections of warbirds

in the world, about 30 of which are flyable. The museum's inventory lists more than 150 machines, covering the spectrum of aviation... World War I and World War II aircraft, jets, missiles, drones, gliders, racers, and replicas. The aircraft are divided between the Chino, California, museum and the Valle, Arizona, facility, which is located south of the Grand Canyon.

The Planes of Fame Air Museum was founded by Ed Maloney, who started collecting warbirds in the late



Lineup of aircraft on Chino ramp from WWII to today.

1940s before Lloyd Nolen and friends began scrounging for aircraft that eventually became the Confederate Air Force (now the Commemorative Air Force). This was even before Paul Poberezny began annual fly-ins at a small field near Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which eventually evolved into EAA AirVenture Oshkosh.

Maloney's first "find" was in a junkyard, where he discovered parts of a Japanese J8M1 Shusui Sword Stroke

Major aircraft at the show included the following:

- P-38F, NX17630 *Glacier Girl*, Rod Lewis
- P-38J, NX138AM *23 Skidoo*, Planes of Fame
- P-38L, NL7723C, Jack Croul
- P-40N, NL85104, Planes of Fame
- P-40E, NX940AK, Tony Banta
- P-47G, NX3395G *Spirit of Atlantic City NJ*, Planes of Fame
- P-47D, NX47DF, WestPAC
- P-51D, N2580 *Six Shooter*, Chuck Hall
- P-51D, NL7722C, Jack Croul
- P-51D, NL7715C *Wee Willy II*, Steve Hinton
- P-51D, N71FT *Strega*, Bill Destefani
- P-51 (CA-18), N64824 *Speedball Alice*, Dan Vance
- P-51 (CA-18), N51AB *Flying Dutchman*, Steve Craig
- P-51D, NL451TB *Kimberly Kaye*, Tony Banta
- P-51TF, NL327DB *Lady Jo*, Daryl Bond
- P-51D, N151MW *Lady Alice*, Ken Wagner
- P-51C, N487FS *Princess Elizabeth*, Jim Beasley
- P-51D, NL5441V *Spam Can*, Planes of Fame
- P-63A, NX163BP *Pretty Polly*, Bob Pond
- Spitfire Mk IX, NX2TF, Tom Friedkin
- Sea Hurricane Mk X, NX33TF, Tom Friedkin
- Fury, N19SF *Argonaut*, Sanders Aircraft
- A6M5 Zero, NX46770, Planes of Fame
- A6M3 Zero, N712Z, CAF
- PT-22, N48742 *269*, CAF
- F3F-2, N20FG, Tom Friedkin
- FM-2, N86572, Tom Camp
- FM-2, N29FG, Tom Friedkin
- F6F-5, N1078Z, CAF
- F6F-3, NX30FG, Tom Friedkin
- F8F-2, NX224RD, Ray Dieckman
- F8F-2, N198F, Tom Friedkin
- F4U-1, NX83782, Planes of Fame
- FG-1D, NX106FG, Provenance Fighter Sales
- F7F-3N, NX805MB *Big Bossman*, Mike Brown
- SBD-5, NX670AM, Planes of Fame
- TBM-3E, N28SF, Chuck Wentworth
- VAL, NX67629 (replica), Planes of Fame
- B-17G, N9563Z *Fuddy Duddy*, William Lyons
- B-25J, NL25GL *Guardian of Freedom*, William Lyons
- B-25J, N3675G *Photo Fanny*, Planes of Fame
- B-25J, N9856C *Pacific Princess*, Ted Itano
- B-25J, NL9117Z *In the Mood*, WestPAC
- C-46F, N53594 *China Doll*, CAF
- AD-6, NX39606, Warbird Aircraft
- T-33, NX6633D, Planes of Fame
- F-86F, NX186AM, Planes of Fame
- MiG-15, NX87CN, Planes of Fame
- CAC-25 Wirraway, Mark Awad



**Kevin Eldridge is the pilot in P-38L
23 Skidoo for a flyby.**

(based on the German Messerschmitt Me-163 Komet). Of seven J8M1s built in 1945, this is the sole survivor. Maloney stored the aircraft in his backyard until 1957, when he opened his first museum in Claremont, California, on historic Route 66.

His search for the Boeing P-26 Peashooter, the last open-cockpit, fixed-landing gear fighter in the U.S. Army Air Forces, led him to Guatemala. He recalled that the longshoremen had to heave coffee bags out of the hold of the ship before the airplane could be unloaded. The Smithsonian has the only other P-26 known to exist. Unfortunately, the Peashooter didn't fly in the show, though it did last year for the first time in 25 years.

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The museum's rare Seversky P-35 (the two-seat version, AT-12 Guardsman) is part of the P-47 Thunderbolt lineage...P-35 to AT-12 to P-43 Lancer to P-47 Thunderbolt. The museum's P-47G was literally on the verge of becoming scrap when Maloney found it. The museum's F4U-1D Corsair is the oldest airworthy Corsair in existence, having served in the southwest Pacific. While serving with the Royal Canadian Air Force, the P-40N shot down one of the explosive-laden balloons the Japanese sent across the Pacific to start fires in the forests of the Pacific Northwest.

The collection contains many more rare and unique aircraft, in-

cluding the only known surviving Mitsubishi J2M3 Raiden Jack, the Messerschmitt Me-109G Gustav, and the only surviving Ryan FR-1 Fireball. Someone noted that Fireball isn't a name that instills a lot of confidence in a pilot! The wreckage of a Mitsubishi G4M1 Betty bomber is displayed in a jungle crash setting.

The Northrop N9M (Northrop, Model 9, Mockup) flying wing is another rarity. In 1942, Northrop built four third-scale N9M prototype wings to test the wing concept prior to the construction of the XB-35 bomber. In 1948, the piston-powered B-35's jet successor, the B-49, broke every aeronautical record in its class. In spite of this, Northrop's flying wing



P-51C *Princess Margaret* was purchased from the Fighter Collection in the UK after going through a complete rebuild by Jim Beasley.

bomber contracts were canceled and the 11 YB-49 bombers in final assembly were scrapped by the Air Force following the government's decision to produce the Consolidated Vultee B-36 instead. The N9M (aka the Flying Razor Blade) didn't fly in the show because of a recent engine fire. It's currently under repair.

A Japanese Aichi D3A2 Val dive bomber is slowly being restored to flying status, as is a Bell P-59 Airacomet. The P-59 will be the oldest airworthy jet when completed. After 15 years of effort, it might be ready for the 2008 show. A second cockpit, which was added in front of the pilot in the 1940s to give VIPs a jet flight experience, has been removed. Funds are being solicited to restore the B-17 *Piccadilly Lilly* to airworthy condition. The plane hasn't flown since 1975. A North American O-47 is also in restoration to fly.

The show included an outstanding collection of aircraft. It was perhaps the best representation of World War

II aircraft at any air show in many, many years. In addition to three P-38s, it included the Grumman F3F

Little Cat, Wildcat, Hellcat, Tigercat, Bearcat, plus four B-25s, 11 P-51s and pairs of P-47s (bubble and razorback),



***Glacier Girl* P-38F was flown by Steve Hinton.**



The museum's original A6Ms Zero, it's the only one in the world flying with its original Sakai engine!

P-40s, Wildcats, Hellcats, Bearcats, Corsairs, and Zeros. If the museum's P-26, P-35, P-51A, and N9M flew as they did last year, it would have been the best show ever! Aircraft were taxiing in front of the crowd, or making flybys, almost continuously. There was very little dead time.

Some of the aircraft in the preceding list didn't fly in the show, including the P-51C *Princess Elizabeth*, P-51D *Strega*, the CAF Southern California Wing C-46F, and the CAF Inland Empire Wing Ryan PT-22. The PT-22 must always be included in any list of fighters because some Ryans used in South

America were fitted with .30-caliber machine guns in the wings. According to pilots, "They made great fighters." All the nooks and crannies on the ramp were filled with aircraft: SNJ/AT-6s, T-28s, Navions, L-Birds, Stearman, Beech Staggerwings, current military (two F-15s, two F/A-18s), a



Just a few of the aircraft parked on Chino's ramp.



A pair of P-38Ls at rest on the Chino ramp.

good assortment of restored helicopters, and assorted strays.

The featured attraction this year was three Lockheed P-38 Lightnings, all of the airworthy P-38s in the world at the time. They flew in formations of three and two and singly, did rolls and chandelles, and overall gave an exceedingly graceful performance. The P-38, powered by two turbo-supercharged Allison V-1710 engines, was the first USAAF fighter with twin tail booms and tricycle landing gear. It served in all theaters of the war and was the favored mount of the two top American aces: Dick Bong (40 victories) and Tommy McGuire (38 victories).

The most famous of the three P-38s present was the multiple-award-winning P-38F *Glacier Girl*. Force-landed on a glacier in Greenland in 1942 and recovered from 268 feet down in the ice in 1992, this historic aircraft returned to the air in 2002 after a 10-year multimillion-dollar restoration by Bob Cardin, which was financed by Roy Shoffner. Since then, it has been displayed by Steve Hinton before hundreds of thousands of people at air shows around the United

States. Provenance Fighter Sales purchased the Lightning in 2006, and it was then purchased by Texas-based warbird collector Rod Lewis in 2007. It was scheduled to fly to England in June over its originally intended route, but engine problems just out of Goose Bay caused the trip to be sadly (but safely) aborted.

Jack Croul's silver P-38L NL7723C made its post-restoration debut at this air show after a thorough restoration by WestPac. This Lightning has been through many owners over the years, including Junior Burchinal, John Silberman, William Lyons, and David Price, before being purchased by Croul in 2005. It was flown by



Every flyable P-38 in the world in the air together at Chino.



Heritage Flight F-19 flown by Maj. Al Kennedy, P-38F *Glacier Girl* flown by Steve Hinton, and P-51D *Six Shooter* flown by Chuck Hall.

Jeff Harris during the air displays and looked really sharp in formation with the two olive drab P-38s.

Planes of Fame has owned the P-38J *23 Skidoo* since 1962. It was previously owned by Jack Hardwick. It was on static display at the museum for 25 years until a complete restoration was started in 1987. Since its first post-restoration flight in July of 1988, it has been one of the most frequently seen Lightnings around the air-show circuit for the past 19 years, flying for most of that time as *Joltin' Josie*.

A fourth Lightning, Ron Fagen's P-38L *Ruff Stuff*, returned to the skies in July in Minnesota, and two other P-38s will be flying again soon. Florida-based Tom Blair's P-38L N9005R is having a thorough IRAN (inspect and repair as necessary) and hopefully will be back in the skies by the end of the year, reportedly with a new olive-drab-over-grey paint scheme. Nelson Ezell's shop is working full time on Red Bull Aviation's P-38L N25Y, which should be finished within the next year.

Dennis Bergstrom's *Gallant War-*
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riors directory of surviving warbirds lists four P-38s as airworthy, with five more under restoration to fly and 25 in museums or storage for a total of 34 survivors out of 9,923 P-38s produced. The last time three P-38s flew together was at Mojave, California, about 30 years go.

The show opened each day with a rare Grumman Ironworks missing man formation, consisting of the F3F Little Cat, FM-2 Wildcat, F6F Hellcat, F7F Tigercat, F8F Bearcat, and TBM Avenger. Well, the Avenger was a General Motors manufacture, but the design was Grumman! The crowd loved it. The Tigercat aborted his takeoff on Saturday, but took part on Sunday.

The flybys were low, fast, and curved close around the crowd, showing the topside of the planes. Almost every pass was a "photo pass." The Pacific air battle segment had the Spitfire, Hurricane, Wildcat, Hellcat, Corsair, Dauntless, P-38, P-40, and P-51 using the two hapless Zeros as targets. The replica Val and Zeros made nice "Pearl Harbor" attacks (could have used some pyro!). The F-86 Sabre and MiG-15 flew

some very tight formation flybys, and then very fast/close tail chasing. Dennis Sanders' routine with smoke generators on the Sanders' Fury *Argonaut* was great fun to watch.

The show had some "special moments," as every show does. As Tom Friedkin's F8F Bearcat taxied past the crowd, he suddenly spun around in a 360! The crowd erupted into applause and cheers. Great idea. The B-17 *Fuddy Duddy* was attacked by a huge turkey buzzard on Saturday and didn't fly in the Sunday show. The bird impact made a 6-by-12-inch hole/dent in the leading edge of the right wing, midway between the No. 4 engine and the wingtip.

As a marshaller pulled the chocks from the P-38 *23 Skidoo*, the prop wash sucked his straw hat into the prop, and it exploded like a burst hay bale! Kurt Jolson, Luftwaffe pilot, related some of his World War II experiences. He said pilots were told they had to fly until they received either a wooden cross or the iron cross. He received two iron crosses, but still had to continue flying.

The mass gaggle warbird flyover (no trainers) was very, very impres-



Remains of a Mitsubishi G4 MI Betty bomber in the museum's Japanese aircraft hangar. All aircraft are potential rebuilds.



This wooden replica of a German He-100 was called the "propaganda fighter." Only 15 were built that never saw action, and none are in existence today.

sive. It consisted of 27 planes on Saturday (23 on Sunday), including one four-engine plane (B-17), eight twin-engine planes (three P-38s, four B-25s, F7F), and 18 single-engine planes, for a total of 38 throbbing warbird engines strung out over 2 miles. That's like having more than 60,000 horses galloping overhead! These flights aren't very conducive

to photos, but it's almost orgasmic to watch them. The museum estimated that the fuel cost for the mass flyby event was \$12,000 to \$15,000!

The USAF Heritage Flight and the USN Tailhook Legacy Flight were both flown. These are flights that feature modern combat fighters flying in formation with fighters from World War II, Korea, or Vietnam. The Heri-

tage Flight paired an F-16 with Chuck Hall's P-51 *Six Shooter* and the P-38 *Glacier Girl*. The Tailhook Legacy Flight featured an F/A-18 Hornet with Ray Dieckman's F8F Bearcat. These flights never fail to impress the crowds.

Plan to make the Planes of Fame show a *must* next year: May 17-18, 2008. You won't be disappointed. It's *all warbirds!*

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