



# Gathering of Mustangs and Legends Is an Event for the Ages

More than 150,000 flock to Columbus

BY BILL FISCHER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EAA WARBIRDS OF AMERICA

It was Thursday morning. As I unloaded supplies from my truck, raindrops began to splatter on the tarmac. The rain began slowly, but within a minute I could tell we were in for a real soaker. I closed the truck door and took shelter in the walled tent. At least I could set up our display under cover. Fifteen minutes went by and I could tell the rain wasn't letting up. The water was beginning to flow swiftly toward the drains on the tarmac. I glanced down at the legs of a folding chair. The water was now 2 inches deep! As I gazed outside, the running water made it look as if I was aboard a boat, cruising down the Mississippi River. What a way to start an air show! After sitting on top of a folding table for a half-hour, the rain finally subsided and I could walk about without fear of getting washed

downstream. Fortunately, things improved later that afternoon. I was able to finish setting up the EAA Warbirds of America tent and get things ready for a very busy weekend.

Rickenbacker International Airport in Columbus, Ohio, was the host for the Gathering of Mustangs and Legends—The Final Roundup. Event organizer Lee Lauderback and his staff at Stallion 51 Corp. put together an outstanding program. The goal was to assemble as many P-51 Mustangs and living legends as possible for the purpose of celebrating those remarkable men and machines. Stallion 51 had coordinated a previous gathering back in 1999 in Kissimmee, Florida. This time, the scope was much larger.

Upon arrival, I was impressed by the overall size of the aircraft parking area—all paved. It certainly had

advantages, especially considering Thursday's downpour. No mud to deal with. As an active military base, Rickenbacker airport was able to handle all the Mustangs along with other warbird fighters and bombers. Add to that the U.S. Air Force inventory, which included the B-52, C-5, C-17, KC-135, C-130, A-10, F-15, F-16 (and a B-2 flyover), and you had an awesome display of military might from the 1940s to the present. The USAF headliners were, of course, the Thunderbirds.

A wide variety of vendors and exhibits added to the mix. There were displays by the Women Air Service Pilots (WASP), Tuskegee Airmen, a USAF 60th anniversary exhibit, and many others. Long lines were common at the souvenir tents as Mustang enthusiasts shopped for that special memento.



BRADY LANE PHOTOS

Approximately 77 P-51s made it to the event, which drew more than 150,000 spectators.



The soft dawn light reflects off the metallic surface of a Mustang.



*Old Crow, Crazy Horse, Gentleman Jim, and Miss Marilyn II* form over Columbus, Ohio, during the event.

JIM BUSHA

EAA Warbirds of America was proud to participate in the 2007 Gathering of Mustangs and Legends. Early in the planning stages, discussions were held with the Stallion 51 staff. It was clear that experienced volunteers would be needed to help move aircraft and coordinate activities on the flightline. As usual, EAA Warbirds of America members stepped up to the plate and volunteered by the dozen. Rhonda Tesch, the Mustang flightline leader at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, took on similar duties in Columbus. It took an army of volunteers to move all those Mustangs! Some of the other contribu-

tions by EAA Warbirds of America were virtually unnoticed—but important to the event. Consider aircraft chocks. Where can you get hundreds of sets of chocks in one spot? Oshkosh, of course. Loaded in the back of my truck was a pair of bins, filled to the lid with more than 400 chocks. Upon arrival at Rickenbacker airport, the chocks were quickly and neatly distributed along the flightline.

On Friday morning, I arrived before sunrise at the field. Two reasons: One, to beat the crowds, and two, to get photographs while taking advantage of the soft early-morning light.

I'm glad I did. In order to enter

through the vendors' gate with my truck, I had to go through a thorough security check. A bomb-sniffing dog worked its way around the truck, its tail wagging as the officer led the way. The dog took mild interest in my empty McDonald's bag. No bomb there—just a wrapper from my sausage biscuit. After a few minutes, the officer gave the okay to proceed through the gate.

The flightline had filled a bit more since the previous day's afternoon, but still there seemed to be a lot of empty space. The word on the flightline was that many Mustangs were still waiting for weather to clear before making the final leg



BRADY LANE

The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds dazzled the crowds during the air show. They were equally impressive parked on the ramp before sunrise.



BRADY LANE

People gather to hear Clyde East share a story of flying the P-51 during World War II. East flew a Mustang during the D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944.

28 DECEMBER 2007

to Columbus. Soon the general public was streaming through the gates. By 8 a.m. it was time to report to the EAA Warbirds of America tent and open up for the day. As I made my way across the flightline, I waved to the group of volunteers who were huddled around a tractor—Wayne, Claude, Bill, John, Chuck, Tom, Rhonda, and scores of others.

Joining me in the EAA Warbirds of America tent was our president, Rick Siegfried. Between the two of us, we met with hundreds of members and prospective members. One thing that seemed to be a common thread among all of the people we talked to was the excitement and enthusiasm of being part of such an event. One member described it as “being just like Woodstock, only for airplanes.” Well, I really had to think about drawing similarities between Woodstock and “The Gathering.” I didn’t see too many hippies or rock stars in Columbus. But I did see thousands of people having a good time, being



BRADY LANE

**Barbara Telling polishes Lady B, a P-51 owned by her husband, Fred, WB 21203.**



BRADY LANE

**The Patillo brothers, Buck (l) and Bill (r), sign a spectator's poster. Both brothers flew the Mustang in combat and later were members of the original Thunderbirds aerial demonstration team in 1953.**

entertained by some of the best in the industry.

By lunchtime on Friday there was a steady influx of aircraft—a flight of four P-51s cruised overhead in formation, followed by a perfect break and landings. It was an awesome sight. You could feel the excitement in the air. A lone B-17 arrived, followed by a B-25. Later in the afternoon a pair of P-38 Lightnings zoomed overhead. It was *Glacier Girl* and *Ruff Stuff*, a pair

of Oshkosh favorites. The Cavanaugh Flight Museum represented the transport ranks with their C-47. Parked next to it was the Avro Lancaster from the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum. With the number and variety of warbirds on the ramp, the volunteers were busy as bees. Gators, golf carts, and tractors were running continuously back and forth around the ramp helping move both man and machine.

By Saturday, the flightline was filled with history makers. The final count of Mustangs in attendance was 77. By all accounts it was a very respectful number. More important, however, were the veterans who flew the P-51s for their original purpose—combat. I was very impressed by the outpouring of appreciation and respect given to the veterans. There were handshakes, thank-yous, and even a few tears shed. EAA Warbirds of America joins in saluting all the veterans who participated in the Gathering of Mustangs and Legends. In addition, the lineup included The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds, who flew each day, delighting the crowds with their precision routines. Heads turned skyward and people rushed to the flightline as the first Thunderbird streaked overhead, announcing their arrival. Along with the Thunderbirds, a series of Heritage Flights were part of the Air Force presence—helping demonstrate U.S. military air power through the ages.

Civilian warbirds also made their share of noise and smoke. The Red Baron Stearmans and AeroShell T-6s performed their great formation aerobatic routines. Lee Lauderback put his Mustang *Crazy Horse* through its paces. Even the heavies got a piece of the action when the bombers made a series of passes. Rich's Incredible Pyro Company turned up the heat with its "Wall of Flame," rumored to be around 3,000 feet long!

The bombers were supported by a variety of fighters, including P-38s, P-40s, P-47s, P-51s, and a rare P-63. In a separate routine, John Mohr entertained the crowd with his daring solo program in the Stearman. He has performed at Oshkosh a number of times, and his act always has the crowd scratching their heads—how does he do it? John was featured on the cover of the December 2006 issue of *Warbirds*.

The crowd totals were estimated to be in the 150,000 range for the weekend. One group of enthusiasts from Great Britain spent most of September here in the United States, touring aviation museums, attending



DICK PHILLIPS

the Reno Air Races, and finally traveling to Columbus for the Gathering of Mustangs and Legends. That's quite a tour! I personally visited with our members from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and France. At one point on Saturday, the ramp

was simply a sea of humanity. I took a break from the Warbirds tent and grabbed a bite to eat. On my return, there were so many people that I had to look around for a few seconds to get my bearings—which way back to the tent? One thing was clear: People love their air shows and people love those old warbirds!

If I were to sum up the Gathering of Mustangs and Legends, I would describe it as an event for the ages. It is an extremely rare occasion when so many aircraft and so many people can come together to share in the history, the hardware, and the passion for flight. Putting this event together was a monumental task. EAA Warbirds of America congratulates Stallion 51 Corp. and its dedicated staff for a job well done. We also recognize and applaud the great work of the volunteers, security staff, airport and FAA personnel, air show coordinators, photographers, vendors, and, of course, the pilots and veterans.



JIM BUSH

TOM SMITH



Lee Lauderback, owner of Stallion 51 Crazy Horse and Crazy Horse II, is the event organizer.

Scott Yoak, standing on wing, conducts a P-51 cockpit tour. Bill Yoak, facing camera, directly below Scott, answers questions from the crowd.

# P-51 Roster

Registration	Serial Number	Name, (if any)	Owner	
1	N7TF	44-73856	Double Trouble Two	Tom Friedkin
2	N6WJ	44-73518	Precious Metal	Ron Buccarelli
3	N20TF	67-14866		Dan Friedkin
4	N50FS	44-74839	La Pistolera	Rod Lewis
5	N51AB	A68-100	Flying Dutchman	Steve Craig
6	N51BS	44-84786	Lil Margaret	Butch Schroeder
7	N51DL	44-13257		Ed Lindsay
8	N51DT	A68-175	Slender Tender & Tall	Tom Blair
9	N51EA	44-63507	Double Trouble Two	Jerry Yagen
10	N51HY	45-11439	Quick Silver	Bill & Scott Yoak
11	N51KB	44-74009	Ain't Misbehavin'	Jim Thompson
12	N51MV	45-11391	Luscious Lisa	Todd Stuart
13	N51MX	45-11559	Mad Max	Max Chapman
14	N51PE	45-11586	Little Horse	Paul Ehlen
15	N51PT	44-72145	Petie 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Jeff Pryor
16	N51RH	44-74739	Ole Yeller	John Bagley
17	N51VF	45-11553	Shangri-La	Charles Osborne
18	N51YZ	44-84900	NACA 127	Bill Allmon
19	N51Z	43-6006	Polar Bear	Jerry Gabe
20	N51ZM	45-11471	Diamondback	Mark Peterson
21	N55JL	44-84615	Cloud Dancer	Jimmy Leeward
22	N68JR	44-72051	Sweet Revenge	Ron Fagen
23	N83KD	44-84410	Cincinnati Miss	David O'Maley
24	N93TF	44-72922	Scat VII	John Lane
25	N151D	44-72777	Sparky	Steve Sehgetti
26	N151DM	44-72483	Ridge Runner III	Dan Martin
27	N151FT	44-74506	Lady B	Fred Telling
28	N151HR	44-72524	Dakota Kid	Henry Reichert
29	N151KW	44-74813	Cripes a Mighty	Bill Wiemann
30	N151MC	67-22581	American Beauty	John O'Connor
31	N151TP	44-73543	Sweetie Face	Tom Patten
32	N151W	45-11540	Excalibur	Jim Read
33	N201F	44-84933	Dusty's Dolly	Harry Barr
34	N251MX	42-103293	Betty Jane	Max Chapman
35	N314BG	44-73140	Petie 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Leslie Heikkila
36	N327DB	44-84860	Lady Jo!	Darrell Bond
37	N334FS	44-72907	Red Dog XII	Duane Doyle
38	N351BD	44-84034	Big Beautiful Doll	Mike Henningsen
39	N351DM	44-74458	Sizzlin' Liz	David Marco
40	N351DT	44-74502	Crazy Horse II	Lee Lauderback
41	N351MX	44-74391	February	Chris Woods
42	N451D	44-73260	Sweet and Lovely	Bob Baker
43	N451MG	44-74474	Old Crow	Jim Hagedorn
44	N487FS	43-25147	Princess Elizabeth	Jim Beasley
45	N551J	44-74320	Gentleman Jim	Jack Roush
46	N551VC	44-73415	Voodoo	Bob Button
47	N551W	44-14985	Millie G	Trent Latshaw
48	N651JM	44-74976	Obsession	Jeff Michael
49	N751RB	44-13903	Glamorous Gal	Bob & Chris Baranaskas
50	N851D	44-84745	Crazy Horse	Lee Lauderback
51	N921	45-11507	Cripes a Mighty III	Kermit Weeks
52	N951M	44-73287	Worry Bird	Mike George
53	N1202	44-10947	Ina the Macon Belle	Kermit Weeks
54	N1451D	44-74446	Checkertail Clan	Nathan Davis
55	N2151D	44-73656	Moonbeam McSwine	Vlado Lenocho
56	N2869D	44-84390	Section Eight	Doug Driscoll
57	N3333E	44-63893	Glamorous Glen III	Mark Huffstutler
58	N3751D	44-73206	Hurry Home Honey	Dr. Joe Richardson
59	N4034S	44-63889		John Anderson
60	N5427V	44-72942	Petie 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Tony Buechler
61	N5428V	44-73273	Gunfighter	Reg Urschler
62	N5500S	44-74543	Geraldine	Chuck & Bev Greenhill
63	N6168C	44-73704	FF-704 Thunderbird (logo)	Lewis Shaw
64	N6306T	44-74878		Tom Wood
65	N6320T	44-74497	Little Witch	Bob Jepson
66	N7551T	44-72438	Hell-er Bust	John Sessions
67	N7715C	44-73053	Wee Willy II	Steve Hinton
68	N7722C	44-73420		Jack Croul
69	N10607	44-74466	Barbara Jean	Harry Barr
70	N41749	44-63663	Miss Marylyn II	Christopher & Kit Goldsbury
71	N63476	44-63476	City of Winnipeg	Bob May
72	N64824	44-74389	Speedball Alice	Dan Vance
73	N94384	44-74832	Boomer	Tim McPherson
74	CF-IKE	44-73120	Miracle Maker	Ike Enns
75	G-CBNM	44-12018	Twilight Tear	Stephen Grey
76	XB-HVL	44-72934	Shangri-La	Humberto Lobo de la Garza
77	XP-51G	43-43335	Margie Hart	John Morgan

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