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Thunder Dodges Weather Again... Show Features Award-Winning Performers!



Kyle Franklin in his Super-Cub.



(TOP PHOTO) Michael Goulian and his Extra 300SC.

John Mohr in his 220 hp Stock Stearman.

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The 2009 “Thunder on the Lakeshore” air show in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, June 5-7, was large enough to attract some fantastic performers, yet small enough that almost everything was right in front of the crowd all weekend. This year, Curt Drumm of Lakeshore Aviation and the show organizers, brought in the 2006 “Art Scholl Memorial Showmanship Award” recipient, Michael Goulian, and his



Jim Maroney & his Super Chipmunk.



John Mohr & his Stock Stearman.



U.S. Navy F-18 Hornet.

brand new Extra 330SC for fans of high-energy aerobatics.

At the other end of the airplane performance spectrum was John Mohr with his 220 hp Stock Stearman biplane. John is a long-time regular at Thunder on the Lakeshore, and also the recipient of both the “Art Scholl Memorial Showmanship Award,” and “Bill Barber Award For Showmanship.” In addition, Smithsonian’s Air and Space Magazine named John Mohr one of the top-10 airshow performers in 2007.

Jet fans weren’t forgotten either. The Air Force’s Viper East F-16 demo team, and the Navy’s F-18 East demo team, both tore up the sky around the airport. Two classic jets also flew. Fowler “Big Dog” Cary brought his T-33 painted in the colors of the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds, and Jerry “Jive” Kerby flew it in the shows. Bruce Anderson flew his Fuga Magister CM170. Both jets were also part of the static displays.

For “something completely different,” Kyle Franklin and his “Flying Circus” (Brandon Spain and Andy Roso) did their unique motorcycle-to-plane transfer using Kyle’s Super-Cub. Kyle and company also performed his fun wingtip-dragging comedy act.

Steve Fallon’s Pitts SIS and Jim “Fang” Maroney’s Super Chipmunk rounded out the aerobatic performers.

The Traverse City (Michigan) Coast Guard Station sent over one of their HH-65C “Dolphin” helicopters for static display and to do an airborne “Search and Rescue” (SAR) demonstration. Not all of the show was in the air: Neal Darnell ran his

350 mph jet-pickup around the airport producing very dramatic smoke and fire. He then raced Michael Goulian’s Extra down the runway.

Every airshow has to have a parachute demonstration, and the U.S. Army Golden Knights are one of the best. In addition to all the heavier-than-air craft, a number of hot-air balloons also attended.

In addition to the flying acts, there were a number of planes on static display throughout the weekend. Jeff Batzer from Oshkosh flew Rick Van Der Loop’s rare Nord 3203 trainer down from Green Bay. Mike Weinfurter and his wife Sam brought their unmistakable bright-orange L-19 Birddog. Paul Keppler and Jim Allen flew in with a pair of beautifully restored T-33 trainers, each painted as they were when flown by the Canadian Air Force (one in camouflage and one gray). The B-25 “Miss Mitchell” from the Southern Minnesota Wing of the Commemorative Air Force was on hand giving rides, as well as on static display. Flying Miss Mitchell was Kurt Koukkari. The FAA’s Oklahoma City office flew in their “retired” (but beautifully restored) DC-3, N-34, for the weekend, too.

Thunder on the Lakeshore always begins with a Friday evening practice show for sponsors and other VIPs. After the airshow, there is a party; this year the weather cooperated and allowed the hot-air balloons to setup for a “Balloon Glow” at the airport.

The balloons are firmly tethered to their support vehicles and dramatically illuminated by flames from the burners.

Unfortunately, the clouds rolling

in Friday evening were a harbinger of cooler temperatures, overcast, and drizzle on Saturday. Luckily the ceiling remained high enough for almost all the performers to fly. Sunday started out cold and windy with an 800-foot ceiling. Nevertheless, “the show must go on” and the organizers brought out a number of acts that were not limited by the low clouds.

The crowd was also pretty amazing. The flight-line was packed all morning, although at times it looked more like fans at a Green Bay Packers game; they never gave up. First up was model rockets; Eric Cayembert and his father Tom launched two large rockets (one well over 6 feet long that was built by students at Cabrini Middle School in Manitowoc). Next, the Coast Guard’s HH-65C helicopter took off for their SAR demo. Unfortunately, just as they got started, there was a minor mechanical malfunction with the Dolphin and they had to land. Thankfully, Neal Darnell and his crew chief (and wife), Marilyn, were able to fire-up the jet truck and entertain the crowd. As the afternoon progressed, the temperature and the ceiling increased, so by about 2:00 pm, it was clear enough that all of the performers were able to fly their complete routines.

Some of the jet aficionados were disappointed that changes in the FAA airshow regulations in the past few years made it necessary to shift the “jet box” at Manitowoc to the north, so the aerobatic portions of the F-16, F-18, and T-33 performances are a bit far away from show center. The high-speed and “banana” photo passes

CONTINUED ON PAGE 62

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN AIRFEST FROM PAGE 47

solidly packed. The performances were timed so that the flying acts finished just in time for the Leap Frogs to do a twilight jump with the sun setting behind them, followed by a pyrotechnic-enhanced night jump by the Golden Knights after dark. The finale was a night run by Shockwave with Rich's Incredible Pyro in the background – a great way to end the day and start the weekend.

Saturday brought more great airshow weather, with just a bit of high cloud cover. It started out a bit cool and cloudy early in the morning, and attendance looked like it might be low, but at 11:00 am, the sky cleared, temperatures rose, and people started streaming through the gates.

Later in the day I spoke with Rick Fiduccia, one of the airshow committee members, and he said that when the crowds started coming in, he was drafted into selling tickets to help keep the lines moving.

There were some gaps in the schedule while the Golden Knights' and Leap Frogs' jump planes climbed to altitude. While there wasn't much

THUNDER ON LAKESHORE FROM PAGE 51

are still in front of the crowd, and the F-18 demonstration includes a touch-and-go landing right at show center (with a full-afterburner climb that's always a hit). On Sunday, both the F-16 and F-18 demos did their dramatic (and loud) afterburner minimum-radius turns at show-center,

going on, I decided to wander away from my usual "front and center" spot, right at the fence and see how the show looked from other vantage points. I discovered many people who prefer to watch the show from a bit further back. Some of them are locals with hangars or businesses on the airport. For example, Jim Freeman of Helicopter Specialties has a hangar just back from show-center. There were rows of chairs setup outside the hangar with people milling around enjoying the show, and barbecue cooking on an assortment of grills. Everybody was having a great time and the view was pretty good, too. It was especially exciting when the Blue Angels flew directly over the hangar. I also ran into a fellow photographer, Sam Dammers, who was spending time away from his camera and in front of his drawing pad sketching planes and people at the show.

Sunday was an absolutely gorgeous day from sunrise, and there was no question that attendance would be high.

With the perfect weather the show went off perfectly. The schedule had

too. Hearing protection was a "must have," and that's always a sign of a good jet demonstration.

This year was special for me. Friday morning airshow performer Matt Chapman, who was there to help his friend Michael Goulian, took me up in the team's Cessna 182 Skylane for a photo session with Michael's Extra 330SC. Later in the afternoon,

Wisconsin, on November 4, 1909.

To celebrate this historic event, Michael Goc and Tom Thomas of WAHF will present, "The First Thing I Knew, I Was Flying." Sponsored by the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame and the La Crosse County Historical Society, this lively presentation tells how Warner brought Wisconsin into the age of aviation, and includes stories about early La Crosse-area aviation history. The presentation takes place on Wednesday, August 5 at 6:30 p.m. at the La Crosse County

been rearranged to fill the previous day's gaps, so there was always something going on. The air boss, Dave Schultz, allowed me to shoot from in front of the command trailer at show-center. The Continental Air Show Productions sound system technicians were friendly and helpful, as they always are.

Since I wasn't able to take time to wander around the grounds and meet new people, I was happy when three people joined us at show-center. They introduced themselves as the members of the "Blue Angels Fan Club." Carol Moorehouse from Colona, Illinois, is the president and founded the club in 1996. Mariyln and Gary White are members from Iowa who drove to Janesville for the show. It was great to see them enjoy the show, and especially the Blue Angels performance.

The Southern Wisconsin Airfest is a great event to open the Wisconsin airshow season. ABC Supply Company and the other sponsors help bring in the best performers, and after 8 years running, the show is established on the Midwest airshow calendar. □

I flew with John Mohr in his Stock Stearman and took photos of Jim Maroney's Super-Chipmunk.

While the weather did not cooperate 100% this year, the Manitowoc fans got a full show every day due to the extraordinary efforts of Curt Drumm, air-boss Wayne Boggs, the performers, and all of the staff and volunteers. □

SPECIAL EVENTS

The First Thing I Knew, I Was Flying!

OSHKOSH, WIS. – The Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame (WAHF) has planned a series of 2009 events celebrating Wisconsin's Centennial of Flight, including history presentations and a traveling exhibit of a quarter-scale replica of the first airplane that flew in Wisconsin. That first Wisconsin powered flight happened when Arthur Pratt Warner flew a 1909 Curtiss biplane from a farmer's field in Beloit,

Historical Society's Swarthout Museum, 9th and Main Streets, La Crosse. The public is invited to attend.

The exhibit and quarter-scale replica of Warner's 1909 Curtiss biplane, built by members of the Experimental Aircraft Association's Chapter 60 in Beloit/Janesville, will be on display at the Swarthout Museum through August 31.

For more information and tickets for the August 5 presentation, call the La Crosse County Historical Society at 608-782-1980. □