

The 44th Annual Watsonville Fly-In was held Memorial Day weekend **May 23rd 24th, & 25th.**

This was a fun and very well attended event with 13 people and 8 Ercoupes & 1 RV-7. There was also a \$1.00 discount per gallon, making 100 LL Avgas \$4.23 a gallon.

The weather was a significant factor for those traveling up from SoCal. Dan Hall flew 68H in MVFR below the clouds mostly between 1,500' to 2,000' AGL dodging clouds and rain light rain showers from Chino west to the coast, then north to Santa Barbara and Gaviota VOR & Gaviota pass. It never got too ugly however; I wasn't sure I'd be able to make it to WVI until I was at the Gaviota pass and found it to be VFR. About 15 miles or so north of Gaviota pass, things began to clear out and the flight to WVI from there was nice. Several SoCal Coupers waited until Saturday morning to head north.

Saturday was gray and overcast, but with high enough ceilings and visibilities to make VFR a reasonable proposition, and as a consequence most people arrived Saturday.

One piece of good news is that the TFR for the big Santa Cruz fire was NOT a significant factor getting into our out of Watsonville. However the combination of MFVR weather, the fire TFR, and high fuel prices did seem to reduce the Fly-In aircraft attendance somewhat this year.

Dan Kelsey had his immaculate restored white Ercoupe based at Watsonville on display while he volunteered to work the event. Ed Rutter based at Watsonville also had his Ercoupe on display. The two of them had stakes out a row for "Ercoupes Only". THANKS GUYS !!!! It's sure nice to have friends in high places.

Sean Farrell was also there working as a volunteer and hosted us at his hangar & trailer, where he showed us what remains of his RV-7A after a bird (13 LB GOOSE) strike during take off at Frasier Lake on May 2nd. More details on that sad incident are provided elsewhere however; it was very fortunate that Sean and his co-pilot were able to walk away with only very minor injuries. Thanks once again to Sean for his usual great hospitality to the group!!!!

We had our Coupes in the usual Classic display area not far from the registration & hangar with the traditional spaghetti feed dinner.

Friday evening had Dan K. & Ed Rutter's planes parked on the ramp while they worked. Maynard Smith flew in early, and Dan Hall arrived in 68H from SoCal at about 5:50 PM. Sean Farrell was on hand doing volunteer work with Dan K., and Tony Derrer drove in. Maynard, Sean, Tony, and Dan enjoyed the spaghetti feed dinner together, then walked over to Sean's hangar to inspect his RV-7A and watch the evening air show, which was quite good this year.

Saturday we were joined by Jim Grimes (drove in after his airplane was damaged in the off-field forced landing described elsewhere), Pat Greco & his fiend Ignishka, Ralph Finch, Gary Dallugge, Tom Crowder, Joe Brooks (rode his Harley down from Oregon!), and Eddy Tohikian (RV-8 from Chino).

Somehow Gary Dallugge, Tom Crowder, Joe Brooks, Eddy Tohikian, Ralph Finch, Dan Hall, Maynard Smith & Jim Grimes all ended up at Zuniga's Mexican Restaurant on the field for lunch at more or less the same time (great minds think alike?).

After the air show Ralph, Dan, Maynard, Pat & Ignishka departed the field as a flight of 4 Ercoupes. Pat & Ignishka took off early for South County Airport, while Ralph lead on with Dan & Maynard in trail. We flew under an overcast and dodged some rain showers during our flight north however; it wasn't a bad flight.

Eddy, Gary, and Tom had a more challenging time with their flight south on Sunday, but eventually found their way home safely.

Eddy's RV-8 won "Best RV" at Watsonville (Congratulations Eddy, you deserved it!). However he also won the award for longest distance flown, which Dan is still trying to figure out since they are both based at Chino. Eddy may the flight in 1 hour and 37 minutes, and Dan made the flight in 3 hours and 40 minutes. Where's the justice? ;-)

The air show was good, as usual, with some impressive acts, and some nice military flight demonstrations in addition to the static displays (How about a C-130 & C-17 !).

A number of photos are provided from the event. They should be recognizable by the gray skies !!! :-)

Enjoy, and hope to see you there next year!

Ercoupe row at Watsonville.





Pat Greco & Ignishka.



C-17 on static display;



Some of the group at lunch in Zuniga's Restaurant;

