



WARBIRDS

Warbirds at Reno '72

By Mark Clark

5351 Cochlite Trail
Rockford, Illinois 61111

(All Photos by Mark Clark)

RENO '72 WAS a gathering place for Warbirds from across the country. Many of our members who were not racing came to Reno's Stead Field in a variety of aircraft and vehicles. Warbird John Schafhausen of Spokane, Washington, provided a Discoverer Motor Home for use at the race pit area. In a short time the Discoverer was equipped with signs designating it as Warbird Reno Headquarters. The air-conditioned motor home was a pleasant relief from the warm but dry temperatures. This year the weatherman pulled the right cards from the deck and we were fortunate to have excellent CAVU conditions, which pleased the fans as well as the race pilots.

Each day's race activities are mixed with various aerobatic flight demonstrations. Warbirds were well represented in the aerobatic arena with Frank Sanders and his "Sea Fury". The one and only Bob Hoover flew his "Shrike Commander", P-51, and for a new twist this year also flew a civilian F-86 jet. Art Scholl performed his precision aerobatics in the "Super Chipmunk". Other participants in the daily shows flew a variety of aircraft including a gyrocopter, a Stampe biplane and a Super Pinto jet trainer.

Each day's activities began with an opening ceremony including the U. S. Marine Corps color guard, a Nevada Air Guard jet fly-by, and the American flag parachute drop. This year's flag drop was performed by the Star Dusters, an all girl parachute team from California.

For those not familiar with the way the races are run, here is a brief outline of the racing rules. All pilots and their aircraft must meet the requirements of the FAA and the Professional Race Pilots Association. The various rules cover such things as pilot time and experience needed, aircraft modifications, engines, and other matters of safety. All entries must qualify for the races by making one timed lap of the course. From this time pairings for the heat races are made. All aircraft that qualify are ranked by speed and the odd-numbered planes fly one heat with the even-numbered birds making up the other heat race.

The fastest six or eight birds from both heats make up the field for the Championship Race. The remaining planes will fly in the Silver or the Medallion races. All classes, with the exception of the Unlimiteds, will make a race horse start. The Unlimiteds form up on Bob Hoover's yellow P-51 which serves as pace plane for their formation aerial start.

This year's Unlimited Championship Race was won by Warbird Director Gunther Balz. Flying his silver "Roto-Finish Special" P-51, Balz set a new Reno record of 416.160 mph for the 9.8 mile course. Before the race Gunther had been quoted as saying he was going to win or blow his engine trying. Luckily for the P-51 fans his Rolls Merlin held together enabling his highly modified racer to come through. This was the second time in Reno history a Mustang has won. In 1970, Clay Lacy was able to beat Darrell Greenameyer's F8F Bearcat. This year, due to a dispute, Greenameyer was not flying "Conquest I". It was flown by a NASA pilot Dick Laidley. "Conquest I", holder of the propeller speed record of 483 mph, finished the race second with a speed of 413.175 mph. However, Laidley was disqualified for flying below the minimum altitude of 45 feet. So second place was awarded to Lyle Shelton's No. 77 Bearcat — "Phast Phoenix". This Bearcat was rebuilt from the wreckage of several other F8F's. Third place went to No. 11, "Miss America", flown by Howie Keefe. Clay Lacy took fourth place with the "Omni Aviation Special", No. 64.

The AT-6 Championship race was won by Roy McClain. McClain came from third place of the pole, worked

his way to the front of the field to win with an average speed of 201.587 mph. Neck and neck down the straightaway, McClain held a slight edge over second place finisher, John Mosby. With an average speed of 201.305, Mosby's red "Miss Sky Prints" almost took McClain. Finishing third was William Turnbull's SNJ-5. His speed of 197.035 mph shows just how close the AT-6 class is. The T-6's raced over the short 3 mile course.

This year's field of AT-6 racers was quite an impressive line-up. Compared to the first race in this class, an exhibition in 1967, the looks and care of these great old trainers has greatly improved. Dr. Gerald Swayze, winner of the Grand Champion Warbird at Oshkosh this past summer, had his perfect SNJ at Reno. As an SNJ driver myself it is certainly a great thrill to see such a fine collection of them on one field.

Reno this year was certainly a Mustang versus Bearcat race as can be seen from the list of qualifying aircraft. The only really different entries were Lefty Gardner's P-63 "Kingcobra" and the silver FG-1D of Bob Mitchem.

Mira Slovak, who won the first Reno race in 1964, had planned to enter a rebuilt P-39Q "Aircobra" this year. Mechanical problems delayed his arrival for qualifying and he was not allowed to race. "Mr. Mennen", Slovak's white, green and gold No. 21 has been considerably cleaned up and lightened to a weight of 5000 pounds. No radical airframe changes were made except for wet wings and the installation of a larger Allison engine. Slovak plans to make an attempt on the speed record of Darrell Greenameyer. In 1953, Mira Slovak made world news by escaping from Czechoslovakia in a DC-3 full of airline passengers. This probably was the only time an airliner has been hijacked by the pilot.

Another interesting entry was not seen this year. Tony D'Alessandris of Reno planned to enter a P-51D with an Allison engine. Modification planned for this "Mustang" included clipped wings, cut-down canopy and lengthened nose to accommodate the new engine. Hopefully, this most novel racer will race next year.

Reno '72 was a most enjoyable time for all who were there, pilots and fans

RENO NATIONAL AIR RACES

1972 Races and Results

UNLIMITED CHAMPIONSHIP RACE RESULTS

No.	Pilot-Hometown	Time	Speed
5	Gunther Balz, Kalamazoo, Michigan	11:18.2	416.160
77	Lyle Shelton, Cypress, California	11:37.4	404.703
11	Howie Keefe, Los Angeles, California	11:48.2	398.531
64	Clay Lacy, Van Nuys, California	12:21.0	341.891
94	Robert Mitchem, Broomfield, Colorado	13:45.3	341.985
0	Ormond Hayden-Baillie, Canada	13:48.1	340.828
1	Richard Laidley, Houston, Texas — disqualified for flying too low.		

Bob Mitchem, former AT-6 Champion, entered this FG-1D Corsair. This was the first time a Corsair has made the Championship race.



AT-6/SNJ CHAMPIONSHIP RACE RESULTS

No.	Pilot-Hometown	Time	Speed
25	Roy E. McClain, Eufaula, Alabama	7:08.6	201.587
44	John Mosby, Chesterfield, Missouri	7:09.2	201.305
72	William Turnbull, Fabens, Texas	7:18.5	197.035
88	Robert Metcalfe, Fairfax, Virginia	7:37.5	188.852
69	Robert Suacci *		
4	Don Phillippi *		

* Disqualified for flying lower than contest rules specify.

alike. There are rumors that the races will not be held at Reno next year. We all hope that the races will continue somewhere, if not at Reno. The mountain range surrounding Stead Field provides a beautiful background for the sound and power of the Unlimited and AT-6 races. Reno is quite far from major population centers, however, and the races do need large crowds to be a profitable venture. Wherever the races are held, I am sure that the loyal Warbird fans will be there. It is a thrill not to be forgotten.

FORMULA 1 CHAMPIONSHIP RACE RESULTS

No.	Pilot-Hometown	Time	Speed
16	Ray Cote, El Cajon, California	6:25.8	223.950
81	Bob Moeller, Charleston, AFB, S.C.	6:31.0	220.972
14	Bob Downey, Whittier, California	6:45.8	212.913
25	Jim Wilson, Dallas, Texas	6:50.5	210.475
11	James Stevenson, N. Hollywood, Cal.	6:59.6	205.910
71	Vincent DeLuca, Miraleste, California	6:59.9	205.763
87	Donald Beck, Tahoe City, California	7:03.7	203.918
92	Wm. Falck, Warwick, New York — finished only one lap.		

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SPORT BIPLANE CHAMPIONSHIP RESULTS

No.	Pilot-Hometown	Time	Speed
89	Donald Beck, Tahoe City, California	7:35.4	189.723
76	James O. Hall, Camarillo, California	7:59.9	180.038
10	David Forbes, Belmont, California	8:02.6	179.030
8	Clem Fischer, Carson City, Nevada	8:29.0	169.745
3	Bill Boland, Carmichael, California	7:47.3	184.892



"Mister Mennen", a rebuilt P-39, piloted by Mira Slovak appeared at Reno this year, however did not race due to qualification troubles. Slovak plans to use this aircraft to break the propeller speed record set by Darrell Greenameyer in 1970.



Dr. Burns Byram arrived at Reno in P-51 "Tangerine". His new paint shows the growing trend among Warbirds to military designs. This paint design was used on a P-51D of the 8th Air Force in England.



The new National Champion, Gunther Balz a Warbird director, brought the trophy back to the P-51 side. No. 5 sports a special canopy, airframe modifications, and a highly tuned Merlin engine.



Lefty Gardner of Brownwood, Texas, rounds the number eight pylon during the unlimited heat race. Engine problems kept this highly polished P-63 from showing its potential.