

FLIGHT-WATCH

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2012 SALUTE TO AMERICA AIR SHOW

I.

The Paulding County Airport

The Paulding County Airport (PUJ) was recently constructed near Dallas, Georgia northwest of Atlanta. It features a 6,000 foot runway with an ILS approach. It was constructed before the present days of fiscal austerity. Besides the runway and taxi-way facilities, the airport terminal building is of stone construction consisting of two stories. It has ample conference rooms, a pilot lounge and a host of facilities designed to ensure that pilots and their passengers are well accommodated at the airport.

II.

A New Air Show

Kerry “Tids” Tidmore and Brent “Sparky” Sparks began working on the Salute to America Air Show some time ago. The Air Show was designed to showcase the new airport in Paulding County and also to pay particular respect and reverence to those who fought and died for our freedom. The Air Show theme pays tribute to Americans and American patriotism at a time when our country faces extraordinary challenges both domestically and abroad.

I arrived on Friday afternoon shortly after 5:00 p.m. when the Kate was ushered to the warbird hot ramp and thoroughly serviced in anticipation of the flying schedule for Saturday. The line personnel at the Paulding County Air Show exhibited enthusiasm and professionalism and ensured that my aircraft was properly serviced with aviation fuel, oil and smoke oil. The marshallers exhibited professionalism in directing our aircraft on both Friday and Saturday.



Sunrise over the Kate

There was a dinner on Friday evening for the performers at the air show. The dinner highlighted the importance of the Air Show to Paulding County. Following the dinner, there were twilight performances by the Aeroshell Team, Jim Tobul in his F4U Corsair, Gary Rower in his Stearman, and Elgin Wells in his Extra. One of the more evocative images I recall from the twilight performance was Gary Rower flying his Stearman and painting a smoke trail in the evening sky below a crescent moon. As the setting quickly evolved from dusk to darkness, I admired the precision and discipline of the Aeroshell aerobatic team as they performed flawlessly in the evening sky.

III.

The Saturday Show

The briefing was at 0800 on Saturday, and I got a ride to the briefing with members of the Sky Soldiers. I met Cliff, Joe and Mike, former Army pilots who fly the assortment of aircraft in the Sky Soldiers Flight Demonstration Team including the UH-1 Huey, the AH-1 Cobra and the L-19 Bird Dog. Their performance includes a Vietnam era aerial script entitled “Rescue at Dawn.”

The briefing was short and to the point and was conducted by Kerry “Tids” Tidmore. Our Warbird flight, consisting of four aircraft, would perform shortly after noon at the conclusion of the aerobatic performance by Skipper Hyle. During the course of our briefing, we were introduced to Joe Sarber, the ramp boss and Blake Swafford, the airport manager. As is customary, law enforcement, crash fire and rescue and FAA personnel were present.

The enthusiasm for this event was evidenced by the personnel participating in the briefing. Everyone wanted this new air show to come off without a hitch. Greer Paramore was the primary FAA inspector overseeing the event, and he is no stranger to air shows.

At the conclusion of the briefing, there was a quick huddle between the air boss (Tids Tidmore) and the members of our Warbird flight, Skipper Hyle, Arnie Angelissi (an FAA Flight Surgeon), and Matt Lazar (a Colonel in the Army Reserve). The plan was to have the Warbird flight take off just at the time Skipper was finishing his aerobatic routine so that he could join up on my wing and the four Warbird aircraft could accomplish a number of low passes down the runway and one banana pass before the audience. Our hard deck was a hundred feet AGL. We then had a few quick words with Pete Combs, the air show announcer.



The Kate

In no time at all, the flying had begun. However, as the Misty Blues prepared to exit their aircraft, and Team Aeroshell was in position to circle the American flag toting parachutists, Tids, the Air Boss, was told an actual, unscheduled HERO flight was trying to land. For those of you who are unaware, a HERO flight provides air transportation for medical and other compassionate purposes to wounded warriors, veterans, and their families through a national network of volunteer aircraft owners and pilots. Tids and Sparky quickly assessed the situation and saw that they could bring the HERO flight in, secure it in the hot pit area, and continue with the show. That accomplished, and the wounded soldier safely in the arms of his family, the Airshow continued as planned.

Aeroshell Team



The Misty Blues, a parachute team, displayed an enormous American flag and was encircled by the four air show Aeroshell AT-6 Texans during their patriotic descent to the airport. Then, there was a short performance by the Aeroshell Team followed by Larry King in his Pitts S12 and then the Sky Soldiers performed their aerial script “Rescue at Dawn.” The premise of “Rescue at Dawn” is that an L-19 Bird Dog is shot down and a UH-1 is dispatched to rescue the L-19 pilot while the AH-1 Cobra provides covering fire against Viet Cong during the course of this rescue mission. Gary Rower then performed in the Stearman followed by the Indy Boys with a rocket powered outhouse followed by Doug Glover in the AT-6 Texan and then Elgin Wells in his Extra.

We started engines and taxied out about the same time as Elgin Wells because we had to be at the end of the runway and ready to go at the time Skipper Hyle finished his aerobatic routine. Following our warm-up, we taxied onto the active runway and Skipper called our departure so that just as he finished his aerobatic routine and I took off, he joined on my left wing. We made three or four circuits of low passes during which Skipper moved from my left wing to my right wing. We then performed a banana pass with smoke on and then landed. We were followed by two T-38 Talons. Then Steve Gustafson flew a P-51D Mustang, and Jim Tobul flew his F4U Corsair. Then there was a performance by a T6 Texan II aircraft followed by a salute flight consisting of the P-51D, the F4U and the T6 Texan II. Then the Indy Boys had their jet powered school bus race Gary Rower’s Stearman; and they wrapped up the show with a magnificent performance by the Aeroshell Team.

IV.

Conclusion

The sponsors and coordinators of the Paulding County 2012 Salute to America Air Show are to be congratulated for a job well done. The air show remained on schedule and was run in a safe and efficient manner. All of the air show personnel were courteous and attentive to the needs of the pilots and there were no issues as I recall. Hopefully, next year we will see the 2013 Salute to America Air Show as Paulding County, Georgia pays homage to the veterans of our armed forces who have fought and died to ensure the freedoms we enjoy today.



AEROSHELL TEAM



AEROSHELL TEAM



STEVE GUSTAFSON
AND HIS P-51D



[Photograph Copyright John Slempt]