

Memories of the Merced Antique Fly-in



Curtiss Wright 15-D Sedan of 1931, NC436W, 1978.

During the years between 1963 and 2008, the first weekend in June was a special time. The Merced Antique Fly-in, held in Merced, Calif., drew antique aircraft from all directions. You never knew what interesting old aircraft you might encounter at this annual event.

Merced is located in the agricultural Central Valley of California approximately 300 miles north of Los Angeles. In the early summer, Los Angeles and Orange County experience a low cloud cover called a marine layer created by moist air flowing in from the Pacific. Heading north out of the Los Angeles Basin, when you reach the "Ridge Route," Highway 99, and cross the mountains, the sky is usually clear the rest of the way to Merced.

Organized by the Merced Pilots Association, it was one of the two big antique and classic aircraft shows that took place each year in California. The other is at nearby Watsonville on the Pacific coast. Heavy fog is a perpetual problem for Watsonville because of its proximity to the Pacific Ocean.

The Merced show has drawn 2,000 aircraft when you include antiques, classic, homebuilts, kitplanes, common civil aircraft and restored WWII aircraft – primarily trainers. An occasional P-51 or other WWII fighters will show up once in a while.

The closure of nearby Castle AFB was a serious blow to both the city of Merced and the fly-in. Air Force volunteers were a significant



Curtiss Wright CW-22 Falcon of 1937, N18067, 1964.



Student Prince, N10686, s/n 103, 1977.



Ford 5-AT-8 Trimotor, N9651, on the taxiway getting ready to take off, 1974.



Rearwin Cloudster, N25547, of 1940, 1964.



Porterfield 35-70 of 1936, NC17029, 1974.



Cessna Model C-37 of 1935, NC15462, 1981.



Davis D-1-W of 1929, N854N, 1979.

help, directing aircraft and cars and performing other support duties. The Merced Pilots Association struggled to gather the volunteers in the later years of the fly-in.

There was a degree of friendly rivalry between the organizers of Merced and Watsonville but the two events did complement each other. Many pilots who came considerable

distances to attend would make this fly-in part of their annual vacation.

The range of variety of antique aircraft at Merced was unrivalled on the West Coast. The Merced Antique Fly-in is sorely missed by all those with an interest in antique aircraft.

Article and photos by Albert Hansen



Fairchild Model 71 of 1929, N2K, 1971.



Pietenpol Air Camper, N11MS, 1975.



A modified Ryan 1941 ST3KR, N58729, 1977.



General Aircraft G1-80 of 1941, NC29030, 1977.



New Standard NT-1 of 1929, taking off, 1974.



A Mono Monocoupe of 1935, NC11768, 1977.



Stinson SR-9 Reliant, NC17157, of 1937, 1962.



Howard DGA-15P, N52947, of 1944, 1979.



Stinson Model A Trimotor of 1936, NC15165, 1988.



Curtiss JN-4 "Jenny" WWI primary trainer, 1986. Curtiss Robin of 1929, N9223, 1964.



Piper J-2 Cub, NC17220, 1977.



Fairchild 22C7D, NC9480, of 1933, 1974.



A replica of the Brown B2 Racer "Miss Los Angeles" of 1934, about to depart, 1974.



Meyers OTW 145 of 1941, N34311, 1963.



Kreider Reisner KR34C, NC831N, of 1928, 1977.