

The Joe Nall 21

14 - 17 May 2003

By Hank Mausolf

I finally got to attend the now famous Joe Nall fly-in after a long 18 year absence. The last time I attended this event it was located on Paul Hartness estate with just a few of us who found out by word of mouth. I think we had about 100 pilots and we thought we were huge by any standard. We sure paled in comparison to the 2003 Joe Nall the largest fly-in anywhere. According to the registrar we had over 600 pre-registered, and it looked like they all showed up.

I arrived early Tuesday morning-one day before the official start thinking I would have a leg up on parking my big rig motorhome. My original plan was to be there late Monday afternoon, but I was very tired and decided to camp for one night to catch up with myself. I quickly ascertained the scope of this event. The site was already busy with activity and I was one of about 120 RV's already there not counting the tent campers. But, I will say they were very organized with the parking and I ended up with a great spot almost at stage center.

The site itself (Triple Tree Aerodrome) is a modelers dream. Every possible need was met in a very professional manner. The physical layout consisted of a main runway 6000 feet long and manicured to be as smooth as a golf green. There was no doubt it was constructed for flying both model and full size. There was ample parking space for all the vehicles and their trailers. I was surprised to see how much shelter space was available and it was all next to the flight line. Wednesday morning the shelters went up almost three deep for the entire length of the runway. Even with this it was no problem to maneuver around with your models. Food was never a problem with the open kitchen cooking almost 20 hours each day with a different style evening meal each day.

For those of us who like to shop and talk to the vendors there were plenty. There was a vendors row behind the flight line and it was well attended every day until sunset. The only requirement is bring lots of money. The big names were all there with their teams: Futaba, JR, Robart, Desert Aircraft, 3W, and numerous others. I did fall prey to the vendors and probably enhanced their bottom lines a little. Some items you can only find at events like this unless you go to the trade shows.

Flying this year was slightly different than most giant scale events in that you did not have to sign up for flying each day. There were seven flight lines spaced out so that they did not interfere with each other. You could go to the transmitter impound, get your transmitter and the appropriate pin and line up at the flight line closest to your shelter or the one that had the least pilots lined up already. Here the Line Safety would recover your declaration form and inspect your aircraft. You needed one form per aircraft only once

during the fly-in. Each aircraft was inspected before each flight. Plenty of line Safety Officers helped to keep things moving throughout the four days and I can honestly say if you wanted to fly you could. I flew five times during the event(three times with the CAP-21 and twice with the T-50 Bobcat). I could have flown more, but I was busy meeting fellow pilots and talking my head off like all of us do. I did manage to take some still photos and some video tape.

At any given time, on the field, there were at least 1200 aircraft that included everything you could think of. There were CAP's, Jets, Military, Multi-Engine of every size up to a 20 foot B-29. The flight line busy all the time as very few aircraft did not fly. Walking down the flight line which ran the entire length of the runway yielded a wealth of photo ops and the chance to talk to the builders and the manufacturers. This is where I spent the majority of my time during the event.

At the site was a lake that was dedicated to float-fly and boats. They had their own set of frequencies that did not interfere with the main flight line. The physical location was far enough away that the flight patterns did not cause a problem either and allowed unfettered flying at the lake all day and night.

Each day started with a pilots meeting, the Pledge of Allegiance, the national anthem, and a prayer. During this time many people were recognized for their contributions to the fly-in and to the hobby in general. It was open flying until noon when the war birds took over until around 2 pm. The full size airshow followed until around 4pm with open flying again until 5pm. After 5pm you could fly on the honor system controlling the frequencies on your own. This actually went very well with not a single frequency conflict during the entirety of the fly-in. There were some crashes, but it was not due to interference.

The full size airshows really rounded out the event with some spectacular flying. Each day there was some variation of the airshow that kept you captivated for the entire time. Matt Chapman and his CAP 232 was there every day and flew a marvelous routine with most of the aresti maneuvers we know and a few new ones. Also present was Mike Manmuso with his Extra 2000 that performed several times alone and some time in dual with Matt Chapman. Adding to the airshow routine was from two to four SNJ's (AT-6) that flew every day. The big day for all this activity was Friday and they all put on a great show. I would elaborate, but my video and pictures do a better job.

If you think sunset put a stop to the flying you are wrong. Flying continued into the night with models lit up in many various colors. Actually, I was surprised to see how easily they were outlined in the night sky. They even had helicopters flying at night resembling flying saucers. If the weather was good and the sky clear it was a great show. Most of the time this went on until 11pm. The only time flying would cease is when it was finally time to get some sleep. It all started again as soon as the sun rose in the morning. No need for an alarm clock here.

There were so many groups and individuals here that it would take another page to mention them all. Some of the groups represented were; Team Futaba(Mike Stokes),

Team JR(Pete Goldsmith), Robart(Paul Laterno and Bob Walker). Other names such as Chip Hyde and Qui Que Semensini were present and put on individual airshows that were worthy of their status and this fly-in. A spectacular performance by Mac Hodges and Dan Stevens with the 20 foot B-29 and the Bell X-1 that flew on Friday, this was a must see. And for those of you who went to the WRAM show remember the 1/3 scale Wildcat on stage that was the best scale in years was flown by Paul Laterno of the Robart team.

The last night was Friday night, the world famous BBQ. Believe it or not they sold all 1000 tickets to it and could have sold more. The food was great and the entertainment was first rate. My brother Bob, who came down for two days, and I enjoyed the evening as well as all who attended. It was a great way to end a great fly-in.

The CD Mike Gregory and co-CD Bob Sadler(who doubled as announcer) did a great job. The team that supported them did equally as well and made this large event run smoothly and efficiently. It appeared that everyone had a good time if you were a participant or worker and that makes for a world class event. All I can say is that I will be back next year. Hope to see you there.

Hank