

Goodyear-built FG-1D Corsair, NX83JC, has been re-painted in fictitious markings to honour Senator John Glenn, Mercury astronaut and former US Marine Corps pilot. This aircraft was formerly known as 'Sky Boss', but its new moniker 'Godspeed' refers to the comment made by fellow astronaut Scott Carpenter to Glenn as he blasted off to become the first US astronaut to orbit the Earth.



Corsair Crazy

Kev Baxter witnessed a true spectacle at the Thunder Over Michigan Airshow, the largest gathering of F4U Corsairs in recent times

Willow Run Airport at Ypsilanti, near Detroit, Michigan is perhaps best known for being the wartime birthplace of thousands of Ford-built B-24 Liberators. During peak production, one of the mighty bombers would roll off the production line every hour. Nowadays, the airport's main claim to fame is that it hosts an annual, themed airshow. This year

its title was 'Corsair Crazy', the organisers aiming to bring together as many airworthy Vought Corsairs from around North America as possible. The highest count in the show's planning phase reached 13 aircraft, a record that had not been matched since the type flew in service with air forces around the world. Eventually, a very healthy total of 11 examples reached the

southwestern suburbs of the Motor City (as Detroit has long been known), to captivate and delight a patriotic crowd. A varied selection of other types also appeared, from vintage classics to modern military airframes - overall, the event had the feel and pace of an old RAF At Home Day, and its highlights more than mitigated for long pauses in the flying programme. The sight and

sound of so many Corsairs in one place was breathtaking - and may never be experienced again.

Thanks go to the organisers for accommodating 'FlyPast' and for the hospitality shown by the photo-pit crew led by Tom Walsh, and the ramp crew efforts of John Hogan to make the author and his fellow enthusiasts feel so welcome.

Below
Eleven Wright R-2800s are run up in unison for power-checking purposes. The airshow's name, Thunder Over Michigan, has rarely seemed more appropriate.





This Goodyear FG-1D, Bureau of Aeronautics number (BuAir) 92468/530 from the Dixie Wing of the Commemorative Air Force, represents the US Marines VMF-312 aircraft flown by 1stLt M O Chance, at Okinawa, 1945. The airframe shown here had a long career with US Navy and USMC squadrons, and then flew with the Honduran Air Force. ALL KEV BAXTER



Flying from USS 'Valley Forge' and USS 'Boxer', F4U-4 BuAir 97143 (now owned and flown by Jim Tobul) completed more than 200 missions during the Korean War, as well as operating with the Honduran Air Force. This season the aircraft has been performing the 'Class of 45' act alongside Scott 'Scooter' Yoak's P-51D Mustang 'Quick Silver'.



Lone Star Flight Museum's F4U-5N was constructed for the Argentine Navy with which it served during the 1950s. The aeroplane was restored in Breckenridge, Texas and wears the colours of night-fighter ace Lt Guy Bordelon of VC-3. Although not evident here, it was clear from some of the looks and gestures from the pilots that they knew they'd been part of something very special during this event.





Above

Corsair 'Marine's Dream' runs through a sprightly display in pursuit of the formation leaders; this FG-1D won awards for the standard of its restoration in 2000. Its markings represent those of the USMC ace and Medal of Honor recipient LtCol Ken Walsh.

Above right

A vigorous tail-chase ensued when the 11 Corsairs launched into their display. Seen here are two of the aircraft flying around the runway threshold in line astern, the haze of the high-80°F temperatures distorting the scene and adding to the 'heat' of the action.



The night photo-shoot comprised: P-51 'Swamp Fox', B-25 'Yankee Raider' and as shown here, Corsair 'Annie Mo' (BuAir 121881), running at high power, with wings folded and lights on. The organisers gave much thought to details that might have been overlooked. For example, they employed a fire truck to wet the tarmac, creating some pleasing reflections.



Vought F4U-5NL, BuAir 124692, belongs to the Collings Foundation and represents an aircraft of VC-3, a composite night-fighter squadron that detached its assets among the US fleet during the Korean War era. The aircraft still carries the radome under the starboard wing and a drop tank on the port station. The latter offset the drag of the radome.



Above

A practice formation flight was carried out on the evening of August 3, in a bid to improve what had been a less polished performance earlier in the day. The results were plain to see when the formation recovered to Willow Run, enabling photographers to capture the most Corsairs flying together since leaving service.

Below

Leading the chase was the CAF's Corsair N9964Z. In this view, the stream had slowed to landing speed to make 'everything down' passes (i.e. wheels, flaps and arrestor hook), using their signature curved approach to simulate a carrier deck recovery.

