

**Plane Crazy Saturday
After Action Report
September 17, 2011**

Al and I were sorry to miss the Bellanca Fly-In at Mojave Airport! It was another Chamber of Commerce kind of day, blue skies, lovely and warm, but not too hot. None of that stuff that makes people chase their hats down the ramp, either! Thank you to everyone who worked on the Plane Crazy in my absence. Wish I could have been in two places at once!

Al's son, Dor Hansen, pulled our airplanes out onto the ramp; JoAnn and Wen Painter brought the merchandise for the MTM booth; Chris and Riitta Martin and Bill Deaver manned the booth and Alan Radecki gave great tours on the tram! Heather Benes and her husband, Jere Calef brought their beautiful red and white Bellanca to Mojave Airport from Ancient Valley Airport and encouraged

their friends to do the same! We had five triple-tailed Bellanca's on the ramp. What a treat!

Ozzie Levy from Fox Field in Lancaster flew over and we appreciate his participation! Jim Roberts flew his Bellanca from Tehachapi Airport and he has a 1957 pickup truck painted to match the airplane! Al Pontius and Adam Pontius each had their Bellanca's on display from Ancient Valley Airport.



(Photo above by Bill Deaver)

Al's Bellanca is painted green and white and is beautiful on the ground and in the air! During an interview with *Aerotech News* reporter, Rebecca Amber, he said, "Airplanes are a passion of mine and I own the most passionate airplane you can have."



Between trips driving the tram, Alan Radecki clicked off a few fabulous photos! Thank you Alan for all of your knowledge of aviation history, energy and talent!

Thank you Rebecca Amber, *Aerotech News* and Bill Deaver, *Antelope Valley Press* for helping me with photos for this report!

Aviation enthusiasts gather on the ramp at Mojave Airport to hear Jere Calef talk about his Bellanca and to get a close look at the Cruisair's on display.

In 1910, a young Sicilian named Giuseppe Mario Bellanca immigrated to the United States with dreams of building aircraft in the New World. His first aircraft was a revolutionary design with a high wing, engine and propeller in the front and the tail at the rear! (The Wright brothers and other early aircraft designers positioned the tail at the front and the propellers in the rear.) Bellanca was the man who put the propeller at the front of the airplane!

After World War II, Bellanca focused on production of the four-seat model 14-13-2, known as the Cruisair Senior. This aircraft featured a retractable landing gear that deployed with a manually cranked bicycle chain system. The Cruisair Senior was modestly priced and delivered exceptional performance.

Bellanca workers put plenty of care into their wooden wings and, if properly cared for, these wings will last a long time.



Bellanca's were essentially hand-crafted airplanes, the wooden structure of the Cruisair didn't lend to mass production, although one article claimed the Bellanca Aircraft Company produced five per day.

The wings required hand fitting thousands of small parts. Fabric covering also demands an enormous amount of time and talent.

You can bet that every one of these beautifully restored Bellanca's that flew in to Mojave Airport is kept in hangars to protect the wood and fabric. I read several articles online and liked this phrase the best when describing a Bellanca – they have 'vintage charisma!'

An article from Air Progress Vintage Buyers Guide in 1989 described the Bellanca Cruisair as a "Cardboard Constellation," because it has three tails like the Lockheed Constellation airliner from the early 1950s.

Original Bellanca Cruisairs had 150-horsepower Franklin engines and would cruise over 150 miles per hour! Some Cruisairs will look like later models because





they have been converted to larger Lycoming O-360 or O-435 engines with controllable propellers.

Jim Roberts (Tehachapi Airport) brought his 1957 truck for display too, but left it in the parking lot. He could have parked it next to the airplane. Hope everyone had a chance to see it! Both the airplane and the truck have the same paint scheme!

Admiring pristine aircraft is a great way to spend a few hours on a Saturday!



Alan Radecki even captured some takeoffs!





Chris Martin and his wife Riitta, drove from Los Angeles to set up the Mojave Transportation Museum booth for me and I do appreciate their willingness to help!

Our friend Maggie Geimke had a booth set up with Usborne Books At Home children books too!



Al and I were in Reno with the intention of attending the Reno Air Races. We wanted to cheer for

our friend Matt Jackson, pilot of the Sea Fury “Furias” with a Pratt & Whitney R-4360 engine, in the Gold Race on Saturday and Sunday.

We arrived in Reno right at the time of the heartbreaking and disastrous crash of Jimmy Leeward in the highly modified P-51 Mustang, carrying the name “Galloping Ghost.” The crash occurred on the ramp right in front of the VIP box seats, with fatal injuries to spectators.

Leeward raced at Mojave in 1976 winning the Silver Race in a P-51 Mustang.

The 2011 Reno Air Races were cancelled and the entrance to the airport was closed. We came home late Saturday.

The air races in Reno generate \$85-million for



Jimmy Leeward, the winner of the Unlimited Silver Race at Mojave 1976, is seen in the cockpit of his #9, “Miss Florida”. Photo: John Tegler

the city and surrounding area.

Next Plane Crazy Saturday – October 15, 2011! Celebrating 100 years of Naval Aviation!