

Record-holding pilot Osterud a favorite

By Lia Salciccia
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

A favorite of military and civilians alike in the Eugene airshow was Joann Osterud.

Famous for her broken records, her 5-foot-3, 100-pound frame, her amiable manner and her penchant for loops, Osterud's act in the airshow last weekend demonstrated what her press release calls "finesse instead of muscle to coax the aircraft through precise, demanding maneuvers."

"Everybody has their own style," she said. "You've got basically all of the same moves. You got your straight level, upside down, rolls, sharp rolls, and your leaps. ... It's how you put them together."

Osterud compares her style to free-style figure skating.

"I like to fly upside down a lot," said Osterud, who holds the world record for inverted flight — 658 miles. She's also broken the 58-year-old national outside loop record held by Oregonian Dorothy Hester Stenzel.

In 1989, above a North Bend audience that included Stenzel herself, Osterud set "mini-goals" for herself. She first surpassed Stenzel's record of 69 loops, then Hal McClain of Houston's record of 180 loops, then finally reached the number of 200 loops and decided to call it quits.

Just then, one of her favorite songs came on the in-cockpit tape player and she decided to stick it out for one more song and eight more loops, setting the new

national record of 208 inverted loops.

"I listen to music in the cockpit. Didn't you hear it?" Osterud said.

But the music and the moves are all she thinks about in the air, for flying takes all of one's concentration.

When Osterud is not stunting in airshows she is flying a Boeing 747 jet for United Airlines as a commercial pilot.

"Flying for United is like driving a big luxury car and this one is like my dirt bike that I ride on the weekends," said Osterud, proudly surveying her 30-foot, 350-horsepower engine, blue-and-yellow plane named the Ultimate 300S.

Osterud admits her luck in being able to do what she's always wanted to do — fly.

"Do you realize that this September is the 25th anniversary of my first lesson? When I learned to fly, the military wouldn't take women (in their pilot programs)," said Osterud, who learned through private lessons.

Now a resident of California, Osterud said she misses the Pacific Northwest where she grew up.

"I like to be here," she said of Eugene. "The air is clean. ... The people are friendly."

Osterud said the lineup of acts in the Eugene Airshow were "first class"

When asked about family and off-time, Osterud flashed a grin and asked, "Off time? What's that? ... I used to have a cat."



Eugene kids watch Northwest native Joann Osterud perform stunts in her plane Friday at the Eugene Airshow. Photo by Anthony Forney

AIRSHOW

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cost.

The airshow is a fund-raiser for the aviation program at Lane Community College. While the Saturday and Sunday crowds reached 25,000 people, Friday was a special day open only to the military, underprivileged kids and the media.

Kids from groups like the Make a Wish Foundation, an organization that matches terminally ill children with their deepest wishes got to meet heroes like the Misty Blues Skydiving team and the famous Navy stunt pilots, the Blue Angels.

The military brought to Eugene a show ranging from the biggest plane built in the country, the mammoth transport aircraft C-5B Galaxy, to the sneakiest plane built in the country, the Stealth Fighter F-117, euphemized by the announcer as the "hero of Desert Storm."

Somewhere in the middle of that wide range were the Blue Angels, the world-famous flying team of the U.S. Navy. Producing sounds that seemed apt to rip holes in the

sky, their routine was the loudest and longest, featuring such dazzling maneuvers as the 400 mph diamond roll.

A favorite was the Stealth F-117 fighter, which snuck up on the crowd from the left while the announcer lamented about the Pepsi he spilled on his shirt. While on the ground, it was taped off and guarded.

Rick Dunham, one of only 300 pilots to fly a Stealth fighter, said that what makes it unique is the shape and the radar-absorbent material.

In other words, this black, angular machine with a vulture's beak and a swallow's tail is designed especially to prevent the enemy from detecting its radar. But what's more, the Stealth can place a bomb "in your can of Bud," said the announcer, who also commented on its menacing look.

The C-5B Galaxy is as blatant as the Stealth is subtle for good reason. Completely empty, this aircraft weighs 400,000 pounds and is used to transport everything from smaller planes to vehicles to a group of dolphins used in research by the Navy Seals.

The plane seen at the airshow is from Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield, Calif. With

maximum fuel load and carrying capacity it can weigh up to 800,000 pounds and can go from San Francisco to Frankfurt, Germany in 13 hours, said crew chief Frank Scivoni. The plane can be refueled in the air.

For the showgoer who wasn't impressed by a military show of size and strength, they were perhaps wowed by the show of skill demonstrated by civilian flyers.

They could watch Steve Wolf take the red Samson, built by he and his wife after a 1948 stunt plane, through figure eights and an eight-sided loop that formed what announcers termed "a giant stop sign in the sky."

They could marvel at the spunky act, Yak Attack, which was awarded "Outstanding New Act of 1992" by *General Aviation News*. The act consisted of two Russian Yak-50 aerobatic aircraft performing aerobatics around a World War II military twin-engine transport aircraft, piloted by lead pilot Bill Reesman in Yak-01, Ralph Riddell in Yak-02 and Tim Austen in a Beech-11.

Their planes playfully rolled over each other and passed nose to nose. Reesman wowed spectators with an upward, inverted, flat spin spiral called the "Russian Roulette."

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