

Planes to fly again at Card's Airpark on Saturday

Remote-control crafts first to take off from location since 1993 in rededication ceremony

By **Jolene Guzman**
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Joe Card Jr. loved flying.

He took a thrilling plane ride with famous "barnstormer" and stunt pilot Tex Rankin in 1937. Card saved money for a year to begin flying lessons at Salem Airport, learning a half-hour at a time until he earned his pilot's license.

In 1940, Card and a few others who were infected with the "flying bug" started the Dallas Flying Club. They built an airstrip and hangar, and purchased a plane to share. But soon after the club launched, the nation was at war and all non-military planes within 90 miles of all coastlines were grounded.

Card, then married to his wife, Betty, began training to become a flight instructor for the U.S. Navy.

"At that time, the United States didn't have a lot of trained pilots," said Diane Weaver, one of Joe and Betty's daughters. "It was a big deal to be able to teach people to fly."

Card had plans for after World War II and, of course, they included flying.

"Once the war was over, he wanted to build an airport," Weaver said. "He just loved flying."

In 1946, the Card family purchased 50 acres of land for what would become Card's Airpark. Joe and Betty and a small crew built the hangar by hand. It would serve the airpark until it closed in 1993, two years after Joe died.

Since then, most of the land was sold and is now occupied by Dallas Retirement Village, Safeway, Goodwill and residential homes. All that remains is a small strip of land and the hangar, recently restored by Weaver and her sister Bette Jo Lawson, at the bottom of the hill on Orchard Drive in Dallas.

"My sister and I didn't want to let the building go," Weaver said. "I think it looks pretty good now. It has all new siding and some of the trusses were rebuilt."

They added a sign reading "Card's Airpark: In loving memory of Joe and Betty Card."

Saturday at 10 a.m. Dallas re-



Photo courtesy of Diane Weaver
Joe and Betty Card owned and operated Card's Airpark in Dallas for nearly 50 years, opening it in 1946. Saturday morning, what is left of the airpark will be rededicated by the Dallas Wingdingers RC Club.



Photo courtesy of Diane Weaver
JOLENE GUZMAN / Itemizer-Observer
The Card's Airpark in its heyday also had an automotive shop, which helped support the airpark. Today, the hangar is like brand new after a multiple-year restoration by Diane Weaver and Bette Jo Lawson.

ote control plane group Dallas Wingdingers RC Club will rededicate what remains of the airpark, located at the corner of Orchard Drive and Card Avenue. The event will include the first take off of a plane — albeit remote control — from the airpark in years.

Weaver said talk of a rededication began after a club member asked her if she had any plane artifacts from the time the airpark was open.

She didn't have much, but she did have an unfinished model airplane she wanted to have completed.

Club members took on the task, finishing the plane and painting "Wing Walking with Betty" across the wingspan in honor of Weaver's mother, who wrote a column of the same name for the Polk County *Itemizer-Observer* when the airpark was still open.



JOLENE GUZMAN / Itemizer-Observer
For many in Dallas at the time, Card's Airpark went by another name: the Dallas Airport.

Weaver and Lawson have fond memories of the airpark's heyday.

"My sister Bette Jo and I grew up walking around the crashed airplanes, and playing in the crashed airplanes," Weaver recalled.

There were a number of crashes at the airpark, but fortunately none that Weaver can remember resulted in major injuries.

"There was always something to talk about at school because there was always something special that happened, a plane crash or a big, huge plane (landing at the airpark)," Weaver said.

She said the airpark was used for fly-in events, circuses, drag racing, and even a race track was built on site. Weaver said that track was reportedly the "fastest modified hard-top track in the Northwest."

"He (Joe) wanted it to be like a family affair. We had picnic tables all over," Weaver said. "There was always a lot of activity."

For Lawson and Weaver, Saturday's rededication will honor the years of effort their parents put into maintaining the airpark in Dallas.

"It was pretty emotional for my mom to close it because it had meant so much to my dad — and her — but especially my dad," Weaver said. "It was very traumatic for me when we closed it because it had been a daily part of my life. ... I think it's real special."

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