

MINI OSHKOSH IN SOUTH AFRICA

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(Photos Courtesy of the Author)

INTEREST IN EXPERIMENTAL aircraft is burgeoning in South Africa. Wendell Trogdon, EAA 4029 (Lifetime), a founder member of EAA Chapter 8 in Greensboro, North Carolina, and his wife, Cam, have recently returned from two weeks holiday in South Africa where they plunged headlong into last minute preparations for the Simba Aero-Show held at Springs, near Johannesburg, on March 17.

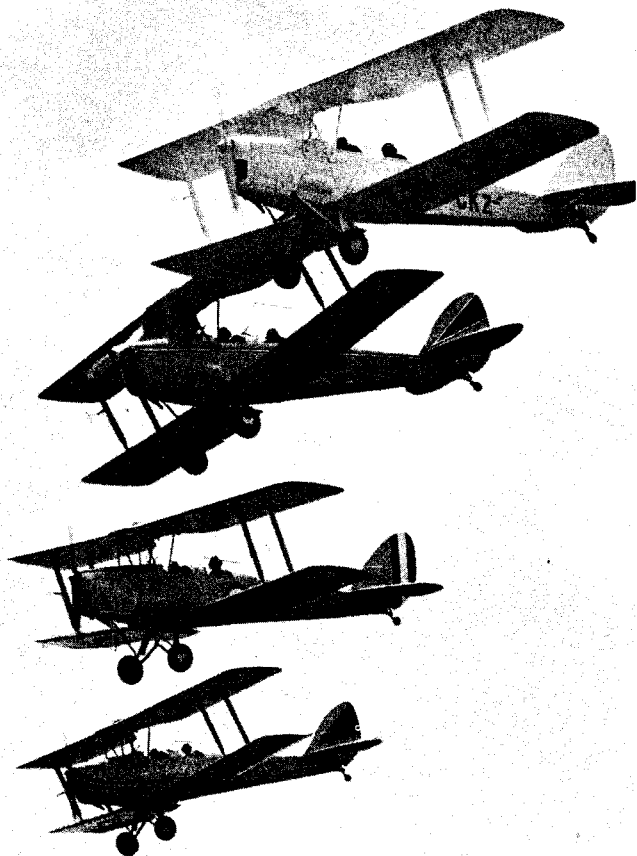
By local standards, it was a real big event sponsored by Simba-Quix, South Africa's biggest snack company. About 55 aircraft attended the fly-in. Chapter 322 did the organizing under Ron Johnstone and in conjunction with the hosting club, The East Rand Flying Club, under Chris Immelman. The EAA started up in South Africa eight years ago. So far, they have put 17 pilots in the air and about 32 are on the stocks in various stages of construction.

Wendell described the show as a mini-Oshkosh scene and said, as an outsider, he believed the show, which attracted 5000 people was a big boost for private aviation in South Africa where the public is still inclined to think of EAA as sticks and strings machines.

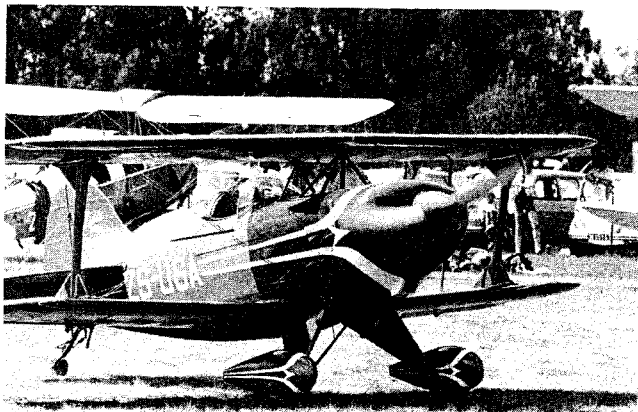
The show was strictly for pre-1950 and homebuilt aircraft. By 1100 hours about 55 pilots had parked their machines in three long rows in front of a crowd of 4,000 people. Together they represented a spectacular show of aviation history.

The line-up included seven Tiger Moths, a Hornet Moth (reputed to be one of only five left in the world today), an Aeronca, Beech Staggerwings, Fairchilds,

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Tiger Moth line up just prior to the start of a race. 3 more joined up before the starter's flap dropped.



Johnny Woods in his father's 180-hp four-aileron Pitts.

Austers, a Stinson, an Ercoupe, Chipmunks, a couple of old Cessnas, a Taylorcraft, an Erasmus Special, a Topsy Nipper, a Mini Ace and a Pitts Special.

The crowd was in for a day of surprises. Excitement and rank curiosity mounted as the program got underway. The public was treated to a display of the vintage and custom-built aircraft and a run down on costs and facts and figures about them. Scheduled starting time was 1100 hours, but the public arrived early and by 1000 hours was already pressing for a closer look at the participating aircraft.

The major event of the day was the Tiger Moth race and it was an exciting moment when seven beautifully restored Tiger Moths took off, circled the airfield and flew in formation over the crowd for the start of the race.

Bob Hay of Johannesburg flew off with first place and will be first pilot to have his name on the Simba Tiger Moth Air Race floating trophy. Vic Dobson of Baragwanath came second and won R50 and Aubrey Weltan of Springs received R25 for coming third in his beautifully preserved yellow Tiger.

South Africa is reputed to have the greatest density of Tiger Moths per capita anywhere.

The most breathtaking events for the public were the spectacular displays of aerobatics by Johnny Woods, who trained in America under Marion Cole and Bill Thomas, and Scully Levin in the Pitts Special. A crowd of 5,000 people has never been so instantly hushed as when they watched the two pilots put the Pitts Special through maneuvers of standard normally only seen at international championships.

A comment overhead in the VIP enclosure after Scully Levin's performance expressed the crowd's admiration perfectly. "That wasn't flying", said one guest, "that was man and machine creating art."

Tony Wessels, well known local aerobating pilot, had the crowds agasp during one of the novelty events when he was billed as an 80-year old granny who had never flown before and who accidentally landed up behind the controls of a Chipmunk.

A delegation of flyers from the Randburg branch, under Bob Botha, of the S. A. Association of Radio Flyers put on an exciting display of aerobatics. Unfortunately, two model aircraft were involved in a head-on air collision. A scaled-down model of a Ryan ST insured for R6,000 proved to be a big draw card for the crowd.

There were six prizes for vintage and homebuilt aircraft and judging was done by a two-man team: Wendell Trogdon and veteran pilot, Bill Fortuin. Prizes were awarded as follows:

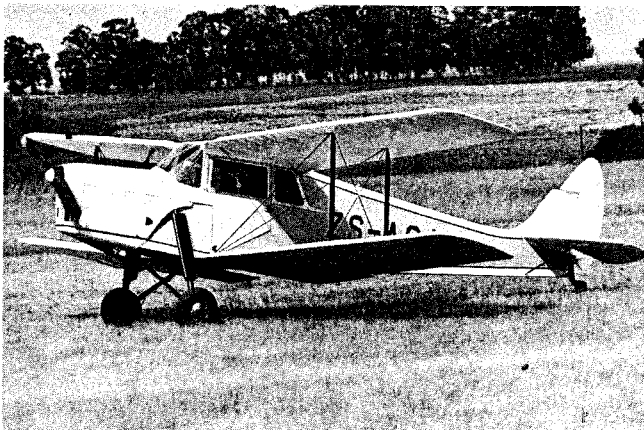
Danie Haupt with his Hornet Moth won the Concours d'Elegance and the prize for the oldest vintage aircraft there;

Mr. Dall of Messina with his Beech Staggerwing won the prize for the vintage that travelled the furthest distance to attend the fly-in;

Woodie Woods won the Concours d'Elegance for the Homebuilts with his Pitts Special;

Phil Gears of Meyerton won the novice prize with his Topsy Nipper;

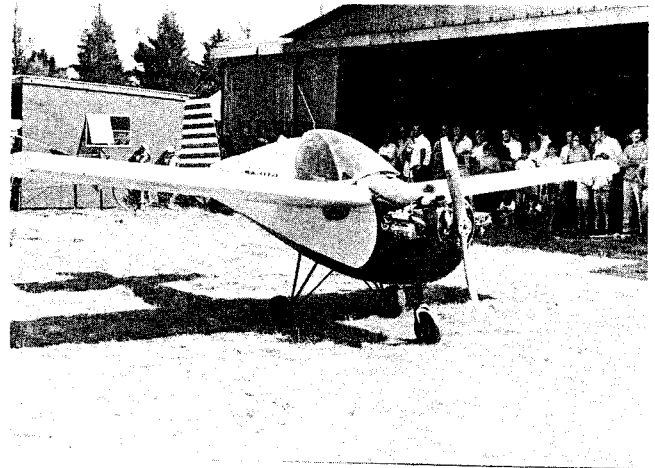
and Tony van Rensburg, of Clocolan, won the prize for the homebuilt that had flown the furthest distance to participate.



One of the big award winners was this rare de Havilland Hornet Moth beautifully restored by Danie Haupt. It won the Vintage division Concours d'Elegance and an award for being the oldest aircraft at the fly-in.

The organizing committee started planning the fly-in in January, found themselves a sponsor in Simba-Quix, and have done a first class public relations job in laying the sticks and strings image attached by the public to homebuilts and in stirring up interest in preserving vintage aircraft.

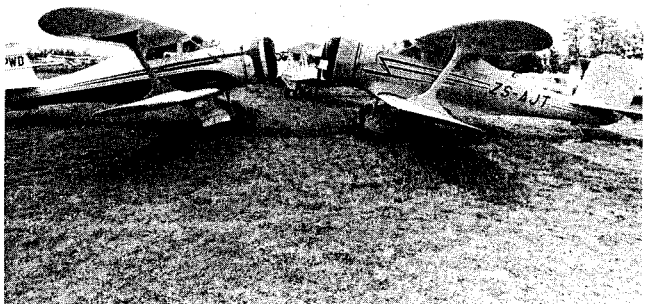
It is believed that this is the first time a commercial concern has sponsored an air show in South Africa and this is regarded as a potentially powerful move for boosting private aviation in the future.



Phil Gears of Meyertown won the Novice Prize for his Topsy Nipper.



The author, Moira Allen, gets a ride in the front pit of a Tiger.



Two-thirds of South Africa's Staggerwing fleet — the third one was unable to attend!