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Local News - Sunday, July 9, 2006

## Those daring young men in their flying machines Annual Cracker Fly-in draws hundreds

By **ASHLEY COX**  
The Times

Say the name of Mark Fullerton's Citabria airplane backward and it sounds a lot like "aerobatic."

And that's exactly what the 37-year-old pilot from Calhoun likes to be in his blue and white aircraft, built in 1975. His feats include upside-down flying, aerobatic rolls and hammerheads, soaring straight up in the air, then immediately flying in a downward direction.

Fullerton was one of about 150 pilots who flew in Saturday morning for the 38th annual Cracker Fly-in at Gainesville's Lee Gilmer Memorial Airport.

The event is sponsored by Experimental Aircraft Association 611.

"We see more unique planes at this airshow than anything we go to," Fullerton said.

Three Ercoupes painted to look like tigers fit into the unique category.



Tom Reed The Times

**Bob Hedgecok of Barnesville watches the edge of the wing as he parks his 1928 Stinson Detroit SM-2 on Saturday at the Cracker Fly-in at Lee Gilmer Airport. The plane was one of more than 100 antique, classic and homemade planes that filled the airport for the annual show.**

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The planes are part of Tiger Flight, a four-plane formation flying team in Rome.

The planes, originally called "Twin Tail Tigers," were made between 1946 and 1947 and used as subhunter planes during World War II.

They were also the first planes to be made with tricycle landing gear, pilot Bart Barber said.

These days, the planes are being used in a more light-hearted manner.

The Tiger Flight team has a motivational program for children that teaches them to pilot their own future, Barber said.

He said children are less likely to be frightened by the size of the Ercoupes when learning about aviation.

"They look like Tigger the tiger," Barber said. "They're very docile airplanes. Normally the kids are just all over these."

The bold orange-and-black-striped aircraft were a hit with 6-year-old Mark Sweet, who came to the fly-in with his grandfather, Charlie Moore.

"I like the tiger planes," Sweet said.

Moore preferred the older biplanes. "I've always wanted to fly in one," he said.

Another fan of airplanes is Gainesville resident Richard Maclagan, who was at the fly-in for the first time with his four children.

Melissa Maclagan, 12, said she has never flown before, but enjoyed looking at all the airplanes. "They look so cool," she said. "I wish I could go in one."

Her sister Rachel, 11, was content to admire the planes as long as her feet were planted on solid ground.

"I like airplanes but I'm scared to fly," she said.



Tom Reed The Times

**Joe Christian of Naylor wipes off the wing of his 1945 J-3 Piper Cub after arriving Saturday at the Cracker Fly-in.**



Tom Reed The Times

**Carlus Gann of LaFayette taxis his T-34 Mentor into a space along the line of planes Saturday morning at the fly-in.**

No matter the color or size of the aircraft, the one thing that draws pilots to the fly-in from a 200-mile radius is their love of aviation.

Phil Cataldo, a Tiger Flight pilot, said flying in formation takes a lot of discipline, camaraderie and skill, but that it's also "a blast."

Camaraderie is important for Fullerton, who said since the aviation community is a small one, everyone knows each other's planes.

Fullerton's love for being in the sky comes from his childhood, when he would soar through the air with his father, who also owned a plane.

"Flying is just something really neat to do," Fullerton said. "It's exciting when you just leave the ground and you're watching the treetops go by."

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