



EAA AIR VENTURE - IS IT OVER ALREADY?

News / Events / Festivals



By Jack J. Pelton, EAA CEO and Chairman of the Board

First of all, let's talk about the numbers that I can talk about already. We had a rough start to the week, but when you look at the number of people camping and the people coming in through the gate, we believe we're on track for a record year. Airport airplane counts are down from the prior year, which is really attributed to airplane arrivals that were lost Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, those who could not come in because we didn't have available surface that was adequate. There was too much rain on the ground.

We do know those airplanes instead went to Fond du Lac and Appleton — they're packed. I've been getting comments from friends who have been texting me saying those airports have massive numbers of airplanes, so the people are here. That's good news. I really, really appreciate the patience of the members in light of us having to park and camp people in places all over Oshkosh's green acres, if you will. EAA members have been very, very supportive of what we had to do.

The Wednesday night air show again continued to be a fan favorite. The Michael Collins event in Theater in the Woods last night, probably other than the general Apollo astronaut one in 2017, was

one of the most crowded ever. It was packed. There were probably 6,000 people who showed up to hear Michael Collins. They were all the way down the vintage flightline. We always find a way to bring something here that's of great interest and truly unique, as we say, only in Oshkosh.

The number of show airplanes and the quality of them have been phenomenal. You go down to the Warbirds area and you're seeing probably the largest lineup of P-51 Mustangs that we've had in many, many years. Same within the Vintage area. There are just some truly, truly unique and special airplanes.

It was a real pleasure to be able to greet Burt Rutan when he arrived. Burt is an icon to the homebuilding industry, and to have him show up and actually act apologetic for not being here the past couple of years was really a sign of how important EAA AirVenture Oshkosh is to the aviation industry, which is an honor we take very seriously.

The Monday night concert was another success. The Fray brought in a big crowd and it was great to see such a young audience here. In fact, I'm noticing more and more young families on the grounds, which is really encouraging for the future. I think we've at least been accommodating enough to where families want to come out and enjoy what's going on.

Finally, 50 years of Oshkosh doesn't happen without the volunteers, and it's been another banner year for volunteerism. I can't think of any other organization out there that pulls together as early as we do to pull off an event like this. And it's been generations of families who do this. I think the experience is one that they enjoy, so they keep coming back, but this cannot happen without the volunteers. So again, hats off to the loyal volunteers that we have. Thank you all for another unforgettable year.

29 JULY 2019

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