



Flying Proms was a Great Success!

With airplanes stowed, tents being removed, and portapotties still to pick up it seems that now is a good time to stop and write you all a quick note of thanks for your support of Flying Proms.

It is probably not a secret to most of you that Flying Proms has been one of the more difficult events for the Museum to execute over the years. It requires a great deal of coordination between a lot of moving parts, and the show itself requires a lot of attendees to make it all work. Whether it is symphonies, fireworks, aircraft or band shells, they are all expensive, and all require considerable planning effort and lead time. It is for this reason that the event has been on hiatus since its 2019 edition.

However, with calls for its return reaching us throughout the winter and early part of 2022 we decided to embrace the risk represented by Flying Proms and its significant up-front costs, and put it on the schedule. I won't tell you that we weren't concerned about the up-front costs, or the scale of the work that needed to be done to return the show to the field, and there is always a few weeks of agony wondering if we will sell enough tickets to cover the cost.

In the environment that we were working in, Flying Proms represented a risk of sorts. With all the expenses on the front end – what if we don't sell enough tickets to cover the cost? Well, the good news is, the public response to the event was fantastic, and not only were the costs of the event covered by the record crowd – but the event is returning significant revenue to the Museum to support ongoing programs and aircraft demonstrations. I don't want to dig too deeply in here with only preliminary numbers while we wait for final expense tabulations, but the event raised in gross terms, over \$100,000.

From all that has been related to me, the 2,261 people that attended really enjoyed the show. Some explained that the weather itself made it the best show ever, but I think there are a couple of really important contributing factors that I want to address, that are sometimes overlooked.

The success of the show rested not just on the weather, or on the staff, or on the pilots, or even on the volunteers alone – but rather on the strength of the team that we all form when we are working together. Collectively, our efforts multiply each other's impact and we can do phenomenal things. The return of Flying Proms in 2022 was one such massive accomplishment that relied on the strength we all draw from one another. Over 50 Volunteers put in more than 400 hours in support of the show, and it simply couldn't have happened without everyone playing their vital part.

Whether it was your first time, or your tenth time (that's right, this was the 10th Flying Proms) I am immensely proud of the passion and investment that was shown by our volunteers. From greeting our first visitors to the stowing of the last airplane, everyone's personal commitment to the success of the event showed.

I will confess that I was scared going into the event. I was being asked to fill a role I was not sure I was capable of filling. The uniqueness of Flying Proms means that past airshow experience doesn't necessarily count for much when trying to line airplanes up with musical performances. Despite the fear however, what I never felt was alone. I knew that I could count on the strength of the team that we have built here at the Museum, and that no matter the specific nitty-gritty challenges that arose, we would be able to overcome them to the betterment of the event.

Sound check including the opening bars of the National Anthem forcing everyone to their feet across the field? Challenge Met, and Overcome. Windstorm in the gift shop blowing all the merchandise away? Challenge Met, and Overcome. Everyone arriving at 5pm promptly and swarming admissions? Challenge Met, and Overcome.

This year marked a subtle (or perhaps not so subtle) pivot in the way that Flying Proms was programmed. We sought to shape the event as a celebration of the American Spirit, deviating somewhat from its distinctly British origins with a focus on patriotic music, and milestones in American military history. While it was a great show, and the flying was fantastic, it occurs to me that the greatest celebration of the American spirit that was offered at the event was the combined effort of everyone putting it on.

We come from all different backgrounds, we are different ages and genders, and under different circumstances we might not even all know each other, but we come together in celebration of history that we all share. Our combined effort creates a result greater than the sum of its parts and we all share in that success.

So whether you are back at your real job today, or still tapering off the Advil you had to take after the event on Saturday, take a moment to stop and reflect on what we achieved together. If you are like me and basically had the world skid by in a blur for two hours, please enjoy the selection of attached images that, I feel, really captured the heart and soul of the event.



This was the first image I saw of the event. Texted to me from Jon Brawner in the PBY it shows our modified layout this year working really well.



Taken by friend of the Museum Ricardo Von Puttkammer, this neat shot of the P-40 was captured during rehearsal. The rehearsal for proms is vital, but was complicated this year by the immense heat on the ramp on Friday afternoon. We even had to advance the start time to avoid the Friday night weather complications. If you see a pilot who flew in the show, don't forget to thank them – this is not the easiest type of flying to accomplish!



Seen here dressed as *Gilligan* shortly before the *Three Hour Cruise* was set to depart is Chris Vtipil. If you were out here the week before the event you probably saw him striping parking lots, etc. What you may not know is that Chris does that on a voluntary basis, and he is on his own time when he supports events out here at the Museum.



Justin Fortier, Museum Volunteer, captured this great picture of the Skyraider taking off at the beginning of Victory at Sea. I used to watch the show with my Grandfather, and hearing the theme performed live with Navy aircraft overhead was just awesome!





This image that Ricardo von Puttkammer captured shows Museum Pilot Mark Gannucci getting into the spirit of the event with a star spangled helmet in the cockpit of the P-40.





The crowds at intermission were really excited to see the performing aircraft up close. Although we were running slightly behind schedule, we were able to adapt the timing to allow people more time with the aircraft by removing a song later in the program.





No event is ever perfect, and as is tradition after these things, if you have notes or feedback on a particular area of the event you can pass it along to Zack (volcoord@aviationmuseum.us) or you can mention it to me of course!

Thank you again for all that you do for the Museum!



Keegan Chetwynd

Director, Military Aviation Museum

