



THE STEARMAN FLY-IN, over the weekend, had planes, hot air balloons and skydivers. Golf carts guided taxing aircraft to parking spots.

Large crowd enjoys fly-in activities

Large crowds enjoyed the aerial adventures at the 27th Stearman Fly-In in St. Francis, over the weekend.

An early morning rain on Saturday stopped the hot air balloons from free flying, but John Kugler of McCook, inflated later in the morning and tethered the seven-story high balloon. While it floated gracefully, skydivers landed beside it. John and Linda Nash also inflated their balloon.

The five Stearman aircraft attending flew often, so there was nearly always an airplane in the sky. Many spectators took rides in the Stearmans, which are WWII vintage, fabric-covered biplanes

with radial engines.

Over the weekend, skydivers made about 25 skydives, and a total of 45 aircraft attended. While the weather was very good, the forecasts were ominous: that fact, coupled with the economic downturn, reduced the number of aircraft attending compared to previous years.

Perhaps the rarest bird attending was a 1945 Stampe' which was flown by Bud Silvers of Colorado Springs.

More information about the event and many photos are available at the official website, <http://stearmanflyin.org>.



HOT AIR BALLOONS at the Stearman Fly-In on Saturday and Sunday were unable to fly but several inflated on the airport grounds (top right). Clockwise: Bonnie Henderson, St. Francis, helped her 2 1/2 year-old granddaughter, Sophie Jean Stockam, Wichita, into the plane; motorcycles, many from the Colorado front range, rode in for the Stearman, raising money for St. Jude Children's Hospital (far left is Rob Schiltz, St. Francis); Robert Grace was caught coming down; Stearman planes, the WWII vintage fabric-covered bi-plane.

Herald staff photos by Casey McCormick

