

Aviation Venture Crew 803

Fly In Pagosa Springs, Colorado



Okay, so it wasn't exactly a combat mission, and Jacob did have a little help flying the aircraft. I guess the event could be best characterized as a joy ride in the beautiful skies over Pagosa Springs with a very cool aircraft. However, with Santa Fe Top Gun instructor Ken Kalstad, an ex-navy F/A-18 pilot, Jacob did get a taste of what he might have experienced as a student naval aviator in preparation for combat, including a low angle bombing run and a couple of victory rolls.

Above: Pagosa Springs High School Senior Jacob Haynes with the WWII naval aircraft he just flew.

The aircraft is the famous North American SNJ navy trainer, which along with its Army Air Corps twin, the T-6, was used in the training of all American military pilots during WWII. As a matter of fact, Ken's father flew the SNJ in navy pilot training in Corpus Christi, Texas in 1942 before joining a PBY Blackcat squadron for combat operations in the Pacific. The SNJ remained in service for the Navy until 1956 and was used for training missions ranging from aerobatics to carrier landing qualifications. The SNJ was released for civilian use by the early 1970's.

But why Jacob? Anyone could have paid for the ride. Jacob got it free. Did he win a lottery, or was he just at the right place at the right time. In the words of an unknown sports motivator, "the harder you work, the better your luck." Or, how about this one: "luck is when preparation meets opportunity." So I guess Jacob did get lucky. The flight was awarded by Santa Fe Gun, a Santa Fe, NM business which visited Pagosa Springs for the Chamber of Commerce fly-in weekend May 16 and 17. According to Ken, Jacob was selected for the donated flight because of his high grade point average, and his status as president of the Aviation Venture Crew 803.



T-6, SNJ

The Aviation Venture organization was only recently founded by airport manager Capt. Bill McKown (USN ret.). Bill came to Pagosa Springs barely a year ago, following a distinguished career in Naval Aviation. He started the "Venture" program to give local kids a unique opportunity for exposure to the aviation industry. Bill has brought an abundance of available resources to his program to create a vibrant and challenging program that may inspire eager participants towards aviation careers, military or civilian, including college scholarship programs. Participants have learned about airport operations from AvJet FBO Manager Bob Goubitz, and recently completed a

private pilot ground school given by local pilot and flight instructor Ann Kautzky, The ground school has prepared them for the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) private pilot written exam.



Santa Fe Top Gun brings the glory and thrill of aviation to both locals and visitors to Santa Fe NM, but makes occasional excursions to Pagosa Springs. Instructor Ken Kalstad, has over 9,000 mishap free flying hours in dozens of different aircraft, both civilian and military, but says that there is no aircraft more enjoyable to operate than the SNJ. And among the greatest pleasures that he derives from flying for Santa Fe Top Gun is the opportunity it provides him to use a great old aircraft and his own

Above: Crew Advisor, Ann Kautzky, center; Airport Manager, Bill McKown, far left, with Aviation Venture Crew 803 and Santa Fe Top Gun instructors Ken and Don.

incredible Navy experiences to motivate and inspire young people. Ken is U.S. Naval Academy alum, and the USNA admissions representative for northern NM. He is an airshow performer with the SNJ, and can be seen in the Santa Fe Airshow on Saturday, 19 September. Please visit www.SantaFeTopGun.com.

So what is the real theme of this long and convoluted story: a great kid with a bright future (Jacob Haynes), a philanthropic business that cares about kids (Santa Fe Top Gun), an awesome program giving challenge and direction for high school kids (Aviation Venture), or dedicated volunteers (Bill McKown, Bob Goubitz, and Ann Kautzky). Maybe it's more a Navy Recruiting pitch. After all, what Jacob said of his flight as he exited the aircraft was "that was awesome. I guess I'm going to be a Navy pilot".

Santa Fe Top Gun is pledging a ride as a part of an annual incentive program, recognizing a student in the Aviation Venture program for outstanding citizenship, leadership and academic achievement.

