

## Vintage Luscombes flock to Vinland Valley



[Meagan Thomas](#)

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By [Meagan Thomas](#)

September 29, 2011

People tend to think of airplanes as a means of transportation rather than a hobby, but Saturday, pilots gathered together at the Vinland Valley Aerodrome to celebrate what they consider a lifestyle.

"The idea is the pilots get together and talk about things. They trade ideas (and) try to upgrade the planes," said event organizer Larry Janssen.

Janssen said the idea for a fly-in at the local airport came last year during an antique airshow in Iowa where there was a call for a Luscombe fly-in.

The fly-in included flying contests, a book signing, photo shoots and live music, but the heart of the event was the passion the pilots had for their planes, many of which were Luscombes.

According to John Swick, author of "Luscombe's Golden Age," Luscombes are a specific type of airplane built primarily in the 1940s. About 6,000 planes were manufactured, and now there are over 3,000 that are still in flying condition. The planes are usually in better condition now than they were out of the factory because of the enormous amount of care owners put into them.

"These people have a great deal of pride in (Luscombes) and they maintain them and take care of them," Swick said.

Janssen is the owner of a blue and silver Luscombe. Some flying friends of his found a plane in pieces in a Pomona hanger. They put together the exterior while Janssen worked on the interior, and it is the plane Janssen is currently flying.

Pilots at the Vinland airport try to use the weekends to get in the air and share their love of flying as a group.

"Any Saturday morning, sometimes Sunday mornings, you can find us out here about 6:30 or 7 o'clock in the morning getting ready to go to breakfast somewhere. We usually hop from here to Miami County or to Topeka, have breakfast and fly back just to get in the air and fly," Janssen said.

Each pilot has his own reason for taking flight, but most are pretty similar.

"The thing I like about flying the most is you don't think about your problems. You just think about flying; everything goes away," said Jerry Cobb, a tenant at the Vinland airport. "If you have bills to pay or kids in trouble or whatever, you go flying for a couple hours and forget all about it."

Cobb started flying airplanes in 1963 while in the U.S. Navy. He spent many years bootleg flying before getting his pilot's license in 1986.

Now, Cobb spends as much time in the air as possible. Weather permitting, he tries to be in the air at least five days a week.

"It's my sole source of entertainment in my old age," Cobb said. "I've had that airplane almost 15 years and 3,700 hours of flight time on it, so I fly a lot."

Cobb owns a 1946 white and yellow Luscombe. He has flown all over the country and tries to take one long trip every year. In the past, he has flown to Michigan, Indiana, New Mexico and Texas in a plane that flies about 100 mph.

Airplanes are not the only type of motor vehicle Cobb takes interest in, though. In his lifetime he has raced motorcycles and owned ski boats, fast cars and show cars. However for him, nothing has compared to taking flight.

"I've done so many things in my life, and I could die tomorrow and not feel cheated," Cobb said. "After four or five years you kind of get burned out on it though. But I never get tired of flying."

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**Originally published at:** <http://www2.baldwincity.com/news/2011/sep/29/vintage-luscombes-flock-vinland-valley/>