

## SM 12: Airshow

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G.I. JOE: Special Missions #12

Airshow

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Summary (by Russ Humphress): Three Hundred Feet above Orange County Airport, New York... A Stearman bi-plane comes in for a landing at the airshow. The two occupants, Bert and Ed, watch the various acts, though Bert seems the more interested of the two. Finally we come to the main event: an exhibition by three members of the Joe team. Ace in the Skystriker, Slipstream in the Conquest X-30, and Maverick in the Vector. The three Joes wow the crowd with some excellent precision flying, ending by sky-writing "G.I. JOE!" above the field. After landing, Maverick goes over to check out the older bi-planes, telling Ace and Slipstream that he has "a thing about those old round engines". He meets with Bert, owner (along with the finance company) of the Stearman PT-17. Maverick reveals that his Mother was a crop duster pilot when he was young, and the old bi-plane brings back good memories. Soon Bert and Maverick are in the air in the Stearman. Shortly a lunch wagon, driven by Firefly, crashes through the fence, and heads for the parked Joe aircraft. Temporarily disabling Ace and Slipstream with non-lethal gas, Firefly and two others strip the electronics bays of the Skystriker and the Conquest, and then escape with the Vector.

Meanwhile Bert and Maverick are enjoying the Stearman, doing some acrobatic loops, when Maverick sees that his plane is missing from the Airport. They land and the other Joe pilots fill Maverick in on the situation. Maverick and Bert take back to the air in the Stearman, and give chase. They follow the stolen Vector until the Stearman is almost out of fuel, and they are forced to land, with no airfield nearby.

Luckily, there is a motor speedway nearby, and the owner is a friend of Bert's. After fueling the Stearman, Maverick and Bert once again take to the air, but there is no sign of the Vector. They head back toward the Hudson River, and spot the Vector, but it ducks behind the hills, and when they come to the river valley, the Vector has disappeared again. The river is empty, save for a lone barge. A flight of USAF F-16s shows up, and Maverick and Bert head back to the ground. After a short stop at Bert's home airfield, they arrive back at the Orange County Airport. Ace and Slipstream let Maverick know that the Airforce has had no luck with the search, and Maverick and Bert suddenly realize the Vector must have landed on the barge.

Taking back to the air, they catch up with the barge as it heads down river into New York Harbor. After spotting the Vector's tail fins from the air, they land the Stearman at the closest available landing strip... the flight deck of the U.S.S. Intrepid memorial and Museum. Some helpful bystanders call the Police, FBI, and Harbor Patrol, as Bert and Maverick commandeer a boat and catch up to the barge. Firefly and the other saboteurs open fire as Maverick and Bert board the barge, and Bert decides that this day had been fun until the shooting started. Never-the-less, he comes though, whacking one of the saboteurs over the head before he can shoot Maverick from behind. A number of boats and helicopters surround the barge, and the terrorists give up. Much Later, at an NYPD station, Maverick and Bert are finishing up the paperwork. Bert's plane is being ferried back upstate at federal expense. Later at the pier, the last of the garbage is being hosed off the Vector, and Bert mentions he could use a ride, although he says he won't mind if Maverick can't do that. Maverick says that the regs clearly state that he can't give an unauthorized civilian a ride, however...they don't say anything about letting a civilian drive!

Review: This is definitely one of the cooler stories of the Special Missions series. The basic premise is fairly cool, although for a Top Secret Team, the Joes certainly seem to do a lot of public events and get a lot of press coverage. That aside, there are a number of cool things about this issue, no the least of which is the landing at the Intrepid Museum. However this is but the last in a long line of references to places (and people) in New York state. A number of places are mentioned during the various flight scenes, including Rosendale, Ashokan Reservoir, Rondout Valley, etc. When Maverick and Bert land at the speedway, there is a notation reading: "Thanks to Accord Speedway in Accord, NY, Now closed after 26 years of fun, and to Smitty Smithers, Owner." One tends to get the feeling that this issue is a tribute by the writer to an area, and some specific people, that he knows well, and likes. While this sort of tribute making was not unknown in G.I. Joe, usually it wasn't done very well. This issue is a nice exception.

As we all came to expect from Larry Hama, the details of this story make it seem like it could have really happened. That, in this fan's opinion, is why Larry Hama is so revered among Joe fans. He made it real.

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