

The Blue Angels are **back**

By **KIMBERLY WARREN**
Record-Eagle staff writer

“Oh!” “Aah!” “Oh my gosh!” “How can they do that?” These are just some of the comments that will be heard from spectators at the Blue Angels air show at 1 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, July 6 and 7.

The CenturyTel Festival Air Show is presented by Northern Michigan Toyota Dealers along with Younker's, National City Bank, CableRep Advertising, Netlink Business Solutions, Grand Traverse Resort, High Pointe Golf Club, Kodiak Equipment Company and Sunny 101.9.

The Blue Angels have been wowing crowds since 1946, when Admiral Chester Nimitz started the program as part of a recruitment effort.

The Blue Angel pilots are among the best in the US Navy and US Marine Corps. New pilots come in every year, so there's always a fresh face and fresh show.

“I have been doing this for...about 12 years,” said Steve Plamondon, director of the festival air show. “I don't get tired of it. They change their show every year.”

That's a good thing for fre-

quent festivalgoers: the Blue Angels have been to the National Cherry Festival six or seven times, Plamondon said. They come every other year.

Plamondon said that though the National Cherry Festival is perhaps the smallest show the Blue Angels do, it's one they enjoy coming back for.

“We run a good air show,” said Plamondon. “But I think it's the area that keeps them coming back. It speaks very well for the air show and the area in general that they come back.”

Plamondon said their choice to return is probably an easy one: “If they have the choice of going to do an air show at some base in the desert or coming to Traverse City — I think it's a pretty easy choice.”

One of their most popular maneuvers is the delta formation, when all six jets perform moves at the same time — in formation.

Other crowd-pleasers are the four-plane diamond and the sound barrier performance of two solo pilots.

Don't think the fun ends with the Blue Angels. There's much more to see at the air show.

One of the acts joining the Blue Angels will be Chris Panzel, a Detroit who flies



The Blue Angels air show, one of the most anticipated events of the National Cherry Festival, is scheduled for 1 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, July 6 and 7.

a Michigan-made plane.

“We've been talking to Chris for a couple of years (about coming to the Cherry Festival),” said Plamondon. “The timing was right this year. We got in touch with him early enough so he wasn't booked for another air show. They're booked far in advance.”

Panzel's plane is a Staudacher — a Sierra 300 Delta — which is made just for aerobatics.

“The plane is a mono-plane that is built exclusively for

flying unlimited aerobatics,” Plamondon said. “It is stressed to +/- 12 Gs.

“It's not very comfortable, but what it's designed for it does very, very well.”

Panzel is a member of the US Aerobatics Team, a spot for which he had to compete.

Besides Panzel and the Blue Angels, plane fans will be pleased to see the return of the Red Baron Stearman Squadron. The Red Barons are open-cockpit biplanes from the World War II era.

An F-16 will be on hand

doing tactical demonstrations, and the F-117 stealth jet will do fly-bys both days of the air show.

To view the air show, any seat along West Grand Traverse Bay should be a good one, said Plamondon, as long as it's not in the area that has to be cordoned off for safety reasons.

“Between West End Beach and the Apache Trout Grill, the area will be coridorred off,” he said. “Other than that, there's not a bad seat in the house.”

Air show viewing FAA restrictions this year

- No spectators from West End Beach, NW along the bay to Carter Road.
- Traffic may flow on the Parkway and Bay Street.

Other map labels: No spectators, Aerobatic Box, West Bay, 3,000 feet, 1,000 feet, Buoy Line, East Bay, Front Street, Eighth Street, Division, Spruce, Carter Road, Peninsula Drive.

For complete listing of NCF events, turn to Page 25



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