

# Air show brings crowd first day, rain second day

**By Penny Randall**  
Editor

Aviation enthusiasts had waited three years to see the Blue Angels grace the skies over Naval Air Station Meridian. The first day of the 2011 Golden Wings Over Meridian air show was amazing showcasing some of the most spectacular flying.

Nearly 20,000 spectators lined the tarmac of the flight line sitting on blankets and lounging back in their lawn chairs to watch the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels put on a rousing show in the F/A-18 Hornet.

Because of low cloud cover, the U.S. Army Black Daggers were unable to jump either day, but military and civilian pilots were able to warm the crowd up on Saturday.

Capt. George Clifford, a Hollandale native, and the Viper West F-16 Demonstration Team performed early in the afternoon, but at about 2 p.m. rain showers began moving into the Lauderdale County area. Air show spectators waited for the shower to pass and the sky opened up with sunshine just in time for the Blue Angels to perform.

Blue Angel #1, Cmdr. Dave Koss, led the five other blue and gold jets out onto the runway. For about 40 min-

utes they zigged and zagged across the sky as air show fans, young and old, watched, some holding their hands over their ears to muffle the thunder from the powerful jet engines.

Weather played a huge role on the second day of the air show. The Federal Aviation Administration rules require a minimum ceiling of 1,500 feet but the cloud cover never rose more than 700 feet.

Sadly, no planes or jets performed, but an estimated crowd of 8,000 people enjoyed the static displays and filled their stomachs with some great air show food.

Officials were able to put together a ground parade of war birds from the past that rumbled slowly in front of the fans so they could get up-close pictures. Then the pyrotechnic experts, who had provided the bang and boom Saturday, set off scores of explosions. Air show officials said once the charges and gasoline are set there is no way to recover them so to the joy of many, the charges were ignited and clouds of fire and smoke filled the sky.

On Sunday, the Blue Angels pilots, five of which earned their "Wings of Gold" at NAS Meridian, signed autographs and took photos with spectators for nearly one hour which made many children happy.