

Plane won't be sold — it'll be given away

By **MARY ANN BOURBEAU**

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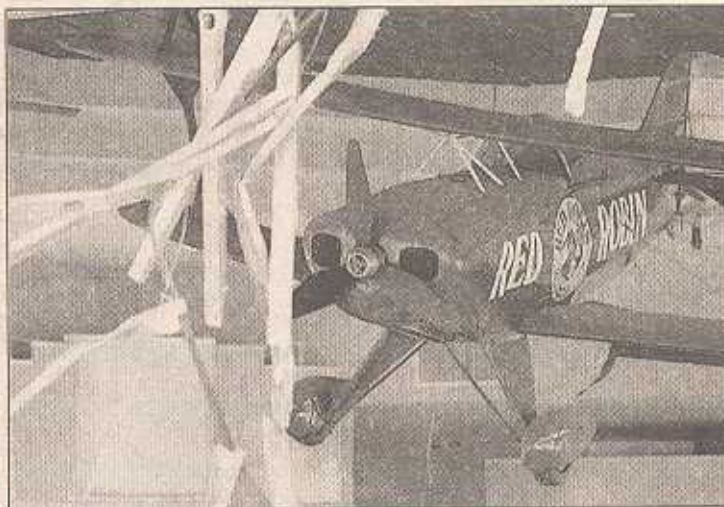
SAYREVILLE: The red biplane that hung inside the Red Robin restaurant on Route 9 has been donated to the Aviation Hall of Fame & Museum of New Jersey at Teterboro Airport.

Though more than a dozen people offered to buy the plane when the restaurant was demolished last month, Danny Matarese, president of Danco General Contracting of Morganville, opted to donate it instead.

Matarese, whose company was hired to demolish the restaurant, was told that the plane would be restored and used in a children's exhibit at the museum, which also hosts events for underprivileged and terminally ill children.

"It went for a good cause," Matarese said. "It wasn't about the money. I wanted to see it go to the right place."

Matarese said he was offered \$5,000 for the plane, with offers



AUGUSTO F. MENEZES/Staff photographer

■ A biplane hangs from the ceiling at the partly demolished Red Robin restaurant Aug. 31.

coming in from people who wanted to restore the plane and sell it for a profit. But when the museum's director contacted him and told him about the programs the museum holds for sick children, the decision was

an easy one for Matarese.

"That just struck a chord with me," said Matarese, who has donated his time and talents in the past with Habitat for Humanity. "There are a lot of people less fortunate than me.

I've been very fortunate."

The plane, which is the gutted shell of a Pitts Special, will be restored at the museum and hung up as part of a children's exhibit. Since the work will be performed by volunteers, it may take two years to get it done, said the museum's director, who did not want his name used. The plane had been hanging in the dormant restaurant for a decade before it was taken down last month, and corrosion and insects have taken a toll on the metal frame.

The Aviation Hall of Fame & Museum of New Jersey was founded in 1972. The 25,000-square-foot museum has air and space equipment and artifacts on display, as well as photographs, fine art and an extensive model collection.

Additional information is available by visiting www.njahof.org.

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