

Gyroplanes take to skies this weekend

Annual fly-in will move to Mt. Vernon Airport from Shelbyville

BY RICK HAYES

MT. VERNON MANAGING EDITOR

MT. VERNON — Five Centralia men — all members of the Rotorcraft Club Chapter 35 based in St. Louis — needed a change of scenery for their annual fly-in.

After recently attending the Midwest LSA Expo in Mt. Vernon, the Centralia men convinced other members of the organization to host their annual show in Mt. Vernon.

Although some gyroplanes will be located at the airport on Friday, the show will actually be held on Saturday and Sunday, starting at 8 a.m. each day.

Mt. Vernon Airport Manager Chris Collins, who announced during an Airport Authority meeting on Aug. 9 that the fly-in would be held locally said it's another sign that the word is getting out about the facilities available in Mt. Vernon.

"This particular group had held its annual meeting and show in Shelbyville for the last 28 years. After some of the guys from the club came to our Expo, they were so impressed with our facilities that they convinced other club members to bring the show here,"

said Collins. "That means that about 250 people will be eating at our local restaurants and staying in our motels for three days."

Club spokesman Larry Miller of Centralia said club members are looking forward to new surroundings.

"When we started this we went to Shelbyville every year. They were very unkind to us. Chris Collins wants us down there. We're looking forward to it. As long as we're welcome, we'll probably be there awhile. The friendliness of the airport staff and the town has been overwhelming so we want to be there," Miller said.

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Submitted Photo

READY FOR ACTION — Centralians, FROM LEFT, Bobby Ireland, Larry Miller and Bill Hammond exhibit their gyro planes that will be shown this weekend at the Mt. Vernon Airport during the Rotorcraft Chapter 35 annual fly-in. Ray Brown is the owner and pilot of the first gyroplane.

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Rotorcraft Club Chapter 35 meets monthly on each Saturday of the month in Greenville.

"We're welcomed at Greenville, and it is centrally-located for our club members, but our choice of Mt. Vernon for the annual show was because of the interstate. It may not be well-known for the first year, but as the years progress, it should get better," Miller said.

Miller also said having a restaurant [Wilkey's Cafe] in close proximity to the show also played a role in the decision.

"We were down there a couple of weeks ago and ate off the buffet. The food is absolutely delicious. We also found out that the weekend of the fly-in he'll be offering breakfast from 8 to 10:30 a.m., so that ought to help bring in a few people," Miller said.

Miller said he, Bobby Ireland and Bill Hammond instigated the move to Mt. Vernon, while Ray Brown and Fred Blair — who knows Collins personally — also had a hand in the move. David Herrmann of Bunker Hill is the club's president.

Gyroplanes are a type of rotorcraft which uses an unpowered rotor in autorotation to develop lift, and an engine-powered propeller, similar to that of a fixed-wing aircraft, to provide thrust. While similar to a helicopter

rotor in appearance, the autogyro's rotor must have air flowing through the rotor disc in order to generate rotation. The first autogyro was flown on Jan. 9, 1923, at Cuatro Vientos Airfield in Madrid. It was invented by Spanish engineer Juan de la Cierva, who wanted to create an aircraft that could safely fly at slow speeds.

Miller said the public is invited to examine the gyroplanes up close this weekend.

"That's why we're doing this. A lot of the fixed wing pilots look down on us. They have a stigma of us being unsafe, and think the gyro is an unsafe machine. We're trying to prove them wrong," Miller said.

There is no admission to attend the show.

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