

## Mitchell B-25, Mustang featured at Expo

BY RICK HAYES

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MT. VERNON — Another flying example of the type made famous by the Doolittle Raid over Japan in April 1942, will be making its first visit to Southern Illinois.

The aircraft will arrive at Mt. Vernon Airport about noon on Monday and will be on display through Monday, Sept. 9.

"Maid in the Shade," a North American B-25J Mitchell Medium Bomber, rolled off North American's Kansas City

**SEE B-25 PAGE 8A**

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**FROM PAGE 1A**

assembly line in June 1944. She served in the 319th Bomb Group, 437th Squadron at Serragia Air Base. "Maid in the Shade" flew 15 combat missions over Italy from early November to late December in 1944. Railroad bridges were the aircraft's main targets.

"Maid in the Shade" will be a showcase exhibit at the Plane & Pilot Midwest LSA Expo, scheduled from Sept. 5 through 7 at Mt. Vernon Airport. It will be joined by Dixie Wing Commemorative Air Force's Red Nose P-51D. The public will be offered rides in the B-25. For more information you may call (480) 322-5503.

"They've kind of followed the Maid in the Shade at other stops this summer," said Airport Manager Chris Collins of the P-51D.

"They looked at what we were doing and thought it was a good thing to be involved in. The Mustang is the number one fighter from World War II. It will be nice to welcome it to the airport. When you talk to World War II vets, the sound of that Merlin engine is what won the war."

Also on display will be the Women Wings, the St. Louis chapter of Women in Aviation, who will host their aircraft wash on Saturday, Sept. 7.

Additionally, the Bowers Fly-Baby Fly-In will occur simultaneously with the Expo. The fly-in is a simple and affordable ticket to the sky for interested homebuilders. Several Fly-Baby aircraft, as well as their owners and builders, will be at the event.

Along with every major LSA distributor on the flight line, there will also be a mix of Part 103, gyroplanes and homebuilts. About 40 vendors will be at the show, according to Collins, who said due

to having extra exhibitors this year, the exhibits will be moved indoors to the terminal, and officials will not be charging admission.

"The one that I'm really excited about is the Personal Rotorcraft," Collins said. Snider will exhibit a turbine powered Mosquito XETreme helicopter.

"We've been trying to get John Snider here the last four years. It's a slick exhibit with polished chrome and different color schemes. I think it will be exciting for people to see this exhibit."

Light sport aviation is a relatively new area of aviation that is gaining popularity. The LSA Expo here is just one of two of its kind in the nation. The first expo was held in Florida several years ago. Light sport planes are smaller aircraft limited to a gross weight of 1,260 pounds and maximum speed of 120 knots. The planes are less expensive than their larger counterparts and are well suited for beginning pilots. Licensing is also less expensive.

Collins said it's hard to estimate attendance for the event, but in past years the event has drawn between 600 to 1,000 spectators for the three days.

"Hopefully, we've put together something for everyone. We hope to double, and maybe even triple those numbers," he said. "We've put about everything we could into this one, so I'm very excited about the potential for this show."

As always, Collins said local volunteers have an opportunity to showcase the Mt. Vernon Airport.

"When I was in Oshekosh people would come up to me and say, 'We love coming to your airport. The people are so friendly, and we can't say enough about the volunteers that come and check on us.' That really helps. That puts Mt. Vernon on the map on a national stage. I can't help but believe that's going to win us some opportunity down the road," Collins said. 8-31-13