

Name of crash victim released

*Ultralight pilot
who died in
crash identified*

BY TESA GLASS
tesa.glass@register-news.com

MT. VERNON — The pilot who crashed his ultralight aircraft Tuesday afternoon south of Liberty Road has been identified as Jason Pearson.

Pearson, 39, of McLeansboro, was killed Tuesday afternoon after his ultralight aircraft crashed near a creek and wooded area south of Liberty Road and east of Chestnut Acres Road, just before 4 p.m. Pearson was pronounced dead at the scene of the accident by Jefferson County Coroner Eddie Joe Marks.

Marks said Pearson's remains have been taken to Hughey Funeral Home and an autopsy is scheduled for Thursday to determine if the death was caused by the crash.

Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Manager Chris Collins was one of those called first to the scene, which could only be reached on foot or ATV. He and first responder representatives from the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office and Jefferson Fire Protection District and a local resident began the initial identification of the pilot.

Collins returned to the airport, where he verified that Pearson's vehicle was at his hangar which housed the aircraft, which had been taken up by Pearson earlier.

The FAA was contacted Tuesday, an official aircraft was asked to fly overhead to take investigative photos for the National Traffic Safety Administration and the FAA. The FAA then requested first responders on the ground take several photographs of the scene.

Collins said although the NTSB and FAA usually don't investigate ultralight crashes, an investigation is underway due to the fatality.

Collins said Wednesday the FAA investigator arrived to

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inspect the scene by 11 a.m. Wednesday morning and left the scene about 1 p.m.

"He released the aircraft to take to the airport, and secure in a hangar," Collins said. "The NTSB is now the owner of the aircraft until they or the FAA release it to the family."

Collins said once in the hangar, the FAA investigator will begin his inspection of each piece of the wreckage.

"It's easier to see everything which is laid out on a level floor," Collins said.

The investigation is expected to take several weeks to conclude.

"As to the official findings, who knows how long it will take on that," Collins said. "There are a lot of guidelines they have to follow. We never know how long these things are going to take."

Pearson was a professional in the aviation industry and active with the local Experimental Aircraft Association. He worked on the pit crew for several hang glider, ultralight and RC shows.

"I've known him for over 20 years," Collins said. "Everyone is devastated at the airport. It hits

close to home."

Collins said when not working in the airshow industry, he would be at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport flying his ultralight, which was based in a hangar at the airport, or talking with other aviation enthusiasts. Pearson used the aviation handle "Snoopy."

"He just got back into town on Monday," Collins said. "He has been in California working. But, we always knew when the airshow circuit was done, because he would come out here and fly when he was home."

Collins said Pearson "lived the aviation life."

"I don't know anyone who was more excited about aviation than Jason," Collins said. "Model

airplanes, remote control airplanes, the ultralight he flew — he loved it all."

"Jason Pearson was not a performer, but without Jason, performers couldn't do their jobs," said Scott McMillan, another aviation professional from Colorado. "Jason was one of the best air show grunts in the business and I am a better person for having known him."

Pearson was also home in August and took part in the 10th Annual Jim LeRoy Memorial Fly-In, hosted by the Hamilton County Fearless Flyers Model Club and served as an officer.

Funeral service information has not been announced at this time.

9/1/16