

Experimental Aircraft Fly-In, Reunion being held this weekend

Fly-in will feature a wide variety of military and civilian aircraft types

BY RICK HAYES

SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

EDITOR'S NOTE: More information about the other events being held this weekend as part of the first annual Mt. Vernon Fall Fest can be found in the Morning Sentinel's special Fall Fest section, which is included in today's edition. The Sentinel will also be publishing a line-up of Saturday's parade in Friday's edition.

MT. VERNON — A commemorative Air Force B-25 Mitchell bomber will be among one of the main attractions at this year's Experimental Aircraft Association Fly-In and Veterans Reunion during the weekend of the Mt. Vernon

Fall Festival.

"The bomber is named after Billy Mitchell, made famous by the raid on Tokyo," explained Airport Manager Chris Collins. "This is being made possible through donations provided by McCarthy Builders, Lipps Construction Co. and the Mt. Vernon Airport."

Rides, at a cost of \$395, will be available on Friday and Saturday. Reservations may be made by calling Matt Conrad in advance at (314) 707-9959.

"We're bringing it over on Friday because a lot of people are volunteering downtown at the fes-

Please see **Fly**, Page 3A

Fly:

Continued From Page 1A

tival, and we wanted to make sure people had a chance to see this airplane," Collins said.

Mitchell served in France during World War I and, by the conflict's end, commanded all American air combat units in that country. After the war, he was appointed deputy director of the Air Service and began advocating increased investment in air power, believing that this would prove vital in future wars. He argued particularly for the ability of bombers to sink battleships and organized a series of bombing runs against stationary ships designed to test the idea.

As part of the Veterans Reunion — that coincides with the Fly-In — Collins is inviting all World War II veterans to have a photograph taken in front of the B-25 bomber at 10 a.m. Saturday.

"We're doing this early enough that people will still have plenty of time to make the parade [a 2 p.m. start]. We also want to give people a chance to meet these war heroes," Collins said.

The airport, in cooperation with Kash Helicopter Services, will provide free helicopter rides to all veterans. Identification is required.

"I can't say enough about Kash providing this service,"

Collins said. "It shows their dedication and commitment to veterans."

Aircraft expected to be exhibited during the Fly-In include C-130, CH 47 (Chinook), UH60 Blackhawk, a Russian trainer L29 Delphin, and several other single engine planes, according to Collins.

He also said the event is an opportunity for children and young people to be introduced to aviation through his Young Eagles program. Free rides will be given to children under the age of 17.

Collins also said three hot air balloons involved in the festival should be available for viewing during the early morning hours and late evening hours on both days. One of the balloonists, Kevin Witzel of Mt. Vernon, will not only show his balloon "Nothing But a Breeze" but will explain the hobby.

"We'll be flying over town on Friday night and probably Saturday morning, and then set up the basket at the airport for people to view," Witzel said.

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Sentinel File.Photo

CLEARED FOR TAKE OFF — One of the war planes from the 2009 EAA fly-in gets ready to fly a demonstration run for the crowd. There will be a number of aviation vehicles and demonstrations during the event this year.