

*"Plane 'is cool addition to have for our Veterans Reunion.'"*

CHRIS COLLINS MT. VERNON OUTLAND AIRPORT DIRECTOR

## World War II fighter appears at Balloons Over Mt. Vernon

BY EMILY ROTH

SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

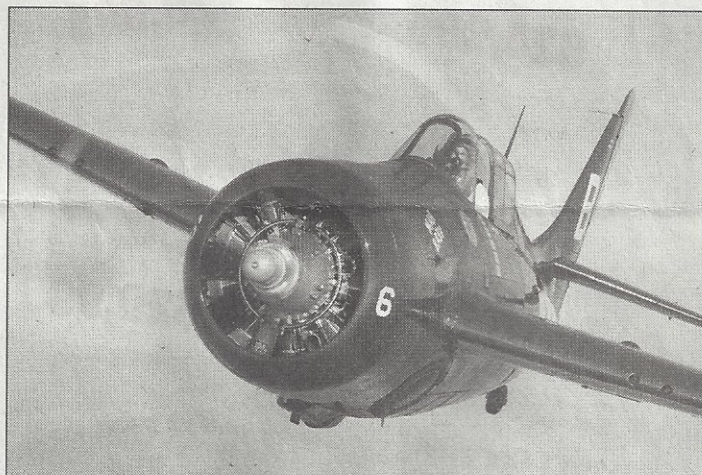
MT. VERNON — For Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Director Chris Collins, Balloons Over Mt. Vernon & Fly-In has been the biggest talking point between him and the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Authority in not only their board meeting on Tuesday, but during the period leading up to this weekend's event.

"There was a lot of searching because we had several cancellations," stated Collins. "I'm lucky enough to know a lot of people in aviation so I picked up the phone and called Tom Frasca in Urbana. His brother and his dad own a lot of war planes, so they agreed to come with the FM-2 Wildcat, which is sig-

nificant because that's the plane [Woodlawn resident] Lyle Endicott flew during World War II, a local veteran here who we're all really fond of. It's a cool addition to have for our Veterans Reunion, especially with Lyle being able to come out and talk a little bit about some of his stories. He has some incredible stories about flying that airplane."

The Wildcat arrived at the airport on Friday and will be on display until late this afternoon. It bears the markings of Captain J.D. McGraw serving aboard the Escort Carrier Gambier Bay CVE-73. Endicott operated his Wildcat off the deck of the Escort Carrier Steamer Bay CVE-87.

Please see **Fighters**, Page 3A



Submitted Photo

**FM-2 WILDCAT** — A Grumman FM-2 Wildcat, a U.S. Navy World War II fighter, will be featured this weekend during the Balloons Over Mt. Vernon event at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. Woodlawn veteran Lyle Endicott flew the Wildcat during his time in the military.

## Fighters:

*Continued From Page 1A*

The Wildcat joins the P-51 Mustang "Red Nose" and the North American SNJ on the flightline. Rides are available in the P-51 Mustang as well as a 1940s WACO Bi-plane, with the Wildcat on display only.

Slots are still available for rides on the Mustang, which may be scheduled by calling the airport.

"You've got 12 pistons in an engine," said Collins, describing the Mustang. "And the pis-

tons are the size of 1-gallon coffee cans. It burns an incredible amount of fuel. ... There's very few two-seat Mustangs in the world, so it's rare to find one that you can actually take a ride in. The Mustang costs a tremendous amount of money to fly. The airplane is a 450-mile-an-hour piston airplane. ... What a winner. There's nothing that could fly with it except an Me 262 jet. And even then, there are Mustang pilots that knocked down a lot of those jets."

Balloons Over Mt. Vernon began Friday and continues through noon on Sunday.

[eroth@morningsentinel.com](mailto:eroth@morningsentinel.com)