

SRT restores 'Spirit of St. Louis'

SENTINEL STAFF REPORT

MT. VERNON — SRT Aviation, Inc., based at the Mt. Vernon Airport, was recently invited to complete a condition inspection and cleaning of Charles Lindberg's historical aircraft, the Spirit of St. Louis.

SRT's maintenance director, Shawn Sayle, was no newcomer to working on the Spirit of St. Louis, as he led a team of aircraft mechanics to restore the aircraft in 1998. During that project, the Spirit was removed from inside the main terminal at Lambert St. Louis International Airport and trucked to Langa Air at St. Louis Regional Airport, where extensive restoration work was completed, then taken to the Missouri Historical Museum — where the airplane is suspended by steel cables 23 feet above the ground.

"We completely overhauled the aircraft's exterior during the project," Sayle stated. "The fuselage, wings and control surfaces were recovered. The museum's new viewing area was built exclusively for the Spirit, so hanging the aircraft in its new home was quite a challenge, especially since



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RESTORING HISTORY — The SRT Aviation maintenance crew recently completed a condition inspection and cleaning of the historic Spirit of St. Louis aircraft at the Missouri Historical Museum. FROM LEFT are SRT President Richard Carney, aircraft technician Andrew Brand, aircraft technician Derek Howard and SRT Vice President Shawn Sayle.

the building was being constructed as we finished the aircraft."

When the Spirit of St. Louis

was due for its period condition inspection and cleaning, the museum director contacted Sayle, who is the vice president of SRT. After the Spirit project, the SRT Aviation maintenance department has been contracted to complete two more aviation condition and cleaning projects on vintage aircraft hanging above check-in areas at the main and east terminals at Lambert St. Louis International Airport in January.

"It is great to be involved in such a range of projects," SRT President Richard Carney said. "On one day, we have the opportunity to work on jets capable of crossing the Atlantic Ocean from Mt. Vernon nonstop in several hours,

and on the next day we work on the aircraft Lindberg flew 33.5 hours from New York to Paris."

The Spirit of St. Louis was made famous in 1927 by Lindberg, after he became the first pilot to complete the transatlantic crossing in an aircraft. Ryan Airlines of San Diego built two aircraft: the record-setting plane on display at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and its sister aircraft, which was built in case the original encountered problems. The sister Spirit of St. Louis is on display at the Missouri Historical Society, was flown in the 1959 motion picture "The Spirit of St. Louis" by actor Jimmy Stewart and was last flown in 1967.