

# Mt. Vernon Outland Airport hosts convention

The Ercoupe Owners of America National Convention will last through the weekend

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MT. VERNON — Thursday was the first day of the Ercoupe Owners of America National Convention, which will last through the weekend, hosted by the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

David Winters of Clarksville, Tenn., has owned his plane since 2004. He said he used to fly a Citation jet, which is much bigger than the Ercoupe, which seats two.

The planes were designed pre World War II and about 6,000 of them were produced. Winters said the planes were once quite popular and were even sold at Macy's during the first years of production in the mid 1940's.

The plane was designed for non-professional pilots, with cutting-edge safety features that don't allow it to stall out. One unique feature of the Ercoupe is the lack of rudder pedals — the plane is flown entirely using a control wheel instead and like driving a car.

Winters stripped his plane, which is named Frolic, of paint and removed the upholstery to make it lighter and said it only weighs about 860 pounds. His plane gets about 17 miles to the gallon and is relatively easy to learn to fly, he added.

Frolic is a work in progress — Winters has been working on her and replacing parts since he purchased the plane.

"When I first started flying, every time I

took off, something fell off," Winters said. "I don't think I will ever be finished [restoring the plane]."

He said parts for the plane are easier to find and cheaper than most aviation equipment, because Ercoupe planes were built before the FAA was founded.

Larry Snyder, organizer for the convention, said the national convention this year is attended mostly by those who live east of the Rocky Mountains because of the small size of the plane. He said the planes come from as far away as South Carolina, Wisconsin and Oklahoma.

The Ercoupe convention was in Mt. Ver-

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David Winters, of Clarksville, Tenn., ties down his plane, Frolic, at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. Winters flew in for the Ercoupe Owners of America National Convention. ROSIE GITHINJI/REGISTER-NEWS

## ERCOUPE

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non two years ago and Snyder said they will be coming back from time to time over the years, but does not know when, because the dates for the convention are usually planned no more than a year in advance.

There will be seminars, a presentation by the Federal Aviation Administration, a picnic for those attending the convention and motivational speaker Jessica Cox, who was born without arms and earned her pilots license will be the guest speaker on Saturday, Snyder said.

"A lot of it really is just hanging out on the ramp and talking to everybody," he

said.

Snyder said the convention serves to help preserve and promote the use of the Ercoupe airplanes, which were engineered 65 years ago.

"There is actually a surprising number of them out there considering how old they are. The airplanes were only expected to last 10 years," Snyder said. "There

are more than 1,500 [planes] still flying. By nature it is safer than a lot of airplanes."

The community is welcome to come to the airport and take a look at the planes and speak with the pilots, Snyder said. There are about 30 aircraft registered and a few fly-in's as well. The convention will end on Sunday, with planes departing, starting at 7:30 a.m.