



Sentinel Photo/RICK HAYES

Dave Graham of Moline poses next to his 800 XP during the Light Sport Aircraft Expo at Mt. Vernon Airport on Friday. Nearly 50 planes are on exhibit through Saturday at the Midwest show.

Moline pilot veteran of 20 years in light sport flying

About 50 planes on exhibit at Midwest LSA Expo

BY RICK HAYES

MT. VERNON MANAGING EDITOR

MT. VERNON — At 37 years old, David Graham of Moline is a seasoned pilot with more than 20 years of experience in operating a light sport aircraft.

Graham, representing Gobosh Aviation, is one of about 50 participants in this year's Midwest Light

Sport Aircraft Expo being held through Saturday at the Mt. Vernon Airport.

Graham started flying when he was 17. His father started flying at the age of 4, but is no longer interested in the "sport."

"When I learned to fly I couldn't afford it and my dad says there was no way he was going to pay my way. I found a plane in Baltimore that an Irishman owned, sold it, and with the proceeds built a hangar and learned to fly," said Graham, whose accent gives away his Irish heritage.

Graham has worked as an engineer and was employed by an aviation company in Ireland building airplanes. He then became a manufacturing representative for a German company covering the U.K. and Ireland. That company was taken over by a Canadian company in 2004 and Graham went north of the border in 2005. In 2006, one of the owners of that company and Graham formed Gobosh Aviation.

Graham is exhibiting a Gobash

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800 at the Mt. Vernon show, manufactured in the Czech Republic.

"It performs at the outside edge of what light sport is all about, which allows it to go as fast as light sport allows [about 138 mph at cruising speed]. It's a very responsive airplane. It's a lot of fun to fly," he said.

Graham said it's no accident that he is a return participant of the Midwest show.

"It's more about the people that put on the show. They do an exceptionally good job to make it very easy to exhibit here and they do a lot of promotion to people who are interested in purchasing Light sport aircraft," Graham said, adding, "What we learned last year is that even though there weren't a huge number of attendees anybody

that made the effort to get here who were here to purchase a light sport plane or to learn more about the sport or to purchase a plane in the future. I think that's a tribute to [airport manager Chris Collins] and his team."

As a resident of northern Illinois, Graham said he often makes a pit stop in Mt. Vernon to and from other destinations:

"They're just great people. They put on a great welcome and make it easy to land here, get fuel and food and get you on your way. They're just very welcoming. That's what makes the show a success," he said.

Despite hefty winds coming out of the southwest, several planes braved the conditions on Thursday to fly the friendly skies of Jefferson County.

"It's a little bit breezy, but nothing like it was last year. Sunshine and airplanes always mix pretty well," Graham said.

9-27-10

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