

No need to 'ex-plane' - Aviation Day in Vero a hit

BY FRANK KIMMEL Correspondent
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Vintage World War II-era planes flank the helicopter ride area on Aviation Day 2008.



Photo by Frank Kimmel

Ken Mishler, center, of Vero Beach, talks with a visitor in front of his custom-built Velocity experimental airplane during Aviation Day 2008 at Vero Beach Municipal Airport on Saturday. More than 50 aircraft were on display, from ultra-modern to antique and classic aircraft.



VERO BEACH — The big whirly bird didn't make it, but everybody else did.

The Sikorsky MH-53E, billed as the country's largest, meanest helicopter, ran into mechanical trouble and couldn't make the trip.

But more than 50 aircraft arrived for a static display at Aviation Day 2008 at the Vero Beach Municipal Airport, and thousands of spectators turned out to see them on a balmy Saturday. The display, sponsored by the city and the Experimental Aircraft Association, Chapter 99, based in Vero Beach, was a rousing success.

And it wasn't all static. The helicopter tour craft was busy all day, as moms and dads and the kids kept up a steady stream of eager riders.

The day was tailor-made for family outings, and there was plenty to see for everybody. Sometimes it was hard to tell who was getting a bigger kick out of things, the dads or the kids.

There were big planes, including a DC 3, and really small, single-seaters, vintage World War II fighters, and lots of custom-built experimentals.

Ken Mishler, of Vero Beach, offered two Velocity experimental planes, one of which he built himself, for sale. The other plane's spectacular paint job drew lots of attention and kept Mishler busy answering questions.

"I got tired of the hassles of running a business, so I quit and started building airplanes," he said. "I'm too happy a guy for all those hassles."

So he sold his business seven years ago, and has been building experimental aircraft since.

For Lars de Jounge, of Vero Beach, who imported his heart's desire, a De Haviland Tiger Moth from Sweden, restoring it was a labor of love.

"I bought it over there in 1972, and brought it over here in '76," he said. "It took me four years to restore it. That's the original way it looked . . . it was in the Swedish air force from 1932 to 1935. It's funny to think of a plane in the service with a paint job like that (red and yellow), but that's the way it looked."

And for Bill Zorc, the Vero Beach airport is truly home base.

"I got my first airplane ride here when I was 8 years old when Eastern Airlines flew in and out of here," he said. "I rode my bike out here to take flying lessons. I got my license when I was 17, the earliest you get can 'em. Now I've been flying for UPS for 20 years!"