



An Ultralight Resurgence?

The hope of many

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It's been about a month since we've returned from the Sun 'n Fun Fly-In at Lakeland, Florida. You'll find our wrap-up of what we found new and interesting on pages 36 through 41 of this issue...and a recap of the daily stories and videos we posted online at www.EAA.org/SunNFun2008.

A lot is happening in the light aircraft community, but one thing that struck me as important is we're seeing some new Part 103 legal machines—a couple of fixed-wings, some powered parachutes, and trikes. That's exciting!

As you'll read in the Sun 'n Fun story, many in the light aircraft community are anxious to see ultralights remain a focus because they *are* the most affordable way for people to get started or continue flying. That's a priority of EAA's Ultralight and Light-Sport Aircraft Council, too. It's no secret that ultralight activity has been on a downswing for a few years, and the introduction of the sport pilot/light-sport aircraft (SP/LSA) rule no doubt contributed to that. Enthusiasts didn't know where they belonged...single-seater or two-seater; what did they really need to quench their aviation thirst; and what were the regulations really going to require?

Now the realities of life under the SP/LSA rule have sorted out, and people have a better understanding of what's required to fly as a sport pilot

or to fly an LSA. It's easier for light aircraft enthusiasts to figure out what's the best fit for them. Consequently, manufacturers can get a better idea of what kind of machines people want. Ours is a supply-and-demand economy; if there's a demand, some entrepreneur will supply the product. If you're interested in ultralights, let the manufacturers know.


More good news is that aircraft like the Sport Hornet and, most recently, a CGS Hawk, have earned special light-sport aircraft (S-LSA) approval, and M-Squared Aircraft is in the midst of the process for its Sport 2. That will make these aircraft available as trainers for fixed-wing ultralights, and they are more appropriate trainers than many other S-LSA. The last thing the ultralight community needs to do is go back to the days of people training themselves, as they did before the two-seat training exemption existed. I'm hoping more manufacturers of ultralight-like LSA will choose to develop S-LSA models for trainers. I also hope flight instructors will embrace teaching ultralight students. That will be extremely important to keep the sport alive...to keep all of general aviation alive.

Still, just wishing for more ultralights or ultralight activity won't make it happen. Like anything in life, it takes action to make something happen. So, if you're an ultralight enthusiast wanting to keep that movement alive, what can you do?

Well, for one, participate in the community. Contact the members of the EAA Ultralight and Light-Sport Aircraft Council and work with them to help resuscitate activity. You can find their contact information online at www.EAA.org/ultralights/council.asp. They'll be delighted to hear from you.

Another way is to share your ultralight stories with us so we can share them with other readers. We're always looking for good ultralight stories. You can e-mail them to Editorial@EAA.org.

Still another way is to introduce others to the sport to others and mentor them. David Hipschman, EAA's director of publications, recently participated in something called Maker Faire in the San Francisco area, and he came away with a renewed understanding that while not everyone is inclined to fly, many people are but find it difficult to "get beyond the airport fence." Now that the lines between ultralights and light-sport aircraft...between what's legal and what is not...are clear, it's actually easier to explain how people can get started flying ultralights. Let's use that to our advantage.

Lastly, we can promote the sport by flying responsibly so that people see how safe and fun ultralighting can be. As we head into the heart of the flying season, remember that people judge the sport by the actions of all who participate; be a good example. 

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