



## **Moontown Airport News**

### **Summer 2009**

**By George Myers**

### **Michael J. Durant to be Banquet Guest Speaker**



Michael 'Mike' Durant will be the guest speaker at this years Moontown September Fly-In Banquet on Saturday evening, September 19. Mike is the American pilot from “Blackhawk Down” who was held prisoner after a raid in Mogadishu, Somalia on October 3, 1993. Durant served in the United States Army 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Night Stalkers) as a Chief Warrant Officer 3. He retired from the Army as a Chief Warrant Officer 4 Blackhawk helicopter Master Aviator in

the 160th SOAR after participating in combat operations Prime Chance, Just Cause, Desert Storm, and Gothic Serpent. His awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, Bronze Star with Valor Device, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, three Air Medals, POW Medal, and numerous others. He and his wife Lisa have six children. Mike is now a New York Times best selling



CW3 Mike Durant US Army  
Super 64 lone survivor and Aidid hostage

author and motivational speaker.

Tickets for the banquet are on sale for \$20.00 at the Moontown Airport Pilots Lounge. Join us and Mike for an entertaining evening. We expect that he will have copies of his books for sale and signing.

We are also expecting some music entertainment during the banquet social hour. We never know what will happen after the banquet is over.

Pilots who wish to fly in to Moontown and stay over night can contact me, George, at 256-683-7337 and I will help with overnight stays for camping or hotels and can also provide ground transportation.

Much planning has gone into this years fly-in. We will have a large NASA presence, Young Eagle Rides, and helicopter and bi-plane rides for hire. Of course, it will not be a fly-in without the help of our fly-in guest. Breakfast will be at the pilots lounge as usual. Madison County High School Band Boosters will be preparing lunch and snacks during the day.

We have invited Dan Grider to return with the DC-3 but that is subject to him getting a crew together for the trip. Redstars and L-Birds are also invited to participate in fly bys and help with the atmosphere but we never know who will turn out. The Banquet will be held rain or shine and we will work the fly-in around the weather as best as we can. We plan to park the small wheel, short span planes in front of the lounge and mobil home. The bigger tired planes will be parked in the Southeast transient parking area. We have other places to park light twins. Yaks and other Warbirds will be parked West of the windsock along with any other warbirds that might show up. We want to make all planes available for viewing by our guest.

### ***Busy Summer***

We started our summer flying season a little early on Memorial Day weekend with DC-3 Day at Moontown.

AVWEB helped sponser Dan Grider's Fiddling Across America tour with its first stop at Moontown. Weather delayed his flight but we still had a good turnout.



**DC-3 parked at Moontown**

The flight continued on up the Mississippi River to the Canadian Border and back down to Gaston's Fishing Resort in Lakeview, Arkansas.



**Yaks and CJs join the DC-3 at Gaston's (Stack Doll in the Slot, Right side of picture)**

The DC-3 was complete with a bluegrass band that performed at our BBQ supper in one of our hangars.

Jeff "Fiddler" Pritchard did not catch up with the flight until Memphis so some of our Moontown musicians helped fill the gap. I rejoined the group with other Yak and CJ pilots at Gaston's for two days of formation flying and fun that included rafting down the White River. Thanks to Dan Grider and AVWEB for a great week.



**Bluegrass at Moontown**



**“Fiddler” joins the group at Gaston's**

We have had good weather for the Summer Fly-In Breakfasts and the Buckhorn High School Band Boosters are doing a great job preparing the food. There have been as many as 75 airplanes in attendance. We have done a lot of work on the Southeast transient parking area and the airport can now accommodate as many as 100 airplanes on the south side of the runway. EAA 190 is planning to expand the patio area with concrete and placing a sunshade over it for improved eating pleasure.

Other activities supported by Moontown and EAA 190 include Scout Day to prepare boys and girls for their aviation merit badges. Sam Dawson, President of the International Bird Dog Association flew up from Niceville, FL to take retired Army Pilot Col. Herb Gringas for an honor flight in his L-19

Bird Dog. Col Gringas was an L 19 pilot in Vietnam. His family was present at Moontown, as was WAAY-TV to record the honor.



**T-6's and SNJ's at Moontown Breakfast**

Oshkosh was its usual exciting event. I took the Yak (Stack Doll) with a stop at the Keokuk formation clinic. I flew her three times in the OSH show. There were also some extra flights over Northern Wisconsin and Lake Winnebago. My long time friend Nate Pritzker from Orlando caught up with me and we shared a UWO dormitory room. He and I first went to Oshkosh together back in 1977. Nate rode back seat for some non-air show formation tours and took some great pictures. See the web sights listed at the end of this newsletter.



**The RV Corral**



**Yaks and CJ's over Lake Winnebago**

Jerry Barnett flew our L-16 for his first trip to Oshkosh and the dreaded Ripon arrival procedure. He met with some of his former fellow Air Force U-2 pilots and saw one of the T-38's that he flew with that group.



**Jerry Barnett, our Airfield Operations Manager, posing with a T38 he once flew**

Oshkosh is more than flying and looking at airplanes. I ran into several pilots from Moontown and friends from all over the United States and Canada. At least two Russians stopped by to talk about their experiences flying the Yak-52.

The Yak pilots from Moontown supported several area air shows and fly-ins this past spring and summer. We performed demonstration formation flights at Scottsboro and Albertville, and the Lebanon, TN Warbird Show. We also flew for the opening of the Madison County High School football season. Other Redstar members are invited to join us at the annual Moontown Fly-In.

Speaking of air shows, the Redstars really showed up in force at Albertville. Besides the four planes from Moontown, we were joined by an additional Yak from Scottsboro and five L-39 jets from Gadsden. Along with the other acts, it was quite a day for the city and its residences.



**Yak formation landing as L-39s taxi for take-off at Albertville**

## ***Airport Improvements***

Jerry and I, with additional help from other Moontowners, have been working on airport improvements. With help from EAA 190 and Johnny Hooper, we have changed the threshold lights to allow 2500 feet of lighted runway for runway 9. The runway 27 threshold is displaced past Moontown Road and allows only 2180 feet of lighted runway. There is still a 250 feet over run on runway 27 beyond the 2180 feet.

Jerry has been working on the older plane port roofs and walls but there is still a lot of work to be done to bring them up to standards. We hope to fix all the leaks and replace the rotted wood beams.

We are building two Plane ports for the rental planes. This should free up at least two plane ports to be rented out.

We continue to work on the southeast transient parking area. The field has been disked, dragged, and rolled. The grass is being cut shorter so that

small wheel planes can use it safely. This parking area is subject to water saturation during the winter months, but should be quite safe to use at least nine months a year. Parking there allows better access to the pilot lounge for breakfast.

Jerry, Shirley, our staff and I are all working to make your visits to Moontown as enjoyable as possible.

### ***Aircraft Maintenance***

This has been a bad year for aircraft maintenance at Moontown due to the crash that took Rickey Weldon's life. We had a short term temporary fix but now Harold McMurrin has officially opened his doors. With help by Jerry Barnett, he is bonded and ready for business. People who know Harold know that they can expect reliable and affordable service. Please see Harold for your aircraft maintenance and inspection needs.

### ***Problems***

We have been pretty free and open at Moontown but lately we have found money missing from the lounge and AVGAS taken without paying. As a result we have had to take some additional security steps. We work with TSA and the local Sheriff Department but that is not enough. We have had to start locking up the change and donation baskets and we have put tumbler combination locks on the pumps. Pilots that we know will be given the combinations so that they can still refuel after hours. We also plan to install some kind of security system to help catch the idiots.

I hesitate to bring this subject up but it ends on a good note. I have really enjoyed my investment and time spent at

the airport over this past 20 years. I have met many very nice and even famous people. I get to fly in airshows and travel to distant places. Most of our customers and guests like what we do. There is that small percentage of outspoken people that think we are ripping them off and getting rich. Most of you know that people operating private, public use airports and FBO's do not get rich. There is a good side to this story. I do it for fun as I have since being a line boy at Morgantown Airport as a kid. I am fortunate that my wife, Shirley supports and helps me manage the airport. How many husbands are that lucky. It's people like Shirley, the flight instructors, our staff and the helpers that make Moontown what it is. We can stand the few naysayers. Thanks much to the rest of you who support Moontown Airport. We hope it lasts forever, well at least as long as we are around. We plan to pass it on to good hands when that time comes around.

### ***Nate's Oshkosh Photos***

Pictures from successive days at Oshkosh

<http://picasaweb.google.com/uncaged89/Oshkosh72909?feat=directlink>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/uncaged89/Oshkosh73009?feat=directlink>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/uncaged89/Oshkosh73109?feat=directlink>

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## SAT-SUN, SEPT 19-20, 2009

MOONTOWN AIRPORT - 3M5, Huntsville, AL

BREAKFAST STARTS AT 7AM EACH DAY

BANQUET TICKETS-256-852-9781

**FREE ADMISSION**

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