



Larry Willis says "These things are going to sell."

Photo by David Corey

Ultralight planes provide high flying for a low cost

By **MARIAN GREEN**
Of the Emerald

Just as the automobile and television slowly but surely became affordable diversions for virtually every family, so it will be with airplanes. Or at least with the "Ultralight" plane, says a Eugene dealer of the revolutionary new flying machine.

The "Ultralight" is a one-person plane, weighing only 155 pounds, that is powered by light winds and a twin-cycle "go-cart" (30 horse power) engine, says Larry Willis, who started his Eugene dealership, The Ultralight Place, in June.

"Every man has always wanted to fly but could never afford to. Now it's within everyone's grasp to be able to fly," Willis says.

The planes, which were displayed on the Downtown Mall Saturday, cost \$3,995, including flying lessons.

Willis says that's cheap because "a little gas" is all a customer has to buy after purchasing an Ultralight. Gone are the hangar, pilot licensing (no license is required as Ultralights carry no passengers) and maintenance costs associated with standard small plane ownership, he says.

The planes fold into a 5' high, 1' wide and 16' long package, which can be stored easily in a garage or carried in a car or truck, he says. Ultralights can be re-assembled on "the easy side" of 30 minutes, he adds.

With multi-colored wings, harnesses and aluminum bodies, Ultralight planes look similar to hang gliders, but they're just the opposite, Willis says. "In hang gliding, you've got to have wind."

Willis says Ultralights are safer than hang gliders, too.

"You'd never get me to hang glide," says Willis.

But, he says, Ultralights are another story because they're only flown in winds of less than 15 miles per hour, at airspeeds averaging 20-30 mph and can take-off or land within a span of 60 feet or so.

"You can set it down almost anywhere if you had to," Willis says.

Leonard Tarantola, owner of the Eugene Iron Works, is one person who has had an Ultralight experience.

"I'm having a ball," he says.

"It's like being a bird, a slow-flying bird."

"There's a freedom of perspective that's unique."

Tarantola first glimpsed the planes at the Creswell Airshow, later purchasing one that he now flies two or three times a week, weather permitting.

Like many others, Tarantola says he always had a "lingering desire" to fly but never had the time or money to learn.

"Within an hour (of Ultralight training), I had soloed," he says.

That short a learning period is not uncommon, Willis says.

Willis gives a new student a book on the principles of flight to read and then commences the practical training, which can take from two to four hours.

"Two to three hours, and I'll have you flying," he says, and with a laugh adds, "and that's not a crash course."

Learners spend most of that time taxiing on the ground to "get a feel" for the one-person plane. They then take the plane up one foot off the ground for awhile, then five feet, then 10 feet, and finally they're ready to fly the plane at a normal altitude of 300 feet.

Willis uses this gradual procedure and only teaches in calm weather "so there's no way you can get hurt."

Ultralights are great for aerial photographers and outdoor enthusiasts because they fly slow enough for photographers to take sharp pictures and are maneuverable enough to land in normally inaccessible places, Willis says.

Although Eugene's economic bind has affected Willis' sales (he's sold just four Ultralights in the last two months), his parent company, the California-based Eipper Formance Inc., outsells its nearest competitor by 18 percent nationwide.

Slow sales, though, have not disheartened Willis. He says he gets many calls daily about the planes, an indication that sales will pick up soon.

Willis gets calls from Albany, Corvallis, Salem and Roseburg as well as Eugene. And these people "all want to go flying," he says.

"These things are going to sell," he says confidently.

Homecoming activities slated for the weekend

A giant spaghetti feed, a decoration contest and an old-fashioned pep rally will mark the University's annual homecoming celebration set Thursday through Sunday, Oct 15-18.

A jazz band will be featured at the spaghetti feed, Thursday at 5:30 in the EMU. Tickets are \$1.50. After dinner, Rich Brooks, head football coach, and some of the players on the University's football team will speak at a pep rally. The rally squad and the pep band will perform at the rally.

Friday's activities include a German-style beer garden, complete with imported sausages and polka tunes, runs from 4-7 pm. At 9:30 the big-band sound of the Starlighters, a local dance band, can be heard in the EMU Ballroom.

Highlighting the homecoming activity is the football game against the University of Arizona Wildcats, complete with a pre-game spirit parade from the campus to Autzen for the 1 pm game.



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