

Airplane 'lands' at MSCC

By Times News Staff
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West Memphis sits squarely on several major traffic arteries. It's not uncommon to see something unusual rolling down the road.

No doubt, motorists did a double take Tuesday or at least thought a pilot missed the runway at West Memphis Municipal Airport when they saw a twin-engine Beechcraft airplane turning right on Broadway.

Funny thing is, the pilot, Mel Bearden, and his "co-pilot" Phillip Para, was right where they were supposed to be. Even when they "banked" left onto the driveway of Mid-South Community College's north campus, they were



Photo by Mike Douglas

Students and staff helped guide "pilot" Mel Bearden get an airplane between trees that line the drives at MSCC. Bearden taxied the plane from the West Memphis Airport to the Workforce Technology Center. The aircraft will be used in the college's Aviation Maintenance Technology program

still "flying" true.

MSCC has added its first air-worthy teaching tool for the Aviation Maintenance Technology program, thanks to Bearden.

Bearden sold a 1968 Beechcraft Baron twin-engine aircraft to the College at a dramatically below-market price to assist efforts to train students for high-demand, high-salary jobs in the region.

"We greatly appreciate the generosity and philanthropy of Mel Bearden in what amounts to a significant contribution to the College and our Aviation Maintenance Technology program," said Dr. Glen Fenter, MSCC President.

"While we did purchase the aircraft from Mel, we did so at a fraction of its appraised value, and there's no way we could have secured a comparable plane at anywhere near that minimal a cost."

"This plane will be a great training resource for our students and our program and will help us provide the kind of instruction that will make our graduates among the best prepared in the profession."

MSCC took possession of the aircraft after a carefully-planned and flawlessly-executed trip from the West Memphis Airport. Bearden, Bill Starnes, and West Memphis Airport personnel removed a section of perimeter fence to allow the plane off the airport property.

Bearden then taxied the craft to the college's Workforce Technology Center. Mid-South's aviation team/class assisted with the move and handled the tie-down duties when the move had been completed.

MSCC will use the plane for retractable landing gear training/operation and rigging; propeller synchronization system train-

ing; Janitrol combustion heater operation, troubleshooting, and repair; Teledyne Continental engine fuel injection operation and troubleshooting; alcohol anti-ice system operation and troubleshooting; Trimble navigation/GPS system operation, radio communications training, run and taxi training, assembly and rigging instruction, 100 hour/annual inspection procedures, and aircraft towing and ground control instruction.

After the planned installation of glass cockpit instrumentation, the aircraft will also be used for training on Next Generation indicating systems.

The Beechcraft Baron was one of the most popular, owner-flown twin-engine aircraft of its day.

MSCC received formal approval from the Federal Aviation Administration for its Aviation Maintenance Technician School earlier this year.

MSCC accomplished the certification feat in about four months, which is much quicker than most FAA certifications. FedEx has partnered with MSCC in creating the program.

The Aviation Maintenance Technology program at MSCC provides students with an introduction to the occupational area of Aerospace Maintenance as currently understood and practiced by FAA Aviation Maintenance Technician Certificate holders.

MSCC met a wide array of FAA requirements to earn the certification necessary to start the program.

With help from all of its partners, including FedEx Express, MSCC has developed an integrated training program for airframe and powerplant technicians. Aviation

maintenance classes will be taught by three highly-qualified and experienced instructors with more than 100 years studying, flying, servicing, repairing and teaching about aircraft.

Key partners in the program include FedEx Express, Arkansas Northeastern College, the Arkansas Delta Training and Education Consortium (ADTEC), the Workforce Investment Board of Eastern Arkansas and Aviation Repair Technologies.

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