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## About Ultralights...

The future is ours to determine

**I**t was Saturday, July 28, about 9 a.m. I was checking out Baron Taylor's powered parachute parked underneath the wing of a DC-2 on AeroShell Square when I heard the AirVenture announcer say, "Ladies and gentlemen, there's a black Honda parked in the blue parking lot, and the car's still running and the doors are locked. We're glad you're here, but you might want to check on your car."

I smiled to myself; someone was pretty excited about arriving at AirVenture. I could imagine they saw an aircraft flying overhead and took off for the flightline, forgetting everything else.

Who couldn't get that excited about AirVenture, especially this year? There were more exciting announcements in the first two days than in any other year I can remember. Cessna and Cirrus' entries into the light-sport aircraft market certainly highlighted the week.

Attendance was great; some 560,000 people came through the gates, and there were multitudes of interesting aircraft to view, and new engines and avionics to pine over.

But, one area was suffering, and that was "the farm." Ultralight activity was sparse; there were fewer exhibitors and privately owned ultralights on display than I remember in a long time. I don't know all the reasons for this turn of events, but I've heard some rumors. I've heard that some folks—private owners and exhibitors

alike—were afraid to show up at AirVenture for fear the FAA might initiate some enforcement action. That's unfortunate, because that was not in anyone's plan. I've also heard that some manufacturers are having a tough time this year. Sales are down for reasons no one's quite sure about, but one suspicion is that people are undecided whether they should fly an ultralight or a light-sport aircraft.

I've also heard rumors that some folks think EAA doesn't care about ultralights, and that's not true either. EAA will continue to operate its ultralight student, pilot, and aircraft registration programs into the future, as long as there are folks interested in flying as responsible ultralight pilots.


*"The FAA has no intention of doing away with Part 103..."*  
— FAA Administrator  
*Marion Blakey*

In a private interview with FAA Administrator Marion Blakey, I asked her if she'd had the opportunity to visit the ultralight area this year. Recall in years past she's flown in a Quicksilver MXII and other two-place machines.

She reported that she had not been down on the farm, but asked about the area. When I replied that activity was sparse, she was concerned. "You mean, it's not as active as in recent years when I've visited?" she asked. I replied that it was not. And she asked why. I opined that there is still a lot of confusion about ultralights versus sport pilot and light-sport aircraft. And that I'd heard rumors that many ultralighters thought the FAA was going "to do away with" FAR Part 103.

Administrator Blakey was quick to put that rumor to rest. "No, the FAA has no intention of doing away with Part 103," she said. "The FAA sees ultralights as a place for true individuality and freedom of design."

So, there you have it...straight from the administrator. Ultralights will continue to be a part of aviation's future. Sure, it might be nice to have more than 254 pounds empty weight to work with, but that's not reality or the rule. We know the parameters, so let's use our innovative ideas to create exciting and interesting new vehicles to fly. The people who want more power and more seats have an alternative in light-sport aircraft. That leaves those who just want to experience getting above the ground alone to create a whole new genre of vehicles.

The power to revive the ultralight movement lies with all of us. For those who have the desire, let's put our minds and hands together and make it happen. 

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