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Cross Hill pilot making area a landing spot for Icon's A5

By John Clayton
Editor

A passion for aviation and the excitement of a newly-designed sport aircraft pulled Cross Hill resident Bob Butler out of retirement.

Butler, 65, is putting the finishing touches on his own "Garage Mahal," which is home to his own Icon A5 — an amphibious sport plane produced in Vacaville, California by Icon Aviation. Project manager Corey Miller relocated to the area to become Butler's project manager for the private project and help create a facility for a flight school at the Greenwood County Airport.

Butler wanted to be more than simply an owner of the light aircraft, so the founder of Greenwood Fabricating and Plating is bringing the Boundless Aviation Flight School to the Greenwood County Airport where A5 owners from all over can come for training.

"It's real simple. I hated retirement," Butler said. "With my passion for aviation, I should've been an instructor — I always thought I'd be a good one — but I never made it happen. ... The excitement overwhelmed me. I couldn't help myself. I saw an opportunity, and said these guys need to set up this network and I want to be a part of that."

Butler will now have his chance — at least to see to the training of other A5 pilots, even if he doesn't teach the courses out of the



Photo provided

FLIGHT TIME — Two Icon A5s at Bob Butler's Cross Hill residence.

Greenwood airport himself. In addition to the flight school, Butler is working with other investors in a 10,000 square-foot community hangar at the airport.

After buying the sleek A5 for himself and beginning construction on the airplane's state-of-the-art hangar in Cross Hill, he set the wheels in motion to work with Icon, which already had connections to the Upstate.

Icon CEO and Founder Kirk Hawkins is a Clemson graduate, as is Executive Vice President David Crook.

Butler said as soon as he agreed to buy his Icon A5, he knew he wanted to be a part of the company and bring it to the Lake Greenwood area.

"Flying back, I said this company needs

third-party service, and they need training," he said and set up presentations with Icon executives, including Hawkins.

"We've got an 11,000-acre lake here," Butler said. "I feel like we've got a perfect spot here like a Gatlinburg to do the training. We've got a spoke-wheel here where you can draw from all these different directions."

Those directions include I-85 South toward and Atlanta and North toward Charlotte, and I-26 toward Asheville and Charleston. Those highways connect to the banking industry of Charlotte and the diverse economy of Atlanta, where more buyers can be found for the pricy aircraft, which currently comes in at about \$390,000.

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QT to locate Fuel Center in Clinton

By Judith Brown
Staff Writer

Clinton Mayor Bob McLean announced recently that a QuikTrip convenience store and fuel center will be coming to Clinton and provide a boon to the area's economy.

QT is set to build on Exit 54 on the eastbound side of I-26 near Fatz Cafe and other businesses that serve interstate travelers as well as local residents.

"This will be a QT Fuel Center," McLean said. "It will be something very nice, and they will employ a lot of people and will be very good for our local economy."

During City Council meetings in previous months, McLean has occasionally referred to QT's desire to come to Clinton, but the company had expressed their desire for the frontage road area on Highway 72 across the interstate, in the area of the Clinton 26 Commerce Park: North.

That particular spot is used by the South Carolina Department of Transportation, and McLean said the SCDOT had been unwilling to discuss the relocation of its storage and work area there.

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