



## MOUNTAIN AIRFRAME – A QUALITY EXPERIENCE

👤 Billing User 🕒 April 12, 2017 📁 Business/Church of The Week, Features 👁 101 Views

BY LOGAN MCCOURTNEY –

Mena is home for many hard working men and women who have, through their hard work, have not only made their lives better, but the community itself. For any business, community, or group to truly taste success, hard work will have to be one of the ingredients. David Bly once said, “Striving for success without hard work is like trying to harvest where you haven’t planted.” For Del Lehmann and Brett Ham, owners of Mountain Airframe LLC., hard work is just a part of everyday life.

Del and Brett are no strangers to the airfield, both beginning work at the airport during their high school years. Due to a work program in the high school at the time called Coordinated Career Education [CCE], both of the guys were able to gain some practical experience working in the aviation business. “My first day working at the airport was my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. I started working for Fred Hampton at Rich Mountain Aviation after my dad had bought some property from him and introduced us,” says Del. During that same time, Brett was also working at Rich Mountain, an opportunity that was made available because of CCE. “The program was really beneficial for us. I knew I didn’t want to go to college, but this allowed me to get practical hands on training. That program and others like it have been helpful for so many,” says Del.

According to both men, there were a lot of high school guys working at the airport at the time, but both felt fortunate to have the experience they did working for Fred. "A lot of the other guys were working in the paint shops, but I got to work somewhere that we did a lot of structural work," explains Brett. Both realize that there is a need for college for many coming out of high school, but also acknowledge that there are many students, just like them, that don't desire a four year university experience. "After you have went to school your whole life, you aren't always exposed to that much. Sometimes the best thing for some kids may be to go learn a trade or attend a vocational school. We, and many others at the airport, show that it is very possible," says Del.

After both men had opportunities to work in a variety of capacities in the aviation business, they had desires to join efforts and start their own business. Del had been working in various hangars on the airfield doing subcontract work, while Brett was continuing his work in structural repair and maintenance. Over time, Del and Brett had talked about the details of going into business together. After receiving encouragement from people within the business, Del pursued the opportunity to open the business and in 1996 Mountain Airframe was incorporated. "We both felt that we had the experience to do it and had received encouragement to do so. Brett knew adjustors and had contacts, so when we joined it was mutually beneficial."

Over the last several years, Mountain Airframe has grown immensely. What started as a small business with three to four employees has now doubled in size. Until March 1<sup>st</sup>, Mountain Airframe was working out of two hangars, one on the east end of the runway, the other on the west. "It was getting hard, we would have to run back and forth to get tools so we could get jobs done." At the beginning of March, Del and Brett and the crew have been in a much larger hangar, a change that was much welcomed. "The previous tenants didn't want to renew their lease and we had been wanting to be here for a long time so it was perfect," says Del proudly. With the move, not only did Mountain Airframe get to consolidate under one roof, but their size in facilities doubled. Between the combined hangars they worked out of before, there was a combined 13,000 square feet. Now, their hangar boasts more than 25,000 square feet. "Not only have we grown in space, but as the business has grown, so have our employees. Until four years ago, we only had three to four employees, now we have 12," explains Del.

The sweetest rewards are often those that have been realized after much hard work and effort. "It has really been so great to see where this thing started and where it is now. To see it grow like this has been unbelievable," says Brett proudly. Mountain Airframe specializes working in. heavy structural sheet metal repairs, refurbishments, and modifications. There are various reasons that planes may come into the

hangar, for some, modifications are needed; but others, due to landing accidents, may need 70 to 80% of the aircraft rebuilt. Over the years, the hard work at Mountain Airframe has earned them a great reputation across the country. "We have traveled coast to coast to pick up or deliver planes. Over time, as we have performed quality work, word has spread and customers desire to use our services." Their credibility for producing quality work is something that means a lot to the guys and the crew. "That is one of the reasons we wanted in this hangar, it increases our efficiency, which means we can produce quality work for our customers."

Mountain Airframe is yet another example of the hard working people in the community and the blessing that it is for Mena to have an airport full of growing and diverse businesses. "We are fortunate to work at this airport. It is probably the busiest maintenance airport in Arkansas." Brett and Del are a constant reminder for anyone that hard work and persistence will reap plentiful benefits.

---