



The Inav Moni used to be available with only one wheel, a la sailplanes. The new tricycle gear option simplifies ground operations.

INAV, LIMITED

True to its acronymic name, the company is forging ahead with innovative aviation ideas.

ART DAVIS

Inav, Limited, which offers several kit-built aircraft designs, appears poised for a future in which a new generation of factory-built light aircraft will be certificated under simplified standards. But those standards are not for a new class of primary aircraft. Rather, Inav intends to build aircraft certificated under an

existing set of standards—Part 22 of the Joint Airworthiness Regulations (JARs), which apply to motorgliders. Under the JARs, the United States and the countries belonging to the European Economic Community allow joint certification.

Inav is preparing to flight test its first air-

craft intended for JAR 22 certification, a two-seat motorglider made of fiberglass. The airplane, called the Mercury, is a canard and tip-rudder design created by E. L. (Burt) Rutan. Earlier plans called for the Mercury to be powered by a two-cylinder, four-stroke Magnum engine designed and built by Group

Lotus, the British automobile manufacturer. However, following the January 1986 acquisition of Group Lotus by General Motors Corporation, the Magnum program was put on hold, pending further evaluation. Inav general manager John T. Monnett Jr., AOPA 733603, would not comment on what engine is being used in the Mercury prototype. The projected price for the Mercury is \$15,000.

Inav is a subsidiary of a British company, Aviation Composites, that in 1985 purchased the assets of Monnett's company, Monnett Experimental Aircraft. In the transaction, Aviation Composites acquired the rights to produce all of the previously designed Monnett airplanes. Monnett said he sold his company largely because of concerns about the aviation industry's worsening product liability situation.

Despite the sale, product liability remains a concern for the new owner. "You probably will not see any further kit developments from Inav," says Monnett. "Motorgliders provide everything you would want in a basic airplane. And it is a lot easier to get product liability insurance for motorgliders."

Since the acquisition, Inav has expanded its

product line and its services in several areas, some of them having to do with industrial design for nonaviation companies. On the aviation side of its business, Inav has become the sole U. S. importer of König engines, a line of light-weight, air-cooled, three- and four-cylinder radial engines made in West Germany. The Monerai self-launching sailplane is powered by a three-cylinder, 25-horsepower König engine. Earlier this year, Inav added to its line of kits the Wittman Tailwind, a two-seat, tube and fabric aircraft developed by noted designer and racing pilot Steve Wittman.

However, Monnett's own designs constitute the company's main product line. Monnett introduced his first kit aircraft, the Sonerai 1, a single-seat, mid-wing, formula V racer in 1970. (Formula V aircraft must meet certain design criteria, including a 1,600-cubic-centimeter limitation on engine size.) The Sonerai 2 two-place airplane followed in 1974. Then came the Sonerai 2L low-wing model; the Sonerai 2LT tricycle gear model; the stretched Sonerai LTS with tricycle or taildragger gear; the Monerai sailplane and Monerai self-launching sailplane; the Moni

motorglider, and the Moni Tri-Gear motorglider. Some 2,000 Monnett-designed aircraft have been sold, and approximately 1,000 of them are flying, according to Monnett.

For those in the market for an inexpensive, single-seat, kit-built airplane, the Moni has much appeal. For less than the cost of some ultralights, the Moni offers excellent performance on only 30 hp: Cruise speed at 75-percent power is 91 knots. The aircraft also offers moderate soaring performance, with a 20:1 glide ratio. It is relatively easy to build, requiring only simple metalworking techniques. Estimated construction time is 500 hours. The kit includes virtually everything needed to complete the airplane, including the 30-hp KFM-107 engine and an electrical system with battery and starter. Cost of the kit is \$6,300 for the standard motorglider version and \$6,720 for the Tri-Gear version.

Monnett has his own new designs for production aircraft on the drawing board but could discuss them only off the record. However, he will say publicly that other JAR 22-certificated motorgliders may follow introduction of the Mercury. —J. Jefferson Miller