Model 18-A Gyroplane On The Market

John Potter of Dunnellon, Fla., became the first of about 150 retail dealers to take delivery of a production model of the Air & Space Manufacturing Company's Model 18-A gyroplane.

Now being built in Muncie, Ind., the two-place, three-bladed wingless aircraft has been under development for more than eight years. Since its recent full certification by FAA, plans have been firmed up for its manufacture on a mass production basis, according to company president Richard W. Bosse.

More than 150 people are now employed at Air & Space's Muncie facilities. This will increase to about 450 by midsummer when full volume production is achieved, Bosse said.

Powered by a 180 h.p. Lycoming engine, the Model 18-A has a maximum certificated weight of 1,800 pounds and a useful payload of about 500 pounds. It reportedly will cruise at 90 m.p.h. for three hours at 65% power and, according to Bosse, is the only aircraft in the world that separates lift from thrust in flight. Retail price of the Model 18-A is just under $15,000.

The Model 18-A rotor serves as the aircraft's wing. It is turned by air movement and is never engine-driven in flight. Once the plane is off the ground the passage of air upward through the rotor disc causes the blades to revolve. Even with engine out, therefore, the danger of a serious crash reportedly is greatly alleviated.

Bosse claimed that any certificated fixed-wing aircraft pilot can easily learn to fly the Model 18-A with only a few hours of instruction. The craft is an improved version of the gyroplane designed and developed by Umbaugh Aircraft Corporation from 1957 to 1962. ●

Air & Space Company's Model 18-A executes a low level maneuver. The recently certificated two-place V/STOL has been placed in full production at Muncie, Ind., plant