



SCHOLARSHIP IN HONOR OF

CLARENCE L. JOHNSON

Clarence L. "Kelly" Johnson

Kelly's approach to aircraft design and project management, like his name, was unique and simple... perhaps simply unique.

Born on February 27, 1910, of Swedish immigrant parents, Peter and Christine Johnson, Kelly was raised in the tiny iron-ore town of Ishpeming, Michigan.

He showed a great deal of tenacity, courage and determination as a school kid and earned the nickname "Kelly" because he didn't act like a "Clarence," and there was a popular song at the time entitled "Kelly with the Green Necktie." As one of nine children of a family that was far from affluent, he had but one necktie green, naturally - so the label stuck .

From as far back as he could remember, Kelly wanted to design and build things. Much of his motivation can be traced to the many hours spent at the local library where he devoured books on model airplanes, the Rover Boys and the Tom Swift series. By the time he was 12, Kelly had designed his first airplane which he called "the Merlin-One Battle Plane."

He worked his way through junior college and the University of Michigan, where as Johnson puts it, "I washed 10 million dishes for meals."

His brilliance soon surfaced, and Kelly won two scholarships in a single year. He tutored in Calculus and worked as an assistant to the renowned Professor Edward Stalker, head of the aeronautical engineering department.

Following graduation and while working at the university's wind tunnel in 1933, Kelly noted cer-

tain limitations in the design of Lockheed's new all metal, twin-engine transport, the Model 10 Electra. With the brashness of youth and the rock-ribbed honesty for which he was always known, Kelly spelled out the design faults and recommended fixes to Robert Gross, head of the firm, and his top engineers, Hall Hibbard and Lloyd Stearman. Impressed, they put him to work, and a series of brilliant aircraft designs affectionately known as the "Kelly Collection" began to emerge. In all, he contributed to designs of more than 40 aircraft, and more than half of these were Johnson originals.

The wonderful thing about Kelly is that he could instantly spot trouble... better than anyone. I swear he could see air flow in or outside a wind tunnel. "
Hall Hibbard

Prior to World War II he worked on a family of twin-engine transports, the Electra Series, which evolved into the Hudson Bomber and the Lode-star. The familiar twin rudders were incorporated in nearly 10,000 P-38 Lightnings that were produced for the United States and its allies during World War II. This unique aircraft, America's first 400 mph interceptor, was credited with more aerial victories than any other U.S. fighter.

When at the height of World War II the government asked Lockheed how fast it could build a jet fighter from scratch, Johnson promised to do it in six months. The P-80 prototype emerged in less than five months from a giant tent located near the Lockheed wind tunnel, and the legend of the "Skunk Works" was born.

Lockheed's post-war fortunes were tied to a series of highly successful aircraft designs having the

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Johnson touch. They included the Constellation series, the T-33 trainer version of the F-80, the P-2 Neptune, the double sonic F-104 Starfighter, and of course, two famed recon naissance aircraft, the U-2 and the SR-71.

"The entire U-2 program was probably the finest bargain the American taxpayer has ever had. "
General Leo Geary

A tribute to Johnson's design genius is the fact that the SR-71 Blackbird has been flying for 20 years, yet today it holds seven speed and altitude records. No other aircraft even comes close.

Acknowledged as America's preeminent aircraft designer, Johnson's reputation as a project manager is equally legend. He had a way of bulldozing his way through red tape and getting the most out of fewer people in a shorter period of time. His legacy at Lockheed is a theory that still pervades the Skunk Works... "Keep it simple. If it works, don't fix it."

"Kelly Johnson and the products of his famous Skunk Works epitomize the highest and finest goal of our society, the goal of excellence. His record of design achievement in aviation is both incomparable and virtually incredible. Any one of his many airplane designs would have honored any individual's career."

President Lyndon B. Johnson

Kelly received just about every award that can be bestowed on an aeronautical engineer, some of them twice. For instance, he was the only two-time winner of the Collier Trophy and was honored twice with the Theodore Von Karman and Sylvanus Albert Reed awards. He was elected to the Aviation Hall of Fame in 1974. The National Medal of Science, the highest award this nation can give a civilian was presented to Kelly in 1964 by the late President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Dear General Bellis:

We are indeed proud to establish a Falcon Foundation Scholarship in honor of Clarence L. Johnson. "Kelly" who recently celebrated his 50th year of service for Lockheed, is idolized by three generations of aircraft buffs. The SR-71, still the fastest and highest flying aircraft in the world, is perhaps his greatest design achievement, but many of his peers respect Kelly as much for his management philosophy and integrity which produced the legacy of the "Skunk Works."

Sincerely,


*Roy A. Anderson
Chairman and
Chief Executive Officer
Lockheed Corporation*

(In 1995, Lockheed and Martin Marietta merged to become Lockheed Martin Corporation.)



The Falcon Foundation is a 501(c)(3), non-profit foundation. Its purpose is to provide scholarships to College or Preparatory Schools for motivated young people seeking admission to USAFA and a career in the Air Force.

Although it is a separate organization, the Falcon Foundation works closely with USAFA.