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SCHOLARSHIP IN HONOR OF

IGOR I. SIKORSKY

Igor I. Sikorsky

Igor I. Sikorsky, the legendary aviation pioneer, will long be remembered as the man who gave the world its first practical helicopter.

The achievement alone was significant enough to ensure the gentle Russian immigrant's place in the history books, but it was only one facet of an extraordinary man's remarkable career... a career that paralleled the history of powered flight.

Often described as a humble genius, Mr. Sikorsky had already achieved worldwide recognition in two other fields of aviation before he built and successfully flew his VS-300 helicopter in 1939.

Born in Kiev, Russia, on May 25, 1889, Mr. Sikorsky developed an early interest in aviation, thanks largely to the influence of his mother, who was a doctor, and his father, a psychology professor.

A youthful tour of Germany in a company of his father, during which he first heard of the Wright brothers and came in detailed contact with the work of Count Zeppelin, more or less settled the question of what career the youthful Sikorsky was to follow.

He graduated from the Petrograd Naval College, studied engineering in Paris, returned to Kiev and entered the Mechanical Engineering College of the Polytechnical Institute in 1907. But in 1909, his young mind full of aviation, Mr. Sikorsky went back to Paris, then the aeronautical center of Europe, to learn what he could of the embryo science.

While in Paris, he became known to many of the men who later were to make great names in aviation - Bleriot, Ferber, and others. Despite advice to the contrary from these and other experienced men, Mr. Sikorsky announced plans to build a helicopter. Having learned all he could of aviation as it was then known in Europe, he bought a 25 h.p. Anzani engine and went home to Kiev to begin building a rotary-wing aircraft.

The helicopter failed, as did its successor due to a lack of power and understanding of the rotary-wing art. Undiscouraged, Mr. Sikorsky then turned his attention to fixed-wing aircraft.

First success came with the S-2, the second fixed-wing plane of his design and construction. His fifth airplane, the S-5, won him national recognition as well as F.A.I. license Number 64. His S-6-A received the highest award at the 1912 Moscow Aviation Exhibition, and in the fall of that year the aircraft won for its young designer, builder and pilot first prize in the military competition at Petrograd.

Mr. Sikorsky's success in 1912 led to a position as head of aviation subsidiary of the Russian Baltic Railroad Car Works. In this position, as a result of a mosquito-clogged carburetor and subsequent engine failure, he conceived the idea of an aircraft having more than one engine - a most radical idea for the times. With the blessings of his parent company, he embarked on an engineering project which gave the world its first multi-engine airplane, the four-engine "The Grand." The revolutionary aircraft featured such things as an enclosed cabin, a lavatory, upholstered chairs and an exterior catwalk atop the fuselage where passengers could take a turn about in the air.

His success with 'The Grand" led him to design an even bigger aircraft, called the Ilia Mourometz, after a legendary 10th Century Russian hero. More than 70 military versions of the Ilia Mourometz were built for use as bombers during World War I.

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The Revolution put an end to Mr. Sikorsky's career in Russian aviation. Sacrificing a considerable personal fortune, he immigrated to France where he was commissioned to build a bomber for Allied service. The aircraft was still on the drawing board when the Armistice was signed and Mr. Sikorsky, after casting about in vain for a position in French aviation, traveled to the United States in 1919.

After another fruitless search for some position in aviation, Mr. Sikorsky resorted to teaching. He lectured in New York, most to fellow emigres. Finally, in 1923 a group of students and friends who knew of his reputation in prewar Russia pooled their meager resources and launched him on his first American aviation venue, The Sikorsky Aero Engineering Corp.

The first aircraft built by the young and financially insecure concern was the S-29-A (for America), a twin-engine, all-metal transport which proved a forerunner of the modern airliner. A number of aircraft followed but the company achieved its most significant success with the twin-engine S-38 amphibian, which Pan American Airways used to open new air routes to Central and South America. Later, as a subsidiary of United Aircraft Corporation (now United Technologies) Sikorsky's company produced the famous Flying Clippers that pioneered commercial air transportation across both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The last Sikorsky flying boat, the S-44, held the Blue Ribbon for the fastest trans-Atlantic passage for years. All Sikorsky aircraft of the time were known for ease of handling and luxurious comfort.

With two careers behind him and the oceans conquered, Mr. Sikorsky turned once again to the helicopter. Through the years he had jotted down ideas for possible designs, some of which were patented. Finally, on September 14, 1939, Mr. Sikorsky took his VS-300 a few feet off the ground to give the western hemisphere its first practical helicopter. His dogged determination and faith in his own ability to build what many considered to be an impossible vehicle established the bedrock upon which today's helicopter industry rests.

Military contracts followed the success of the VS-300, and in 1943, large-scale manufacture of the R-4 made it the world's first production helicopter.

The R-4 was followed by a succession of bigger and better machines and since then, the helicopter has clearly established its ability to perform a myriad of difficult missions, including the saving of thousands of lives, in both peace and war. Mr. Sikorsky was especially proud of the helicopter's lifesaving ability and of organizations such as the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service which had put helicopters to what he believed was their finest use. During his career, he rarely passed up an opportunity to stress this role or praise the men whose skill and courage made the rescues possible. The pilots of rescue helicopters have contributed "one of the most glorious pages in the history of human flight," he once remarked.

The awards and honors accorded to Mr. Sikorsky fill nine typewritten pages and include the National Medal of Science, the Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy, the U.S. Air Force Academy's Thomas D. White National Defense Award, and the Royal Aeronautical Society of England's Silver Medal. He is enshrined at both International Aerospace and the Aviation Halls of Fame.

Although recognized primarily as a practical inventor of material things, Mr. Sikorsky was also a deeply religious visionary and philosopher with an

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intense interest in man, the world and the universe.

Remembered by those who knew him as a kind and considerate person with a sincere concern for his fellow man, Mr. Sikorsky's two sides are perhaps best described in the following quote from his friend Anne Morrow Lindbergh:

"The thing that's remarkable about Igor is the great precision in his thought and speech, combined with an extraordinary soaring beyond facts. He can soar out with the mystics and come right back to the practical, to daily life and people. He never excludes people. Sometimes the religious minded exclude people or force their beliefs on others. Igor never does."

Although he never attempted to force anyone to accept his beliefs, Mr. Sikorsky wrote two books, "The Message of the Lord's Prayer," and "The Invisible Encounter, "as well as numerous pamphlets, to express them.

In the first book, Mr. Sikorsky expressed his belief in a final destiny for man and a higher order of existence, while in the second, he pleaded that modern civilization has a greater need for spiritual rather than material power.

It was Mr. Sikorsky's abiding faith in God and his strong belief in the importance of the individual that helped him overcome the frustrations and failures that marked his career.

Mr. Sikorsky liked to say that "the work of the individual still remains the spark which moves mankind ahead," and he proved it throughout his life.

Even after his retirement in 1957 at the age of 68, Mr. Sikorsky continued to work as an engineering consultant for Sikorsky and he was at his desk the day before he died, on October 26, 1972, at the age of 83.

Dear General Smith:

Igor I Sikorsky's aviation career spanned more than six decades and included the world's first four-engine airplane, the big flying boats of the 1930s which pioneered transoceanic air routes , and finally, the helicopter, which led to a whole new industry.

It is especially fitting that we create the Igor I. Sikorsky scholarship because of Mr. Sikorsky's intense pride in the helicopter as a life-saving vehicle. This role of the helicopter is clearly exemplified by the Air Force Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Services of rotary wing aircraft. Among Mr. Sikorsky's more than 100 honors and awards is the Thomas D. White National Defense Award given by the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1971 "in recognition of your great contribution to the national defense and security of the United States."

Igor Sikorsky's greatness was of the heart as well as the mind. His piety, humility, strength of purpose and humor won the respect and affection of all who knew him. May this scholarship help perpetuate his name.

Gerald J. Tobias

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