The Aero Club of Northern California

2023 Crystal Eagle Award



Merryl Tengesdal



Colonel Merryl Tengesdal, USAF, Retired, is a military veteran, aviator, and commander who served in both the US Navy and the US Air Force. Colonel Tengesdal is the first black woman to fly the U-2 spy plane used for specialized high-altitude reconnaissance missions. She is one of five women and only the fourth black person to be in the U-2 program Merryl shares the plane's nickname, The Dragon Lady.

Col. Tengasdal started her military career in the Navy where she was commissioned as an Officer after completing Officer Candidate School in 1994. Her first flying role as a Naval aviator was flying the SH-60B Seahawk Helicopter at Naval Station Mayport, Florida. While stationed in Florida, she deployed on two long cruises and multiple short cruises to the Middle East, South America, and the Caribbean.

After a three-year sea tour in helicopters, Col. Tengesdal became a T-34C and T-6A Instructor Pilot. She was one of only four Navy T-6A Instructors to train Navy and Air Force students at Joint Student Undergraduate Pilot Training at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia.

After Col. Tengesdal completed her Navy obligation, she transfered to the Air Force to fly the Lockheed U-2S Dragon Lady. She was promoted to Major, stationed at Beale AFB, and began flying the U-2 in 2004. She was deployed to multiple locations in support of Operations OLIVE HARVEST, ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM, and HORN OF AFRICA. While stationed at Beale she held the positions of 9th Reconnaissance Wing Chief of Flight Safety and 9th Physiological Support Squadron Director of Operations.

After her tour at Beale AFB, Col. Tengesdal became the Detachment Commander of Detachment 2 WR/ALC Palmdale, CA, where she was in charge of flight test and Program Depot Maintenance for the U-2S aircraft. She then worked at the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and U.S. Northern Command J8 staff. As Chief of Studies and Assessments Branch, she was responsible for developing the Command's position on capability gap assessments, development, and integration for senior-level documents submitted to the Joint Staff. Tengesdal returned to Beale and held the positions of Deputy Operations Group Commander and Inspector General, 9th RW, Beale AFB, CA.

Col. Tengesdal has never stopped seeking out education. While on active duty, she took classes at the Air Command and Staff College, she completed a Masters of Aeronautical Science at Embry–Riddle Aeronautical University, and she completed additional studies at the Air War College at Maxwell AFB.

In 2015, Tengesdal was promoted to Colonel and trasfered to the Pentagon for her final tour where she was the Director of Inspections for The Inspector General (TIG) of the Air Force, In this role she developed, revisesed, coordinated, and implemented Air Force inspection policy, oversight and reporting of inspection programs to TIG, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and Secretary of the Air Force on the readiness, economy, efficiency, compliance and state of discipline of the Air Force. Tengesdal also served as Executive Secretary of the Air Force Inspection System Council.

In 2017, Tengesdal retired from the Air Force with more than 3,400 flight hours and 330 combat hours and 1,000 flight hours in the U-2.

National Aero Club Association
2023 Awardee



Carol Ford

The Aero Club of Northern California is excited to award Carol Ford a prestigious NAA award in recognition of her significant efforts and accomplishments with her work and efforts to save general aviation airports; a vital resouce to the aviation community. Carol has been a voice of reason in the Bay Area for many years as she works to educate elected officals, policy makers and the general public about the importance of aviation to all communities.

Carol took her first ride in a small plane when she was 12 years old and has been hooked on flying ever since. She originally took lessons at Phoenix Field in Fair Oaks, California, and earned her Private Pilot Certificate. Her home field was subsequently closed and turned into another housing development. Carol later moved to Fremont and flew out of the now shuttered Fremont airport. These two instances broght to Carol's attention the constant threat that exisits for airports around the country.. When she moved to Redwood Shores, under the pattern of San Carlos Airport, she was determined that San Carlos would not fall as her other two airports.

Carol was awarded the Airport Defender of the Year by the California Pilots Association in 1997. She now serves as President of CalPilots; She is now the Corporate Non Profit representative on the Association of California Airports Board (ACA) [Airport Managers]; Carol is a Director of the CalPilots/ACA Political Action Committee; Corporate AOPA representative for San Carlos Airport; President of the San Carlos Airport Association; and Past Chapter Chairperson, International Organization of Licensed Women Pilots. Carol has also founded Ford Aviation Consultants, now Ford & Associates LLC, dedicated to ensuring airports receive funding they deserve.



James M. Nissen Scholarship

James (Jim) M. Nissen (1915-1994)was born in Livermore, CA. In 1937, after receiving his engineering degree at the University of CA at Berkely, he was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Navy, and later became a naval aviator and flew various military aircraft including te PBY Catalina. He briefly flew trans-pacific seaplanes for Pan American Airways before accepting a research test pilot position in 1941 with Ames Research Center at Moffett Field, know as National Advisory Committee on Aviation (NACA), now NASA. In 1945 he joined North American Aviation as a test pilot. At the same time, with two partners, he founded an aviation company and developed 16.4 acres of land leased from the city of San Jose, creating a small airport. In 1946 he sold his share of the business and was hired by the city of San Jose as its first Airport Manager. Over the next 29 years (1946-1975) he developed the small airfield into the Bay Area's third major jetport -Mineta San Jose International Airport (SJC). At the time of his retirement as Director of Aviation, SJC had achieved national status with service to every major U.S. destination city, including non-stop flights coast-to-coast and service to Hawaii. The airport at the time was also home to more than 600 general aviation and corporate aircraft. The $1.3 billion dollar Terminal B at SJC, which opened in 2010, is named the James M. Nissen Terminal Complex. Mr. Nissen was a past member of the Aero Club Board of Directors. This endowed scholarship was funded by a contribution fom Sallie (Nisssen) Moran.



Bhavya Dhulipalla

Bhavya, a soon-to-be graduate in Aviation Management at San José State University, holds several significant roles. She currently serves as the Treasurer for the SJSU Chapter of Women in Aviation, works as an Instructional Student Assistant in the Aviation Safety and Security course at SJSU (AVIA 128), and dedicates her time as a Volunteer Peer Mentor at the Engineering Student Success Center. Bhavya is actively applying to aviation management graduate programs and has plans to pursue an MBA in the future.

In the summer of 2022, Bhavya completed an internship as an Aviation Security Intern at San Francisco International Airport. During the summer of 2023, she gained further experience with Boeing, working as a Business Operations Intern in the 777/777X airplane program in Everett, Washington. Bhavya was offered a full-time position at Boeing after graduating from SJSU, which she enthusiastically accepted.

Bhavya's primary objective is to inspire more women of color to join the aviation industry and become a role model for others, just as she has had her own role models. Bhavya has been fortunate to connect with numerous individuals who have provided professional and personal support, for which she is profoundly grateful. She is determined to facilitate a smoother journey for those facing similar challenges.

Under the guidance of Professor Wendy Mora, Bhavya is organizing an Aviation Discovery Day event on November 18th at the Reid-Hillview Airport as part of her senior capstone project. Aviation Discovery Day is an aviation career opportunity-focused event for high school students, educators, and more. She extends an open invitation to all interested individuals! Please visit www.aviationdiscoveryday.com.



Robert L. Hamilton Scholarship

Robert (Bob) L. Hamilton (1936-2002) was born in Hanford CA. In 1954 he joined the United States Army and was initially trained in helicopter maintenance. After a tour in Germany, he was accepted in the Army helicopter pilot program and followed his training served two tours in Vietnam as a rescue helicopter pilot. He was awarded the prestigious Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, two Bronze Stars, and 30 Air Medals, In 1986, he was inducted in the Army Avation Hall of Fame at Fort Rucker, Alabama. While most of his 6,300 flight hours were in helicopters, he also piloted fixed-wing aircraft and flew professionally for several companies in the San Jose area. Many of his flight-hours were in the large twin-rotor Chinook CH-47 - the first helicopter to utilize fly-by-wire flight controls systems. Mr. Hamilton was a past officer and member of the Aero Club Board of Directors. Funds for this scholarship were donated by a very close friend of the Hamilton family at the time of Mr. Hamilton's death.

Sofia Goodwin

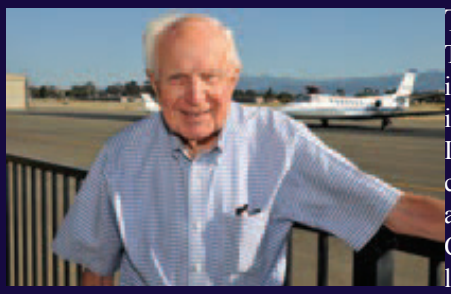
Sofia is pursuing an Aviation Professional Flight degree at San Jose State University (SJSU). She is committed to excelling in her studies, maintaining a high GPA, and taking additional courses to graduate a semester early. Her goal in graduating ahead of schedule is to accumulate more flight hours, expediting her journey toward becoming a commercial pilot and, ultimately, an airline pilot.

Sofia has always had a clear sense of purpose and a passion for making a difference in her community. Her academic journey has been defined by a commitment to leadership, a love for aviation, and an unyielding dedication to self-improvement.



Sofia embarked on her flight training during her senior year in high school. By the end of that school year, she had already passed the written exam for her Private Pilot's license. During the subsequent summer, she continued her flight training, obtaining her Private Pilot certificate shortly after commencing her studies at SJSU. Since then, she has not only completed her Instrument Rating but is also actively working towards acquiring her Commercial Pilot license, all while concurrently working as a fueler and aircraft mechanic's assistant at the San Martin Airport.

In addition to her academic and aviation pursuits, Sofia maintains a well-rounded life with personal interests encompassing training for triathlons, ultramarathons, and mountain climbing. These activities showcase her unwavering commitment to pushing her limits and achieving excellence in every facet of her life.



Thomas E. Leonard Scholarship

Thomas (Tom) E. Leonard (1922-2016) was born in San Francisco, CA. Tom attended California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) in San Luis Obispo. But the onset of WW2 interrupted his college educaiton. During the war years, Tom worked for Pan Am at Treasure Island and served in the U.S. Army Air Corps. After the Was, Tom returned to Cal Poly and completed his degree in Aeronautical Engineering. Although he intended to rejoin Pan Am after graduation in 1946, Tom accepted an invitation to teach for on year at San Jose State College. He soon discovered that he loved teaching and his one-year commitment ended up lasting more than four decades. By 1950, he had become the Department Chairman of the Aeronautics program. He developed the first four-year college-level aeronautics program at San Jose State, secured an FAA Air Agency Certificate authorizing the college to operate an approved Airframe and Powerplant (A&P) program in 1954 and completed his Master's degree in Education in 1956. As the school curriculum expanded, so did the facilities. He successfully negotiated a 50-year land lease to build a state-of-the-art off-campus facility on San Jose Airport. The new on-airport facility was complete in 1962 and became the flagship aviation program in California. By the 1980's, enrollment exceeded 800 students majoring in aircraft maintenance, flight operations and administration. Tom retired form SJSU in 1985, but continued to teach part-time until 1994. Mr. Leonard was a past president and long-time member of the Aero Club Board of Directors. Funds for this scholarship have been contributed by many of the thousands whose lives were touched by this unique man.

Joshua Cucci

Joshua is pursuing an Aviation Professional Flight degree at San Jose State University (SJSU) with an expected graduation date of May 2025. Joshua has earned his Private and Commercial Pilot certificates and Instrument Rating and is working towards a Multi-Engine Rating and Certified Flight Instructor certificate (CFI). In addition, Joshua is on track to obtain his Certified Flight Instructor - Instrument Rating (CFII) next year and plans to work as a CFII during his final three semesters at SJSU.

As an active member of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) for over six years, Joshua has not only demonstrated leadership but also a deep sense of responsibility to aviation and the larger community. His experience within the CAP includes serving as the Public Affairs Officer, where he took the initiative to develop a website, manage social media, and organize engaging community events, such as the youth in aviation event sponsored by United Airlines. As the CAP Cadet Commander, he mentored and managed a large group of Cadets.

Currently, Joshua is a contract flight test engineer for Airbus, operating onboard data collection systems and contributing to developing technology for the Airbus A320neo family. Last summer, Joshua was an Airport Operations Intern at United Airlines in Los Angeles (LAX). He was responsible for analyzing operational performance and establishing performance metrics to examine station and network growth opportunities. Additionally, he was a Flight Operations and Dispatch Intern for Airbus in Sunnyvale at their technological innovation center, working across teams to develop a comprehensive flight operations and test matrix.



Aside from his Civil Air Patrol involvement, Joshua is an Instructional Student Assistant for Professor Edgar Mora at SJSU. Joshua was pivotal in revitalizing the program's flight simulation lab, making it accessible to students free of charge. His dedication to improving the resources available to fellow students is a testament to his commitment to advancing

Changing the World Scholarship

Alexander (Alec) Sandy

Alec, a junior at San Jose State University, is actively pursuing a degree in Aviation Professional Flight. His post-graduation plans involve accumulating flight hours as a Certified Flight Instructor with the ultimate aspiration of becoming an airline pilot.

Alec has made notable progress in his journey towards this goal. Last year, he earned his Private Pilot Certificate and is focused on obtaining his Instrument Rating, which he anticipates completing early next year. He eagerly anticipates making a positive impact on the general aviation community by serving as a flight instructor and mentor pilot to aspiring young aviators.

In addition to his flight training pursuits, Alec is an Analyst Assistant at the NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System program. In this role, he meticulously analyzes a wide range of aviation safety reports, providing valuable insights across all facets of aviation. Alec attributes this experience to enhancing his proficiency and deepening his understanding of the aviation industry, equipping him to be a safer and more knowledgeable pilot.

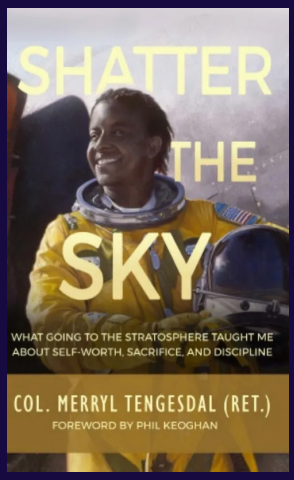


Within the SJSU Aviation community, Alec is deeply engaged in various student organizations. He currently holds the position of President for Alpha Eta Rho and serves as the Safety Officer for the SJSU Precision Flight Team. Alec is honored and immensely grateful to be the recipient of this scholarship, expressing his gratitude to the Aero Club of Northern California Board of Directors and the generous scholarship donors.











Crystal Eagle Award Recipients

2023: Col. Merryl Tengesdal
2022: Randy Howell
2021: no award (covid)
2020: no award (covid)
2019: Patty Wagstaff
2018: Barry Schiff
2017: John and Martha King
2016: Steve Hinton
2015: Alan Eustace
2014: Prof. Thomas Leonard
2013: Rod Machado
2012: Julie Clark
2011: Clarence E. “Bud” Anderson
2010: Brian Shul
2009: Mike Melvill
2008: Phil Boyer
2007: Steve Fossett
2006: Sean D. Tucker
2005: Eileen Marie Collins
2004: Elgen M. Long
2003: Clay Lacy
2002: A. Scott Crossfield
2001: Igor I. Sikorsky
2000: Wayne Handley
1999: Paul H. Poberezny
1998: Donald D. Engen
1997: Robert L. “Hoot” Gibson
1996: Darryl G. Greenamyer
1995: James S. Ricklefs
1994: Frank L. Christensen
1993: Robert T. Jones
1992: Jeana Yeager
1991: Allen E. Paulson
1990: George S. Cooper
1989: Elbert “Burt” L. Rutan
1988: Anthony W. “Tony” LeVier
1987: James M. “Jim” Nissen
1986: William “Bill” Lear, Sr.
1985: Stanley Hiller, Jr
1984: BG Charles E. “Chuck” Yeager
1983: Gen. James “Jimmy” Doolittle

The Aero Club of Northern California

Thirty-Ninth Annual Awards Banquet

Hiller Aviation Museum

November 4, 2023

Welcome and Introduction of Aero Club Board and Guests	Pamela Svrdlin
Aero Club Scholarship Awards Presentations	
James M. Nissen Sr. Scholarship	Bhavya Dhulipalla
Robert L. Hamilton Scholarship	Sofia Goodwin
Thomas E. Leonard Scholarship	Joshua Cucci
Changing the World	Alexander Sandy

DINNER

Aero Club - NAA Awards	Walt Gyger
Carol Ford	

Silent Auction Ends

Crystal Eagle Recipient Introduction	Pamela Svrdlin
Guest Speaker	Col. Merryl Tengesdal
Crystal Eagle Award Presentation	Pamela Svrdlin

The Crystal Eagle Award

The Crystal Eagle:
A distinctive work of art

The Crystal Eagle Award is a unique work of art handcrafted in Italy of the finest crystal.



It is fitting that the eagle should be the symbol for the Aero Club's annual award. The North American eagle is recognized as a bird possessing great strength, natural grace, keenness of vision and power in flight. The eagle has historically been used by man to identify with flying.

The Crystal Eagle is mounted on a California redwood base, unique to Northern California. In its natural state, redwood has unusual durability, commensurate with the recipients of this coveted award.

The Crystal Eagle Award is presented annually by the Aero Club of Northern California to recognize an individual whose accomplishments have significantly contributed to the advancement of aviation

About Our Club

The Aero Club of Northern California was formed to promote activities which advance aviation and aerospace within Northern California.

We are a regional affiliate club of NAA, the National Aeronautic Association, which having been founded in 1905 as the Aero Club of America is the oldest independent, non-profit aviation organization in the United States, and the sole U.S.representative to the Federation Aeronautique International (FAI).

So central to aviation was the Aero Club that until 1926 it issued all pilot licenses in the United States.

The first five pilot licenses issued by the Aero Club were: 1) Glen H. Curtiss, 2) Lt. Frank P. Lahm, 3) Louis Paulham, 4) Orville Wright, and 5) Wilbur Wright. Until 1926, all other pilot licenses issued in the United States subsequent to these five were issued by the Aero Club of America.

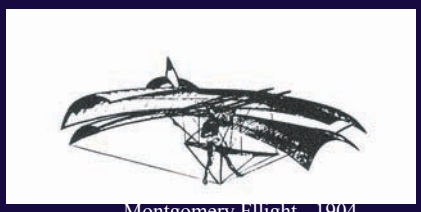
We embrace the goals of our parent organization in our efforts to support a vigorous aviation and space program for sutdents at all levels of learning, and to recognize and honor those who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of aviation and space flight.

Donate

The secondary purpose of this event is to provide scholarships to aviation career minded college students. Please consider making a tax deductable donation to our scholarship program by pointing your cell phone camera at the QR code to the right and completing the donation form. The Aero Club and future aviators will be forever grateful.

About Our Logo

Incorporated in the logo of The Aero Club of Northern California are some of the most significant contributions the Northern California area has made to the art and science of flight.



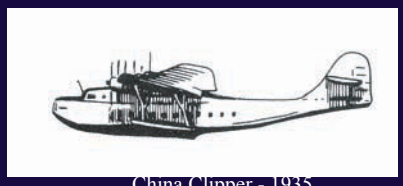
Montgomery Flight - 1904

Often referred to as “The Father of Basic Flying” Dr. John Montgomery was a true aviation pioneer. San Jose was the site of many of his historic achievements. Alexander Grahm Bell noted that, “All subsequent attempts in aviation must begin with the Montgomery Machine.”



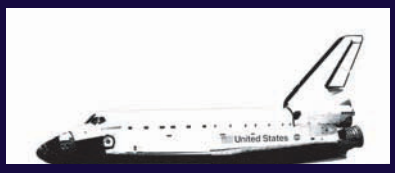
Moffett Field - 1933

Dedicated April 12, 1933, Moffett Field was the United States guardian of the Pacific. It continues to be a major aviation facility supporting federal, military and private operations.



China Clipper - 1935

Lifting from San Francisco Bay waters on November 22, 1935, the Clipper became the first airplane to fly the Pacific non-stop. Cutting over 15 days off the best surface time from San Francisco to Manila, it led to the elimination of the barriers of space and time.



NASA Ames Reserach Ceneter - 1939

Northern California’s continued contributions to the quest for our ultimate destiny is assured by the ongoing advancements in aerospace science and technology at NASA’s Ames Research Center.