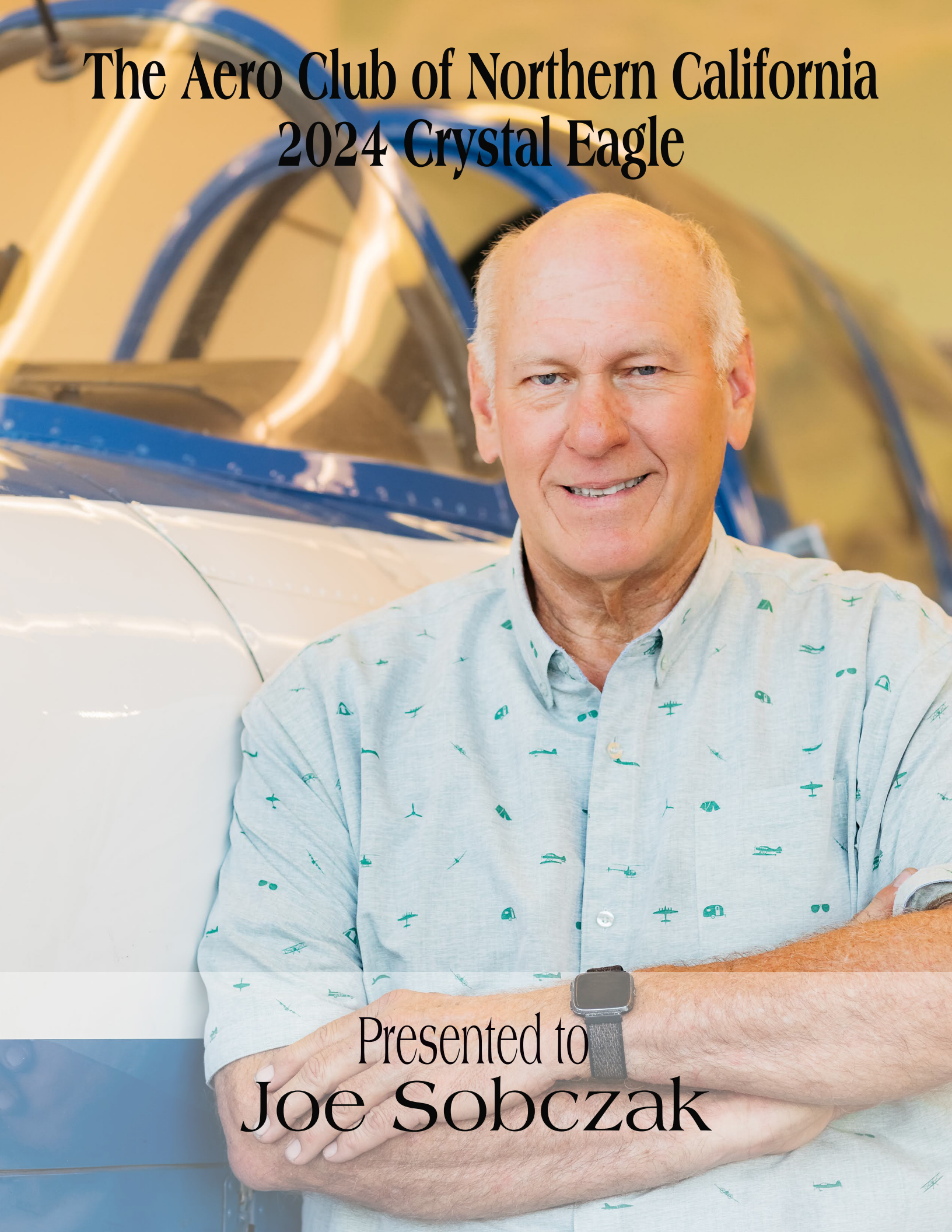
The Aero Club of Northern California
2024 Crystal Eagle



Presented to

Joe Sobczak



Joseph Edward Sobczak

Joseph Edward Sobczak is a seasoned commercial airline test pilot and retired United States Air Force officer. His roots in San Jose, California, where he learned to fly over 50 years ago, have contributed to a distinguished career marked by exceptional education, military service, and groundbreaking contributions to aviation.

Joseph is not just your average commerical pilot. He is an aircraft accident investigator, a CFI, a Glider Pilot, a Licensed A&P Mechanic, and he owns five aircraft, one of which he built. During the Cold War Mr. Sobczak was a fighter pilot too, where he flew the F15 in Germany. Mr. Sobczak was a distinguished graduate and instructor at the USAF Test Pilot School, where he worked with aviation legends such as Crystal Eagle recipients Gen. Chuck Yeager and James H. Doolittle III.

Joseph played a pivotal role in the development of the Automatic Ground Collision Avoidance System (Auto-GCAS) for the F-16 and F-35. The system is a great safety advacement that autonomously prevents controlled flight into terrain accidents. His work on Auto-GCAS resulted in the award of the 2018 Robert J. Collier Trophy.

His commitment to aviation safety, coupled with his local impact and humble leadership, makes him an icon in the aviation community and a deserving reciepient of the Crystal Eagle Award.

National Aero Club Association
2024 Awardee



Willie Turner

Willie Turner has been with the Hiller Aviation Museum since October 1995, where he leads the marketing department and orchestrates promotional events that support the museum's mission. He is responsible for planning and managing all aspects of both large-scale and intimate private events, coordinating vendors, onsite resources, and logistics. Willie has successfully developed the museum's signature events, including Vertical Challenge, Biggest Little Air Show, Day of Drones, Noon Years, and the lecture series.

Willie is a second-generation pilot. His father, a military and civilian aviator, was also an aircraft builder, and his mother, a pilot, constructed her own aircraft at the San Carlos Airport. Willie soloed the plane his mother built at Half Moon Bay Airport, and 35 years later, his son followed in his footsteps by soloing the same aircraft. Growing up attending air shows, Willie developed a deep passion for aviation, which led him to become an Air Boss at numerous local air shows, including at Chrissy Field, Moffett Field, and Watsonville Airport.

A graduate of California State University, Chico, Willie also holds a Private Pilot Certificate, blending his lifelong love of aviation with his professional career at the museum.



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.

Justen Lim



Justen has been flying since August 2023. In that time, he has accumulated over 180 hours of flight time and passed his Private and Instrument check rides. He is currently working on his Commercial Pilots License with the expectation of completing it in the spring of 2025. Justen is in his second year at San Jose State University where he is enrolled in the aviation program. While a student, Justen has been involved in several student organizations. As a member of the Precision Flight Team, where he is currently a ground event coach, he has participated in regional and national events, and had the opportunity to pilot an airplane cross country. He has also become active with Alpha Eta Rho where he was recently elected as the Treasurer. In Women in Aviation Justen is able to participate/volunteer for many SJSU aviation department networking events.

As a boy, Justen's family flew international every summer. It was the excitement of these trips that led to Justen's love of travel and everything aviation and caused Justen to associate passenger jets with adventure and fun! But his intrigue in aviation is not confined to flying and the views of the world below, Justen finds the airports, their systems, and the people you meet to be incredibly fascinating too.



Robert L. Hamilton Scholarship

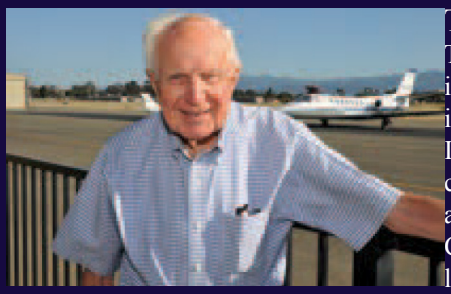
Robert (Bob) L. Hamilton (1936-2002) was born in Hanford CA. In 1954 he joined the United States Army and was initially trained in helicopter maintenance. After a tour in Germany, he was accepted in the Army helicopter pilot program and followed his training served two tours in Vietnam as a rescue helicopter 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.

Kayla Szulc

Kayla's love of aviation was fueled by the proximity of an airport just fifteen minutes from her home. She loved to visit the airport where she would talk with pilots and mechanics on the field and immerse herself in the vibrant aviation community. This resulted in her pursing an Aviation degree at San Jose State University, where she is committed to excelling in her studies, maintaining a high GPA, while juggling work, school and flight training. Her goal is to graduate in May 2027 and to continue her journey toward becoming a flight instructor and then commercial airline pilot.



As a flight instructor, Kayla will have the opportunity to share her passion for aviation while helping others achieve their dream of flying, an endeavor she expects be incredibility rewarding.
Kayla gives back in many different ways. She is a current member of Air Force ROTC program and is a contributing member of Woman in Aviation. In addition to flying, Kayla desires to make the world of flight more accessible and exciting through mentoring young women who are interested in aviation. Her experience allows her to help other aspiring pilots to dismantle barriers while inspiring confidence within themselves.



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.

Juan Hernandez



Juan was bitten by the aviation bug at a very early age. In fact, he does not recall a time when airplanes and flying were not fascinating to him. This fascination with flight led Juan to start flight training while still in high school where while a Senior, he passed his private check ride and became a licensed pilot. Juan hasn't slowed down since then. He is currently enrolled in the aviation program at San Jose State University (SJSU) where he is pursuing an aviation degree while continuing flight training. In August of 2024 Juan passed his Instrument check-ride and is currently working on a Commercial ticket and an Instrument Ground Instructor license. Anybody that meets Juans is immediately taken with his personal drive to succeed. As a student, he is involved with SJSU Precision Flight Team where he is the Safety Officer, the Flying 20's where he is the treasurer, American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE), Women in Aviation (WIA) and Alpha Eta Rho. In his free time, Juan works as a Safety Analyst at NASA's Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS). It is this work, along with personal savings and scholarships that have allowed Juan to continue to pursue his dream of become a professional pilot.

Changing the World Scholarship

This scholarship was founded in 2010 through Women in Aviation International to honor SJSU Aviation Alumnus and past President of the Aero Club of Northern California, Sandra Clifford (1969-2024), who selflessly gave of herself to all that needed her. Sandra was a force of good to recon with and all who knew her could see her drive to help. As a SJSU Student, she led student organization and was constant source of support to her fellow students. After school Sandra embarked on a varied aviation career where she held positions of flight instructor, profeesional pilot, airline spokesperson, flight school manager to flight attendant. This scholarship is given in her name and honors an individual who exhibit similar traites to Sandras in their efforts to mentor others, improved the aviation industry and make the world a better place.

Halle Patzer



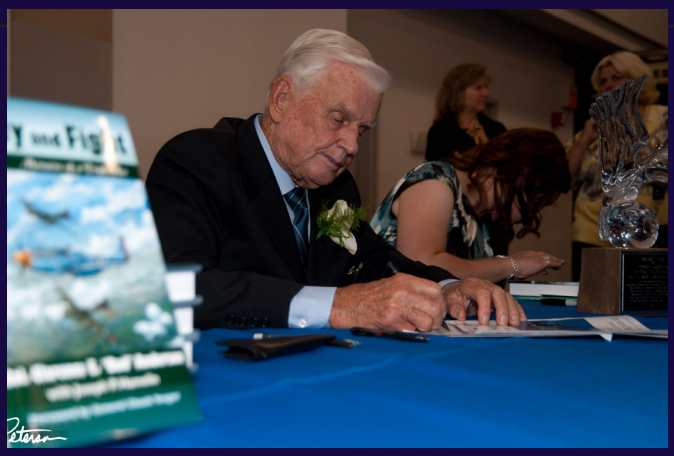
Halle is a senior at San Jose State University where she expects to graduate next spring with a Bachelors degree in aviation. Her journey to aviation began when as a young lady, the local aerobatic club would perform maneuvers overhead. She recalls "the calming roar of an airplane" as it flew over her home and wondering if she could one day pilot the aircraft. She can. Halle's current goals including passing her Private check ride, which has recently been scheduled, and continue her flying pursuits to become an airline pilot. She was involved in developing the SJSU partnership with Alaska and Horizon Airlines, where they will provide financial assistance for students in exchange for a work commitment. Halle hopes to take advantage of this brand new program in the near future.

Halle has worked a variety of jobs to support her education objectives including that of a nanny, a waitress, working in an Amazon warehouse to her current role as an Analyst Assistant at the NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System program. In this role, she meticulously analyzes a wide range of aviation safety reports, providing valuable insights across many facets of aviation.

Halle is the current President of Women in Aviation through which she has found a passion in inspiring young girls and women to become pilots. Most recently she helped organize a Girls in Aviation Day that attracted more than 200 children to Reid-Hillview Airport. Her efforts in the industry have led to her recent invitation to speak in her hometown at a Women in STEM event.

Crystal Eagle Award Recipients

2024: Joseph Edward Solbczak
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

Fortieth Annual Awards Banquet

Hiller Aviation Museum

November 9, 2024

Welcome and Introduction of Aero Club Board and Guests		Pamela Svrdlin
Aero Club Scholarship Awards Presentations		
James M. Nissen Sr. Scholarship	Justen Lim	Michelle Tripp
Robert L. Hamilton Scholarship	Kayla Szulc	Gretchen Kelly
Thomas E. Leonard Scholarship	Juan Hernandez	Edgar Mora
Changing the World	Halle Patzer	Wendy Hales

DINNER

Aero Club - NAA Awards Willie Turner	Walt Gyger

Silent Auction Ends

Crystal Eagle Recipient Introduction	Pamela Svrdlin
Guest Speaker	Joseph Edward Sobczak
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.

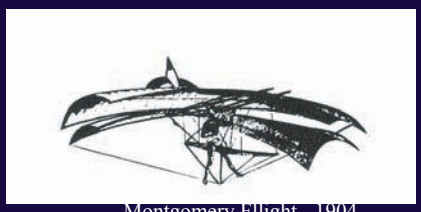
We embrace the goals of our parent organization in our efforts to support a vigorous aviation and space program for sutdents at all levels of learning, and to recognize and honor those who have made outstanding contributions to the advancement of aviation and space flight.

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.



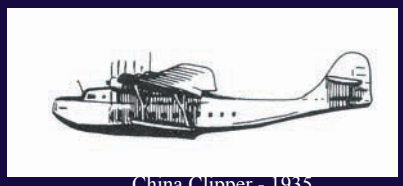
Montgomery Flight - 1904

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.”



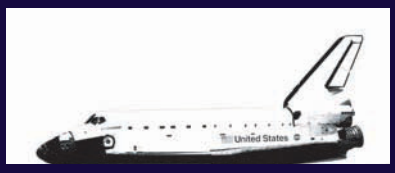
Moffett Field - 1933

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.