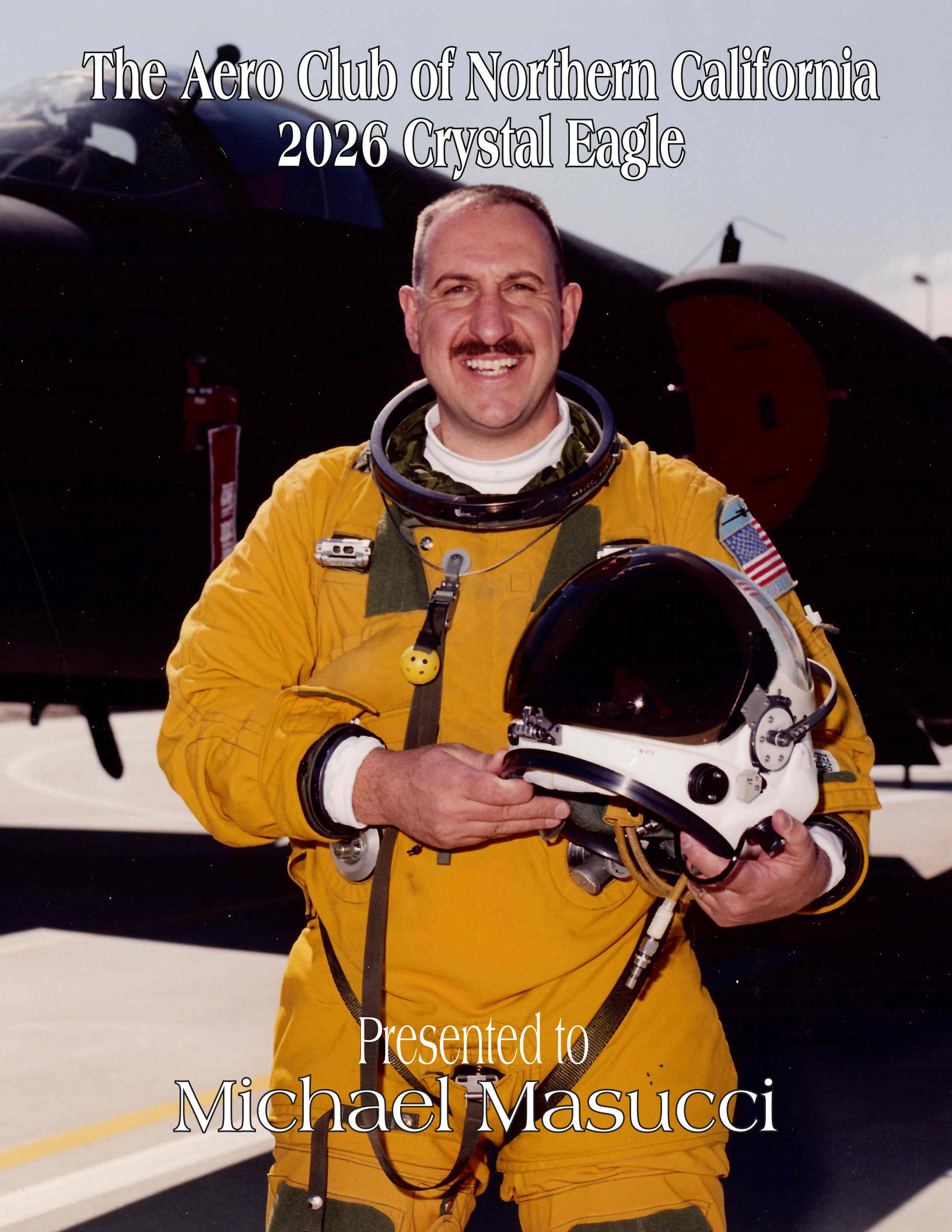
The Aero Club of Northern California
2026 Crystal Eagle



Presented to

Michael Masucci



Mike “Sooch” Masucci

Mike “Sooch” Masucci is currently a Virgin Galactic Test Pilot/Astronaut flying Mother-Ship Eve and Space-Ship vehicles SS2 and SS4. Along with his flight duties at VG, he is the lead flight instructor and is involved with Avionics engineering, simulator development, FAA airspace agreements, and flight crew life support equipment. Mike joined Virgin Galactic from XOJET Inc, a private airline company where he was a Citation X (CE750) Captain and FAA Check Airman. He has over 44 years of civilian and military operational and test flying experience with 12,000 flying hours in over 80 different airplane and glider types.

From Willow Grove, PA, Mike is a 1981 graduate of Philadelphia’s LaSalle High School. He graduated with an Astronautical Engineering degree from the United States Air Force Academy with honors and military distinction in 1985 and earned his Masters in Mechanical Engineering from California State University Fresno in 1997.

Mike was a distinguished graduate of United States Air Force pilot training in 1986 and completed USAF Test Pilot School in December of 1993 as a member of Class 93A. He served as a U-2 combat pilot in Operation Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, and Enduring Freedom. Mike instructed in the F-16, T-38, and glider aircraft at the USAF Test Pilot School while also serving as a Branch Chief. As a U-2 test pilot he conducted engine restart and flameout landing tests and was instrumental in the development and testing of the aircraft’s glass cockpit and power re-wire programs. He has commanded USAF developmental and operational test units as well as combat and training units. In 2008, Mike completed his USAF career as a deputy operations group commander. His decorations include the Air Medal, Aerial Achievement Medal, and Meritorious Service Medal. He also served as a T-6/SNJ war bird instructor for the Commemorative Air Force.

With Virgin Galactic since 2013, Mike has flown to space 6 times, is FAA Commercial Astronaut #6 and the 570th person is space. He is a member of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots (SETP), the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), and the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA). He is an Airline Transport Pilot with Certified Flight Instructor ratings in gliders and airplanes. He is also an FAA Designated Pilot Examiner and Special Aircraft Examiner. Mike is married with two children and five grandchildren.

Tonight, we honor Mike with the Crystal Eagle Award for his extraordinary contributions to aviation and space exploration.

National Aero Club Association 2026 Awardee



Michael Mashack

Michael Mashack is the Founder and Executive Director of Bay Area Urban Eagles (BAUE), a nonprofit organization based in East Palo Alto that connects youth and young adults to aviation and aerospace career pathways. A licensed pilot and former business management consultant, Michael launched BAUE in 2023 to expand access to aviation through hands-on training, mentorship, and workforce exposure. Under his leadership, BAUE has served more than 500 students across the Bay Area, providing ground school instruction, flight experiences, and career exploration opportunities. Michael currently serves as a Planning Commissioner for the City of East Palo Alto and remains committed to building a more inclusive and representative aviation workforce.

In the heart of Silicon Valley, a quiet revolution is taking place in the skies—and it is being built from the ground up. BAUE is a visionary nonprofit organization that is transforming what it means for young people from diverse urban communities to look up and see a future in aviation. By blending mentorship, hands-on STEM education, flight simulation, and tangible career pathways, Michael and the BAUE team are ensuring that the next generation of aviators, engineers, and aerospace leaders reflects the full mosaic of our society.

For many youth in urban neighborhoods, careers in aviation—whether as commercial pilots, aerospace engineers, air traffic controllers, or operations managers—can feel entirely out of reach. They represent a world hidden behind high airport fences and exclusive training costs. Michael Mashack recognized this systemic gap and chose to do something about it.

As a dedicated community leader who has served as a Planning Commissioner for the City of East Palo Alto, Michael understood that true equity requires intentional access. He founded BAUE to act as a bridge, bringing high-growth aviation and technology careers directly to local youth. Under his guidance, the organization has evolved from a spark of an idea into a robust pipeline of opportunity.

BAUE's programming is thoughtfully structured to meet young people at every stage of their educational journey. Through the Youth Aviation Exploration Program, middle school students are introduced to the fundamental thrills of flight and aerospace concepts through engaging lessons and hands-on activities, planting seeds of curiosity early on. As students transition into high school and young adulthood, the Aviation Career Pathway Program deepens their engagement. Utilizing advanced flight simulation training, private pilot ground schools, and aerospace engineering basics, BAUE equips students with real-world skills.

What sets Bay Area Urban Eagles apart is not just the technical training, but the profound sense of belonging and mentorship that Michael instills. In aviation, having someone in your corner can make all the difference between giving up and soaring.



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 sea-planes 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.

Caleb Yedong Woo School: San Jose State University | Major: Aviation Management | Expected Graduation: Fall 2027)
Growing up traveling between the United States, Korea, and the Philippines, Caleb Yedong Woo developed an early appreciation for aviation as a vital bridge for global connectivity and opportunity. Today, Caleb is pursuing a B.S. in Aviation Management with a Business minor at San Jose State University, maintaining a 4.0 GPA as a President's Scholar. He actively leads on campus as President of the SJSU American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) student chapter and works on the HR Operations Team at Pacific Aviation, supporting operations for more than ten international airlines across SEA, SFO, and SJC stations.



Caleb's career ambition is to specialize in airline operations management and ultimately lead from an Operations Control Center (OCC), uniting technical precision with empathetic service. A key moment during an internship with Asiana Airlines reinforced his philosophy: while operational reliability relies on checklists and compliance, its true purpose is serving the people behind every flight. He currently holds multiple industry certifications and is completing his AAAE ACE Operations certification to deep-en his expertise in airfield safety and Part 139 compliance.

Rooted in a family tradition of community service, Caleb has volunteered extensively supporting Kopi-no children in the Philippines and currently tutors ESL students at SJSU. He is dedicated to paying his success forward by mentoring underrepresented, first-generation aviation students throughout his career. give back by mentoring future aviators and funding scholarships for aspiring pilots.



Robert L. Hamilton Scholarship

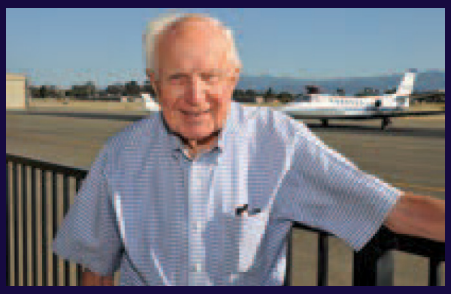
Robert (Bob) L. Hamilton (1936-2002) was born in Hanford CA. In 1954 he joined the United States Army and was initially trained in helicopter maintenance. After a tour in Germany, he was accepted in the Army helicopter pilot program and followed his training served two tours in Vietnam as a rescue helicopter 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 Direc-tors. Funds for this scholarship were donated by a very close friend of the Hamilton family at the time of Mr. Hamilton's death.

Thomas Woneis School: San Jose State University | Major: Aviation Management | Expected Graduation: Fall 2027
Thomas Woneis's journey into aviation began not in the cockpit, but through the detailed challenge of virtual flight simulation, which quickly evolved into a passion for the discipline and precision required in real-world flying. A Milpitas High School graduate, Thomas is pursuing his B.S. in Aviation Management at San Jose State University, where he has earned President's Scholar honors and actively served on the SJSU Precision Flight Team.



Already an accomplished aviator with 600 flight hours, Thomas holds his Private Pilot, Instrument, Commercial, Certified Flight Instructor (CFI), and Certified Flight Instructor Instrument (CFII) ratings. He currently works as a flight instructor at Trade Winds and the Flying Twenty, passing on high standards of professionalism and structured checklist discipline inspired by his mentors. A defining moment in his training occurred when he planned a complex cross-country flight to Shelter Cove, an experience he later presented at a San Carlos Flight Center safety seminar to help fellow pilots navigate challenging coastal flights.

Thomas's goal is to complete his multi-engine rating before graduation, reach 1,500 flight hours by 2028, and transition into regional and legacy airline flying. Deeply appreciative of the scholarships that have supported his training, he commits his free time to providing detailed, free post-flight debriefs for his stu-dents and looks forward to volunteering with organizations like Angel Flight West and Pilots N Paws.



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.

Agatha Vu School: San Jose State University | Major: Aviation: Flight Operations | Expected Graduation: Spring 2029

Agatha Vu discovered her passion for flight during her junior year of high school when she experienced San Jose State University's flight simulator during a field trip. That transformative moment led her to enroll at SJSU, where she is currently pursuing a degree in Aviation with a focus on Flight Operations. A graduate of Santa Clara High School and a recipient of the 49ers STEM Leadership Institute Webb Foundation Scholarship Grant, Agatha balances rigorous academics with active leadership on campus.



Agatha serves on the SJSU Women in Aviation Chapter Scholarship Board and Historian Committee, organizing campus events and fostering community among aspiring female aviators. Her commitment to encouraging underrepresented youth in STEM was sparked while volunteering at Aviation Career Discovery Day, where she guided young girls through interactive flight activities and saw firsthand the power of early mentorship.

Overcoming early challenges of balancing an apprenticeship, full-time academics, and personal wellness, Agatha developed strong time-management strategies and resilience. Inspired by supportive faculty mentors, her goal after completing her commercial pilot certificate and degree is to become a commercial airline pilot and later serve as a flight instructor. Agatha remains dedicated to opening doors for future generations, ensuring that young women seeing an aircraft for the first time know that the sky is well within their reach.

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, 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.

Sophie Lee School: San Jose State University | Major: Aviation, Professional Flight | Expected Graduation: Spring 2028

Sophie Lee's path to the cockpit took an unexpected turn during her freshman year at San Jose State University when a GE aviation course inspired her to switch majors from design to Professional Flight. Today, she is pursuing her dream of becoming a commercial airline pilot, following in the footsteps of her father, who has served as an airline first officer throughout her life.



In addition to earned flight ratings, including her Private Pilot Certificate, Sophie has gained valuable operational insight through an internship in Airport Operations Airside & Terminal at San Jose Mineta International Airport (SJC). On campus, she actively serves as Historian for the SJSU Women in Aviation chapter and holds leadership roles in the Professional Asian Pilots Association (PAPA) and Alpha Eta Rho. Her resilience was put to the test when she faced an initial set-back on her private pilot checkride; through rigorous self-reflection and perseverance, she passed on her next attempt, transforming the obstacle into a foundational lesson in flight discipline.

Sophie's ultimate goal is to fly for a major airline while advocating for increased representation in the flight deck. Having benefited from the encouragement of student clubs and industry scholarships, she regularly volunteers at high school career fairs, panel discussions, and youth fly-ins. She plans to continue mentoring young women and Asian-American students as they navigate their own aviation journeys.



Gerald L. Shreve Scholarship

Gerald (Jerry) L. Shreve (1932–2020) was a dedicated educator, aviator, and mentor whose legacy continues to shape aviation education. Born in Monterey Park, California, Jerry served as a U.S. Air Force pilot from 1953 to 1957, later continuing in the USAF Reserve and California Air National Guard while earning his Aeronautics degree from San José State College in 1960 and an MBA from the University of Santa Clara in 1965.

Jerry began teaching at San José State University in 1960, rising to full professor by 1973 and retiring in 1995 after 35 years of service. His teaching and research focused on flight operations, aircraft maintenance, and aviation management. He also contributed to projects like the Mountain Lion Research Project as chief pilot and flight operations consultant. A passionate aviator, Jerry held a commercial pilot certificate with ratings for airplane single and multi-engine land and sea, helicopter, and instrument flight. He was also a certified flight instructor, ground instructor, and aircraft mechanic. He served as a lecturer for FAA Flight Instructor Refresher Courses and as an FAA accident prevention counselor.

Jerry mentored countless students through his roles as faculty advisor for the SJSU Flying Twenty club and head coach of the university's Precision Flight Team. He judged and coached at national and international flight competitions, including the World Precision Flying Championships in 1985.

His many honors include the William A. Wheatley Award, Paul Mantz Memorial Award, NIFA Outstanding Contribution Award, and induction into the International Forest of Friendship. In 2013, SJSU named its Flight Simulation Lab in his honor and recognized him as a Distinguished Alumnus. This scholarship celebrates Jerry's lifelong dedication to aviation education and his enduring impact on future generations of aviators.

Jerry's legacy is honored through numerous awards, including the William A. Wheatley Award, Paul Mantz Memorial Award, and NIFA Outstanding Contribution Award. In 2013, SJSU named its Flight Simulation Lab in his honor and recognized him as a Distinguished Alumnus. His enduring impact continues through this scholarship, supporting future aviators inspired by his lifelong dedication to flight, education, and service.

Will Lucchetti School: San Jose State University | Major: Aviation Professional Flight | Expected Graduation: Spring 2028

Will Lucchetti's childhood fascination with aviation—built on LEGO airplanes and airport window seats—flourished into a dedicated career path at San Jose State University, where he is studying Professional Flight. A Lincoln High School graduate and former Sierra College transfer student, Will has achieved President's Scholar recognition at SJSU and currently serves as President of Alpha Eta Rho (Eta Chapter), the professional co-ed aviation fraternity.



As a first-generation aviation student, Will encountered a major hurdle when his initial FAA First-Class Medical application required months of complex documentation and clearance. He met the delay with determination, researching regulations and staying disciplined until earning his medical certificate and subsequent Private Pilot Certificate. This experience deepened his problem-solving skills and reinforced his ambition to become a commercial airline pilot.

Under Will's leadership, Alpha Eta Rho successfully launched candidate classes and organized community projects, including airport cleanups and aviation career workshops. Understanding the challenges of navigating an aviation program without family background in the industry, Will dedicates his time to helping new transfer students find housing, navigate flight training resources, and build professional networks. He strives to build a career defined by safety, leadership, and a lifelong commitment to supporting fellow aviators as they take off.

Crystal Eagle Award Recipients

2026: Michael J. Masucci
2025: Bonny Simi
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

Forty-Second Annual Awards Banquet

Hiller Aviation Museum

November 14, 2026

Welcome and Introduction of Aero Club Board and Guests		Pamela Svrdlin
Aero Club Scholarship Awards Presentations		
James M. Nissen Sr. Scholarship	Caleb Yedong Woo	Michael Byrne
Robert L. Hamilton Scholarship	Thomas Woneis	Trish Guerrieri
Thomas E. Leonard Scholarship	Agatha Vu	Richard Bandy
Changing the World	Sophie Lee	Wendy Mora
Gerald Shreve	Will Lucchetti	Walt Gyger

DINNER

Aero Club - NAA Awards	Gretchen Kelly
Michael Mashack	

Download Full Program

Silent Auction Ends

Crystal Eagle Recipient Introduction	John Cabigas
Guest Speaker	Michael J. Masucci
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

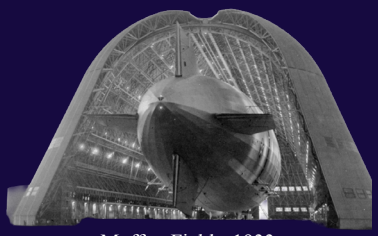
The secondary purpose of this event is to provide scholarships to aviation career minded college students. Please consider making a tax deductable donation to our scholarship program by pointing your cell phone camera at the QR code to the right and completing the donation form. The Aero Club and future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

About Our Logo

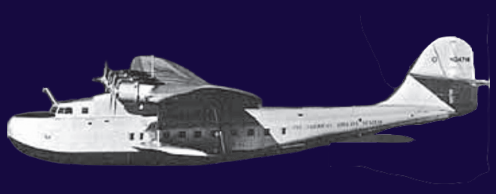
Incorporated in the logo of The Aero Club of Northern California are some of the most significant contributions the Northern California area has made to the art and science of flight.



Montgomery Fllight - 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.