



Contact: Cassandra Bosco  
202-415-2798

## **AVIATION LEGEND BOB HOOVER HONORED WITH WRIGHT BROTHERS MEMORIAL TROPHY**

**Washington, DC, September 25, 2014** – Robert L. “Bob” Hoover will receive the 2014 Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy from the National Aeronautic Association (NAA). The trophy is awarded annually to a living American for "...significant public service of enduring value to aviation in the United States." One of the most important, historic, and visible aviation and aerospace awards in the world, the Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy reflects a timeline of aviation and aerospace’s most innovative inventors, explorers, industrialists, and public servants.

Jim Albaugh, NAA Chairman and a member of the Selection Committee, heralded the choice. “There are very few people in the world that capture the history, progress, importance, and sheer excitement of aviation and aerospace like Bob Hoover,” Albaugh said. “For 70 years he has set the standard for skill, leadership, and bravery which may last forever.”

An icon of the aviation community, Hoover is considered one of the great pilots in history. At the age of 92, he is a living bridge from the origins of flight and space travel to the present, having personally known industry giants such as Orville Wright, Eddie Rickenbacker, Charles Lindbergh, James H. Doolittle, Chuck Yeager, Jacqueline Cochran, Neil Armstrong, and Yuri Gagarin. Doolittle called him, “the greatest stick-and-rudder man who ever lived.” Yeager, the first man to break the sound barrier, called Hoover, “the best pilot flying today.” The Centennial of Flight edition of *Air & Space Smithsonian* named him the third greatest aviator in history.

With the onset of World War II, Hoover enlisted in the Tennessee National Guard and, subsequently, entered United States Army Pilot Training. Upon completion, he was sent to England and, after the Allied invasion of North Africa, he was stationed in Casablanca, where he flight-tested aircraft that had been shipped from the United States and re-assembled. Later assigned to the 52nd Fighter Group stationed in Sicily, he flew 58 successful missions before being shot down off the coast of Southern France. That 59<sup>th</sup> mission led to his capture by the Germans and a 16-month detainment in the Stalag Luft 1 prison camp. In recognition of his outstanding military service, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Soldier's Medal for Valor, the Air Medal with Clusters, the Purple Heart, and the French Croix de Guerre.

But, it was Hoover's exceptional skill and precision as the world's greatest air show pilot that made him an inspiration and example to pilots around the world. In over 50 years of flying, he is believed to have performed in more air shows, in more types of aircraft, in more countries, and before more spectators than any other pilot in the history of aviation. His performances in the Shrike Commander were among his most thrilling exhibitions as he swooped, rolled, looped, and finally maneuvered the aircraft to a landing with no engines running, following his famed "energy management sequence." As a tribute to Hoover's legacy, the Shrike Commander was put on display at the National Air and Space Museum's Stephen F. Udvar-Hazy Center.

The Selection Committee was comprised of:

- Jim Albaugh, Chairman, NAA
- The Honorable Marion Blakey, President and CEO, Aerospace Industries Association (Wright Trophy Recipient 2013)
- Major General Charles Bolden, USMC (Ret.)
- Ed Bolen, President and CEO, National Business Aviation Association
- Nick Calio, President and CEO, Airlines for America
- Captain Gene Cernan, USN (Ret.) (Wright Trophy Recipient, 2007)
- Pete Dumont, President, Aero Club of Washington
- Robert Goyer, Editor-In-Chief, *Flying Magazine*
- Dr. Sandy Magnus, Executive Director, American Institute of Aeronautics & Astronautics
- Jonathan Gaffney, President and CEO, NAA (Chairman of the Committee)

“Now in its 67th year, the Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy is the one of the most prestigious aviation awards in the world,” said Gaffney. “Adding Mr. Hoover’s name to its historic list of recipients is wonderful tribute to his remarkable career.”

***The National Aeronautic Association is a non-profit, membership organization devoted to fostering America's aerospace leadership and promoting public understanding of the importance of aviation and space flight to the United States.***

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