

NAA NEWS

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Contact: Nicole Regele, 703-527-0226
nregele@naa-usa.org

Promoter of Vertical Flight Wins Henderson Award

A man credited with promoting development of helicopters and vertical-takeoff, fixed-wing aircraft has been selected by the National Aviation Club (NAC) to receive this year's Cliff Henderson Award for Achievement.

Retired Marine Lt. General Thomas H. Miller has spent the past 50 years as a booster of aviation in both military and civilian roles.

During the Korean War, he recognized the potential of helicopters to fly search-and-rescue missions--not a common assignment for helicopters at that time--and helped establish the operating procedures that have since led to routine use of helicopters in many emergency situations.

Following a tour of duty in Vietnam, General Miller continued his work with helicopters, encouraging not just new military applications but a variety of civilian uses, ranging from police service to Medivac flights to corporate transportation.

General Miller also took an interest in efforts to build fixed-wing airframes capable of vertical takeoff and landing. According to Leo Schefer, President of the Washington [D.C.] Airports Task Force, "Tom Miller was the first American to fly the prototype that led to the Harrier fighter aircraft. His determination to see the [adoption] of the highly controversial Harrier was decisive in that aircraft's successful development. Ironically, without Tom Miller's efforts, the British probably would have dropped the Harrier and been unable to retake the Falkland Islands in 1982. During that conflict, the Harrier was the only fighter aircraft the British were able to deploy to defend their invasion force from Argentinean attack...."

Before retiring from the Marines in 1979, General Miller won approval for procurement of an improved version of the Harrier (the AV-8B) and for development of the unique tilt-rotor V22 Osprey Transport.

During the last 23 years, General Miller has been active in various capacities with the National Academy of Science, the Department of Defense Science Board, the Washington Airports Task Force, the Air & Space Heritage Council, and the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation.

In announcing General Miller as the 2002 winner of the Henderson Award, NAC President Bud Orr says, "Tom Miller's achievements clearly capture the spirit of Cliff Henderson's desire to recognize an individual whose vision, leadership, and skill have made a significant and lasting contribution to the promotion and advancement of aviation."

The Henderson Award, created by NAC and administered by the National Aeronautic Association will be presented at a special Fall Award Dinner scheduled for October 21, 2002 in the Washington D.C. area. NAA is a

non-profit, membership organization devoted to fostering opportunities to participate fully in aviation activities and to promoting public understanding of the importance of aviation and space flight to the United States.