

# NAA NEWS

National Aeronautic Association

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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



**August 15, 2003**

---

### **Two Winners Picked for Henderson Award**

Two widely respected figures in the world of aviation have been chosen by the National Aeronautic Association (NAA) to receive this year's Cliff Henderson Award for Achievement.

The two are William Chana and Jerome Lederer, both well known for their many contributions to aeronautical progress throughout the 20th century.

The Henderson Award is given annually to "a living individual or group whose vision, leadership, or skill has made a significant and lasting contribution to the promotion and advancement of aviation or space activity."

William Chana trained as an aeronautical engineer at Purdue University and went to work for Consolidated Aircraft (later the Convair Division of General Dynamics) in 1941. During World War II, he was employed as a flight test engineer on numerous Convair aircraft. After the war, he gained fame as developer and test pilot of "the world's smallest plane," the Wee Bee. He and his partners went on to develop two successor aircraft, the Honey Bee and the Queen Bee.

In the mid-1950s, Chana became a customer-service performance and propulsion specialist for Convair, working on both civil and military transports. Among his many projects, he developed (1) a quick-reaction reporting system to expedite resolution of service problems, and (2) an automated information and retrieval system for field reports. He also won recognition for administrative controls he introduced at Fairchild Air Force Base in Washington as Convair's base manager of an Atlas missile installation.

In the mid-1970s, he shifted to other endeavors, focusing initially on design and construction of a triphibian airplane for Rohr Industries. Subsequently, he founded his own company to develop and market new aircraft designs, including concepts for vertical short-takeoff and landing (VSTOL) aircraft.

During much of his career, Chana has been active in the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), which named him a Fellow in 1993 and recently honored him "for extensive activity in the development of general aviation aircraft."

For the past 40 years, Chana has worn multiple hats as a volunteer at the San Diego Aerospace Museum, where he has fathered a long list of programs and events. He is now President Emeritus of the Museum. He has also donated his services to the San Diego Chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA), which presented him an award in 1976 for a seminar he staged on "The Advancing Technology of Homebuilt Aircraft." This year, he was inducted into EAA's Homebuilders Hall of Fame.

Over the last 23 years, Chana has given 350 lectures on aviation to aerospace organizations, technical societies, student groups, service clubs, and other audiences. He has also authored dozens of books, articles, and reports on aeronautical subjects. He will soon publish his own memoir, *Over the Wing*, which he wrote with the support of a fellowship from the Smithsonian Institution's Air and Space Museum.

Jerome ("Jerry") Lederer is one of the few living individuals who can claim to have literally grown up with modern aviation. Born in 1902, he studied aeronautics as an engineering major at New York University in the mid-1920s, a scant two decades after the airplane was invented. With a Master of Engineering degree in his pocket, he joined the U.S. Air Mail Service in 1926 as the agency's only aeronautical engineer. Twenty-four years old at the time, he was responsible for modification and repair of the government's mail planes--a sizable challenge in view of the difficult conditions under which early air mail pilots attempted to operate their primitive equipment.

In May 1927, Lederer was one of the many people who converged on Curtiss Field on Long Island to get a glimpse at Charles Lindbergh's *Spirit of St. Louis* on the day before Lindbergh took off on his historic flight across the Atlantic. Recalling the day, Lederer says he saw a black cat walking on the fuselage--"not a very encouraging sign." Lindbergh was not at the field at the time.

During the '30s, Lederer worked on a consulting basis with several aircraft manufacturers, then in 1940 gave up his private practice to become director of the safety bureau of the Civil Aeronautics Board. During World War II, he served as Director of the Airlines War Training Institute and as a safety consultant to the Air Force. During this period, he supervised the training of 10,000 airmen and 35,000 mechanics for the Air Transport Command. He and his staff wrote 15 textbooks in 15 weeks, including the first survival manuals for pilots.

In 1947, Lederer founded the Flight Safety Foundation (FSF) and served for the next 20 years as its director, establishing it as a prominent forum for addressing safety issues and exchanging information on aircraft accident prevention. Many of the programs Lederer started then continue in operation today. In 1987, FSF created the Jerry Lederer Aviation Safety Library to honor his achievements.

In 1967, after the tragic loss of three Apollo astronauts in a fire at Cape Canaveral, Lederer joined the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) as Director of Manned Space Flight Safety. Three years later, he took over as Director of Safety for all of NASA--a position he retained until retirement in 1972.

Following retirement, Lederer continued what one admirer describes as "Jerry's almost evangelistic endeavors in safety," devoting himself to teaching, writing, and public speaking.

The Henderson Award represents the third such occasion that NAA has chosen to recognize Lederer's many initiatives on behalf of safety. In 1965, the Association honored him with the Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy, and in 1974, NAA named Lederer as one of the Association's Elder Statesmen of Aviation.

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. For more information about NAA and its programs, please visit our web site [www.naa-usa.org](http://www.naa-usa.org).