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A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

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Design of the first successful helicopter in America by Igor I. Sikorsky was based on three decades of brilliant achievement in aeronautics.

Before returning in 1939 to the helicopter studies which he had put aside in Kiev in 1910, Mr. Sikorsky had become world famous as the designer of large multi-engined airplanes and flying boats. Perhaps the most famous of these were the S-42 Flying Boats which Pan American Airways used to pioneer the commercial air routes from the West Coast to Hawaii and then to Asia.

Mr. Sikorsky's first two designs had both been helicopters but lack of suitable lightweight power plants was one of the main factors in his decision to put rotary wing design aside for a number of years. Through those years he had never forgotten the challenge of the helicopter and in 1939, he felt that the progress of aeronautical knowledge and power plant design had reached a point where renewal of the project promised success. With the research and experimental facilities of United Aircraft at his command, he designed and built the VS-300. Test flights early in 1940 with Mr. Sikorsky at the controls proved the novel aircraft capable of vertical take-off and landing and able to hover motionless at any desired height. In the next five years, designs so improved performance that more than 400 in three different models had been built on military order. When the "cease fire" command reached the Pacific, a total of nearly 35,000 flying hours had been amassed by helicopters of Sikorsky design.

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Igor I. Sikorsky was born May 25, 1889 in Kiev, Russia, where his father, a well-known scientist, was professor of psychology in the University of St. Vladimir. From the Kiev High School, young Igor entered the Naval College in Petrograd, and after graduating from the general course in 1906, went to Paris where he studied engineering. Returning to Kiev a year later, he entered the Mechanical Engineering College of the Polytechnical Institute.

In 1909 he began his work in aviation by designing and constructing a helicopter with a motor of 25 h.p. This power plant, the best available, proved inadequate.

In the following three years, Mr. Sikorsky produced a second helicopter which also proved the need of larger power plants, and six different types of airplanes. During these years he succeeded in gradually improving design and in teaching himself to fly without any outside instruction or assistance.

The S-5, produced in 1911, was a successful airplane. Piloted by the designer, this ship made a large number of flights up to one hour in duration and up to 1500 feet altitude as well as several short cross-country flights. On this airplane Sikorsky passed his pilot examination and received an F.A.I. license.

His next airplane, the S-6-A, proved to be a very successful and efficient aircraft according to the standards of its time. It received the highest award in the Moscow Aviation Exhibition in the Spring of 1912, and in the Fall of the same year this ship, piloted by the designer, received first prize in the Military Competition in Petrograd.

Mr. Sikorsky came to the conclusion in 1911 that the future

of aviation depended on the success of large airplanes having comfortable enclosed cabins for the crew and occupants, powered with several independent engines, and a year later he became Engineering Manager of the Aircraft Division of the Russian-Baltic Car (Railroad) Company and this gave him the opportunity to put his theory into practice.

Thus, in the Spring of 1913, the first large four-engined Sikorsky airplane was completed. It was the first aircraft of its size and type in the world. The ship was flight tested by its designer and proved to be an outstanding success. At the end of the same year, Sikorsky completed the second large airplane, also equipped with four engines. The latter ship, piloted by the designer, established several world records and in June 1914, made a remarkable flight for that time between Petrograd and Kiev and return, a distance of 1600 miles.

In 1913, two of Mr. Sikorsky's single-engined airplanes received first and second prizes in the Russian Military Competition.

In 1914, the Sikorsky airplanes established Russian records for distance, endurance, lifting capacity and altitude, in addition to the world records established by the large four-engined airplanes.

During World War I, Mr. Sikorsky designed and constructed a large number of heavy, four-engined bombing planes. These were the first heavy bombers used by any country during the Great War, and they rendered valuable services to the Russian Army.

After the Revolution of 1917, Mr. Sikorsky went to France where he was commissioned by the French Government for the construction of large bombers of his design. This work was discontinued

by the Armistice.

In March 1919, Mr. Sikorsky arrived in the United States. Four years later the first aircraft company bearing his name was organized in the air field section of Long Island.

In the Fall of 1924, the Sikorsky Aero Engineering Corporation completed the twin-engined, fourteen passenger, all-metal cabin landplane, the S-29, which was one of the first successful large passenger airplanes built in this country.

During the following years, several more types of airplanes were designed and produced, among them the S-38, the first successful twin-engined amphibian. This airplane was produced in large numbers; it was used by the Pan American Airways for the pioneering of their air routes to Central and South America, for the carrying of the first load of airmail from the United States to the Panama Canal, and for a large number of other services. This ship was also extensively used by many private owners, as well as by the Army and Navy.

At this time, Mr. Sikorsky received his final citizenship papers.

In the Spring of 1929, the company was acquired by the United Aircraft Corporation.

The Sikorsky organization, in 1931, produced for Pan American Airways the first large four-engined flying clipper ship, The S-40, which became the forerunner of the large flying clippers that at a later date were used for transoceanic flying.

In 1934, the Sikorsky organization produced the next type of four-engined, long-distance flying boat, the S-42. This airplane

was used to pioneer the commercial air route from the United States to Hawaii and then gradually all the way across the Pacific to Asia.

In 1937, the Sikorsky S-42 was used to inaugurate commercial air transportation between the United States and Europe.

That same year, the Sikorsky group produced for the U.S. Navy the Flying Dreadnaught, the XPBS-1, one of the largest and fastest patrol bombers in the world at that time.

At various times Sikorsky airplanes established a large number of world records. The S-42 in particular was at one time the holder of ten world records for seaplanes.

During 1939, Mr. Sikorsky produced the VS-300 helicopter. This machine, of entirely novel design, piloted by its designer, proved capable of rising vertically with no forward run, of hovering in one spot, of flying forward, as well as backward, and sideways. This aircraft may be considered the first truly successful direct lift machine produced in the United States, as well as the first single-main-rotor helicopter successfully produced in the world. It is interesting to note that this success marked the completion of Mr. Sikorsky's initial aircraft design projects first started 31 years earlier.

From the VS-300, Mr. Sikorsky supervised the development of three wartime models and three postwar designs, the largest a five-place helicopter for the Navy. By the close of 1948, Sikorsky-designed-helicopters had amassed a total of some 75,000 flight hours.

At Los Angeles on October 1, 1947, a fleet of four-place commercial Sikorsky helicopters, model S-51, inaugurated the world's first helicopter airmail pickup and delivery system. This service, bringing air mail direct to some forty municipalities, was an immediate success. The saving of at

least half a day in the delivery of incoming air mail resulted in a substantial increase in the quantity of outgoing air mail. The ruggedness and dependability of the S-51 enabled flight schedules to be maintained successfully.

In the spring of 1949, the two-place Sikorsky S-52-1 helicopter brought back from England the international 3 kilometer speed record with an mark of 129.616 miles per hour. Shortly after this exploit the same helicopter set an international record for the 100 Kilometer Closed Circuit with a speed of 122.75 miles per hour. This gave to the United States and Sikorsky all seven major international helicopter records.

Mr. Sikorsky holds honorary degrees from Yale University, Wesleyan University, Lehigh University, Florida Southern College, Rhode Island State College, University of Pennsylvania, Northeastern University, as well as Fellowships in the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences, Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences, Aero Club of Pennsylvania, and American Helicopter Society. He has been the recipient of many honorary medals and awards.

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