



Realizing the Dream of Flight: Biographical Essays in Honor of the Centennial of Flight, 1903-2003

Edited by Virginia P. Dawson and Mark D. Bowles
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It was edited by NASA Contractor historians Virginia P. Dawson and Mark D. Bowles, examines the lives of aerospace pioneers through the lens of biography. They include daredevil pilots, entrepreneurs, military strategists, and managers of large-scale aerospace technology--people who advanced the art, science, and business of Air and space travel, often through sheer force of character.

The essay grew out of the presentations of 12 prominent aerospace historians at a conference sponsored by the NASA History Division to commemorate the Wright brothers' first powered flight in December 1903. The conference, hosted by the NASA Glenn Research Center, was held at the Great Lakes Science Center in Cleveland, Ohio, in November 2003.

Biographies in this volume include those of Bessie Coleman, the first African American pilot, by Amy Sue Bix; Amelia Earhart, by feminist historian Susan Ware; and airplane designer Donald Douglas, by Roger Bilstein. William Lery explores the relationship between Juan Trippe and Charles Lindbergh, early visionaries of international air travel, while W. David Lewis describes the rotorcraft experiments carried out by Eddie Rickenbacker and his pilot Johnny Miller to fly mail. Military historian Alan L. Gropman discusses how Benjamin O. Davis, a black general who commanded the Tuskegee Army Air Corps during World War II, fought the racism of the Army Air Corps, while Tami Biddle critically assesses the personality and achievements of Cold War strategist Curtis E. LeMay. Dreamers and doers an ardent and early promoter of space travel, by Tom D. Crouch; the German rocket pioneer Wernher von Braun, by Andrew J. Dunar; and two less well-known but significant contributors to NASA's space program, Robert Gilruth, by Roger Launius, and Hugh Dryden, by Michael Gorn. The final paper in the collection, by Edward J. Pershey, serves as an epilogue as well as a tribute to the Wright brothers' childhood dreams was first realized.

The enclosed DVD contains the proceedings of the Realizing the Dream of Flight symposium. It includes the presentations of the authors in this book, their responses to audience questions, and supplemental information on the pioneers of flight. The DVD can be played on most DVD players and on both Mac and PC computer systems, provided that they are equipped with a DVD drive and software that supports the playback of standard video formats.