



# Press Release

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## **Vertical Flight Society Receives Nearly \$1M Donation for Scholarship Fund**

### *Estate of Robert E. Head donated \$922,000 for Vertical Flight Foundation scholarships*

**Fairfax, Virginia, June 18, 2020** — The Vertical Flight Society is pleased to announce it has received its largest donation ever to its Vertical Flight Foundation (VFF) scholarship fund. On June 12, VFS officially received a donation of \$922,146.46 from the estate of Robert Head. Head — an engineer with McDonnell, Hughes and Boeing — was a VFS Emeritus Member who passed in 2009; his last heir passed away in 2019.

“We are extremely pleased to receive this very generous bequest,” said VFS Executive Director Mike Hirschberg. “With continued support from our members, this should enable the Society to maintain an annual scholarship disbursement of \$100,000 into the foreseeable future.”

VFF was established in 1967 as the philanthropic arm of the VFS. Since 1977, the merit-based scholarship program has been a great success story: 590 scholarships have been awarded since that time. The program has been greatly expanded in recent years, with the number of recipients doubling in the last decade, and the total annual scholarship disbursement tripling. Since 2012 alone, more than 200 VFF scholarships totaling over \$650,000 have been awarded.

Bob Head was a longtime member of VFS (then the American Helicopter Society) — joining the Society in 1954 — and worked in the aerospace industry for 46 years. After serving in the Army during World War II, he joined McDonnell Aircraft Company in St. Louis, Missouri. He worked on the diminutive XH-20 Little Henry helicopter where the rotor was driven by ramjets at the end of the blades; he later worked on the much larger tipjet-powered XV-1 Convertiplane. Head became highly knowledgeable on “reactionless” powered rotors and he went on to work for Hughes Helicopters in the early 1960s. He contributed to the XV-9 hot-cycle helicopter, which used the exhaust of turbine engines ducted to the blade tips to drive the rotor.

Head left Hughes Helicopters in the late 1960s to join Learjet, which was developing the Gates Twinjet light helicopter. When development was stopped in 1971, he returned to Hughes where he worked until his retirement — through company changes to McDonnell Douglas and, finally, Boeing.

Head was a valuable contributor on many projects and helicopter models: the first Apache composite main rotor blade, an Apache composite flex beam tail rotor, the Hughes Advanced Rotor Program (HARP) — with a composite flex beam hub and composite blades with new airfoils — which was flown and tested on a modified MD500E, the MDX Program (which led to the MD902 Explorer), and numerous other projects.

He retired as a Senior Research and Engineering Fellow and was widely respected and admired. In addition to all of his other positive attributes, he was one of the best mentors of young engineers, his colleagues remember.

Bob Head passed on July 1, 2009, at the age of 86. His legacy will live on, enhanced by his extremely generous gift to the Vertical Flight Foundation.

With this bequest, VFS will now finally reach its goal — set in 2011 when annual scholarship awards averaged only \$30,000–\$35,000 — of \$100,000 for annual VFF disbursements, with the continued support of its members.

"Since 1977, our Vertical Flight Foundation Scholarships have helped inspire generations of students to pursue careers in vertical flight, with many now holding leadership positions in industry, academia and government," said Hirschberg. "With this latest donation, we will now be able to continue to reach the best and brightest vertical flight engineering students around the world."

For more information on the Vertical Flight Foundation or to donate to this important cause, please visit the VFF microsite at [www.vtol.org/vff](http://www.vtol.org/vff). VFS invites donations to its VFF scholarship fund from all those interested in supporting students in pursuing engineering careers in advancing technology for helicopters, advanced rotorcraft, vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) drones and electric VTOL aircraft (aka "air taxis" or "flying cars").

VFF and VFS are both recognized by the US Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)(3) charities. VFS covers all overhead costs of administration and accounting, so 100% of every tax-deductible contribution to VFF goes directly to student scholarships.

Note: As a result of the March 2020 "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security" (CARES) Act, US taxpayers can now again benefit from donations to charities. Taxpayers can who take the standard deduction on their 2020 tax return (which will be filed in 2021), can now claim an "above-the-line" deduction of up to \$300 for any donations to charities made this year. Please consult a tax advisor for details.

Founded as the American Helicopter Society in 1943, the Vertical Flight Society is the global non-profit society for engineers, scientists and others working on vertical flight technology. For more than 75 years, the Society has led technical, safety, advocacy and other important initiatives, and has been the primary forum for interchange of information on vertical flight technology.

**The Vertical Flight Society**

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