

JAMES B. TAYLOR, Jr.

James Blackstone Taylor, Jr. is still listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the pilot who has flown the most planes, having flown 461 different types of powered aircraft during his 25 years as an active experimental test and demonstration pilot for the U.S. Navy and a number of aircraft Companies.

Jim Taylor was born in New York City in 1897. In 1914, he began to learn how to fly. He attended the Bleriot school at Pau and soloed soon after entering the school. He attended Princeton University for two years until the U.S. entered World War I. By then he had become interested in aviation and left college to join the Navy (too young to get in the Army Air Service). He was soon checked out in an N-9 seaplane and was sent to Florida to teach advanced flying.

In 1918, he was transferred to testing early Naval aircraft such as the Loening M-2 *Kitten*, the first monoplane to be developed for the Navy. He also helped the Navy develop catapult and arresting techniques. Still in the Navy, he started testing planes for Vought. In 1922, he left the Navy with the rank of lieutenant and joined the Naval Reserve. In 1927, he organized Air Associates, offering repair and other services to fliers, at Curtiss-now Roosevelt Field. He acted as American distributor for *Avian*, sold the *Aristocrat* and was the first sales agency for Lockheed. He was also active in forming the Aviation Country Clubs, clubs for sportsmen pilots throughout the country and tested many planes designed for private use. In 1931, Taylor took over testing of the *Helldiver*. He also tested the famous Gee Bee racers, among other noted fast airplanes.

When World War II started, Taylor sold Air Associates and returned to active duty in the Navy. He established a record in 1937 when he power-dived a de Seversky Navy fighter at a speed estimated at 500 to 600 miles an hour. He was tragically killed in 1942 while flight testing a new type of wing flap actuating device on a Navy XF4F fighter. Taylor was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross posthumously at his memorial service.

Testing aircraft was Taylor's lifelong business. In addition to testing planes for the Navy, he also tested planes for Curtiss, Grumman, Douglas, Lockheed, and Boeing to name just a few. His professional work combining technical knowledge with pilot skill resulted in numerous technological advances in the field of military and civil aviation during his 25 years of test flying in the 1920's and 1930's.

At his death, Taylor was a member of the Institute of the Aeronautical Sciences, a member of the SAE, ASME, the U.S. Naval Institute, Royal Aero Club of London and an Associate Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society of Great Britain.

Taylor was the first aviator to be inducted into the Carrier Aviation Test Pilots Hall of Honor on the USS Yorktown. This Hall of Honor on Yorktown is named in his honor.