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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND

CHARLES CONRAD
CAPTAIN, UNITED STATES NAVY (RET.)
STEVEN FORBES.

EDWARD J. NASH
COLONEL, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
EDGAR L. ALLISON

LIEUTENANT COLONEL, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE (RET.)
PAUL J. WEITZ

CAPTAIN, UNITED STATES NAVY
AND

JOSEPH P. KERWIN
CAPTAIN, UNITED STATES NAVY
AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE
HARMON TROPHY AWARDS

THE ROSE GARDEN

12:06 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Senator Goldwater, trustees and the Advisory Committee of the Harmon Trophy Commission, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I am very, very honored this morning to add my name to the list of Presidents, as well as Vice Presidents, who have presided at Harmon Aviation Award ceremonies.

The Harmon Awards, as many of you know, were founded in 1926 by the late Colonel Clifford Harmon, a pioneer in American aviation as an American balloonist.

The awards are for outstanding feats of individual pilot skill, worthy of international recognition, contributing to the art of the science of flight.

In addition to Americans, the pilots of six other nations have won Harmon Awards -- Italy, Britain, France, Germany, Norway and Switzerland.

Colonel Harmon, in 1908, was the first pilot to fly across Long Island Sound, some 25 miles. He also set, during his career, several altitude records for his day.

MORE

By contrast, two of today's awards involve a round trip Middle East flight -- some 13,000 miles -- in a flight from Formosa to Scott Air Force Base in the State of Illinois, almost 9,000 miles.

The humanitarian role of today's aviators, including the piloting of helicopters and big airlift missions, are often vital to life. Without our brave American pilots, we would have witnessed, unfortunately, greater tragedy in the recent evacuation in Vietnam, and in Cambodia.

We sometimes forget the humanitarian aspects of aviation, and the dedication of the pilots who are involved. If it were not for Colonel Harmon, we would probably not be flying oceans today. He is a true hero of America's progress in aviation.

It is now my honor to present the 1974 Harmon International Aviation trophies to a half dozen new heroes -- three astronauts, an aeronaut, and an aviator -- as well as the winner of the 1973 Harmon Aviator's Trophy.

First, the 1974 Astronauts Trophy. To the crew of Skylab II, the first astronauts in the history of space flight to accomplish major repairs successfully on a space vehicle during a mission itself.

The flight took place between May 25 and June 23, 1973. Skylab II was launched and made a successful rendezvous with Skylab I, whose aluminum shield had ripped free, damaging solar cells for converting sunlight to energy.

The crew's repair allowed Skylab I to conduct 80 of its scheduled 100 hours of extensive medical experiments in orbit. The trophy is awarded jointly to U.S. Navy Captain Charles Conrad, Jr, now retired from the Navy; Captain Paul J. Weitz, U.S. Navy, and Captain Joseph P. Kerwin, U.S. Navy.

May I congratulate each one of you.

MORE

CAPTAIN CONRAD: Mr. President, Senator Goldwater, ladies and gentlemen:

It is the great honor of the Skylab II crew, Joe, Paul and myself, to accept this trophy in honor of Mr. Harmon.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: The 1974 Aeronaut Trophy is awarded to Malcolm S. Forbes for a series of 21 flights in a hot air balloon which crossed the American Continent from Coos Bay, Oregon to Gwynn, Virginia, more than 2,500 miles.

His son, Steve Forbes, is here to accept the award.

MR. FORBES: Mr. President, Senator Goldwater, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of my father, we thank you very much and accept this award with much appreciation and gratitude.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Now, the 1974 Aviator's Trophy is awarded to a pilot who flew a C-5 airlift mission some 13,000 miles, round-trip, from the United States to Israel. In addition, between October 14 and November 14, 1973 he personally directed, virtually without interruption, the operation of 15 C-5s and 417 C-141s from the United States to the Azores and on to Israel.

The winner of the 1974 Aviator's Trophy is Colonel Edward J. Nash, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations of the 21st Air Force.

Colonel Nash.

COLONEL NASH: Mr. President, Senator Goldwater, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the dedicated men and women of the United States Air Force, I humbly accept this recognition.

Thank you.

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: The 1973 Aviator's Trophy for piloting an HC-130H aircraft of the 57th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron of the United States Air Force nonstop on February 20, 1972, from Taiwan to Scott Air Force Base in Illinois -- a total of 8,732 miles -- without refueling.

This established a record for the longest flight in a straight line, without landing, in a turbo-prop aircraft.

Winner of the 1973 Harmon Aviator's Trophy is Lt. Colonel Edgar L. Allison.

COLONEL ALLISON: Mr. President, Senator Goldwater, ladies and gentlemen:

I would like to echo Colonel Nash's comments and specifically and especially thank the other 11 gentlemen that were with me on the flight.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT FORD: Let me simply conclude by offering again my personal congratulations to all of these highly trained, completely dedicated men who have added another page of history in the area of aviation for the benefit of all mankind.

Congratulations.

END

(AT 12:13 P.M. EDT)