

APRIL 24 + 25 - 82

# AMIGO AIRSHO

# Hall of Fame

Amigo Airsho, now established as an annual event in El Paso, this year inaugurates a Hall of Fame, honoring local personalities both living and dead, who have contributed to aviation in the El Paso Southwest.

The Hall of Fame, initially honoring four such individuals, will be revealed in ceremonies during this year's Amigo Airsho presentation, with formal dedication taking place later this summer following completion of expanded facilities at El Paso International Airport Terminal. In future Amigo Airsho presenta-

tions, two individuals, one living, one deceased, will be honored annually.

The Hall of Fame will be perpetually maintained in a special place, designated for the purpose, in the Terminal building.

Honors this year, selected by special committee designated by the Amigo Airsho Board of Directors, will be bestowed upon the late U.S. District Judge R. E. Thomason, and three living local aviation pioneers, Stacy C. Hinkle, Donald R. Thompson and John G. Oechsner.



## Robert E. Thomason 1879-1973

- Robert E. Thomason, 1879 - 1973 ... Was serving as mayor of El Paso at the time of Charles Lindbergh's flight to Paris. In preparation for Lindbergh's visit to El Paso in September of 1927 on his tour of the United States, Mayor Thomason asked several World War I aviators who were residing in El Paso, to drive the cars that would form the caravan carrying Lindbergh to festivities to be held in the downtown area.

At the time, El Paso had no airport facility other than Biggs Army Air Field with its solitary balloon hangar. The former Army pilots selected by Mayor Thomason became so enthused with the prospect of meeting Lindbergh that they interested other former Army aviators living in El Paso in joining them and forming an Aero Club.

Official founding of the club took place just a few days before Lindbergh's scheduled visit on September 24th, with a prime objective of establishing an airport, with commercial airline and air mail service for the city, all with the blessing of Mayor Thomason.

Donald R. Thompson was elected president of the club with Stacy C. Hinkle among those serving on the board of directors.

Hinkle also served as a member of a committee named by the club membership, to draw up plans and specifications for an airport that would meet the standards of the Department of Commerce for a Class A rating, permitting day and night operations to serve El Paso's future aviation requirements.

On April 15, 1928, those plans were accepted and approved by Mayor Thomason's Airport Committee for subsequent submission to the Department of Commerce.

Finally, after Federal approval, the facility was formally dedicated September 8, 1928, located just northeast of what is now the intersection of Railroad Drive and Fred Wilson Road, about three miles northwest of the present El Paso International Airport. Mayor Thomason presided over those dedication ceremonies.



## Donald R. Thompson 1895 -

- Learned to fly during World War I in Lawton, Oklahoma and Fort Worth, Texas. Served with the 12th Aero Squadron in France. Although he gave up flying following the war, he maintains an avid interest in aviation.



## Stacy C. Hinkle 1895 -

- Learned to fly at Ellington Field, Houston, Texas in 1918, assigned to 12th Aero Squadron upon its return from France, serving with the organization at the old Army flying field at Fort Bliss from 1919 to 1924. He participated in the bombing of the German Battleship "Ostfriedland" under the command of Gen. William "Billy" Mitchell, in demonstrating the capability of Air Power.



## John G. Oechsner 1891 -

- Born with a natural genius in mechanical aptitude, Oechsner performed maintenance and installed a braking device on one of the first aircraft to fly in the El Paso area. He later served in the 351st Aero Squadron in France during World War I. He also designed a controllable pitch aircraft propeller, doing the initial engineering and research while in training just prior to his overseas assignment. The well documented project, presented to his superiors and others in the chain of command, was rejected on the basis that it was 'too complicated', yet it bears striking resemblance, in both design and metallurgical specification, in the basic development that today is commonplace in aircraft use.

**The Hall of Fame** — A facial likeness (head and shoulders) of each honored in line drawing etching is laser engraved on bronze plate, in turn mounted on a walnut wood plaque, inscribed with the name and brief resume of the individual's achievement in or contribution to aviation in the El Paso Area.

The Hall will be established in an especially designated historical area of the terminal building at El Paso International Airport, where it will be perpetually maintained and added to annually. This committee is chaired by Bruce Bissonette and John MacGuire.