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THE AHS VERTICAL FLIGHT FOUNDATION

Educating the Vertical Flight Leaders of Tomorrow

Since 1977, AHS has awarded more than 450 Vertical Flight Foundation scholarships to promising undergraduate and graduate students planning to pursue careers in vertical flight, thanks to the generosity of members like you. Two of our VFF recipients from 1985 look back and give their perspectives.

After 30+ years of involvement with rotorcraft and AHS, I welcome the opportunity to reflect back on what the VFF scholarship I received in 1985 meant to me. Although I had a strong fascination with airplanes as a high school student and undergraduate engineering major, I have to admit that "rotorcraft" never really caught my attention. It wasn't until I joined the Alfred Gessow Rotorcraft Center of Excellence at the University of Maryland that my true enthusiasm for rotorcraft started to take root. As a graduate student, Prof. Inderjit Chopra encouraged me to apply for a VFF scholarship. I felt honored to receive one and of course the funding was appreciated because it helped me focus on classes and research. What I didn't realize at the time was how much this scholarship was really an "invitation" by the rotorcraft technical community to join their ranks and how it would help instill in me a career-long inspiration to be involved with rotorcraft.

As a Navy engineer, I have been fortunate to work on many different types of systems including Navy ships, underwater systems, fighter jets and, yes, rotorcraft. From working on stoppable rotor concepts to ducted fan systems to rotorcraft HUMS technology, from basic research to visiting helicopter pilots and enlisted maintainers in Navy squadrons (and even a short flight in the NOTAR demonstrator), it has all been great fun. I have also been able to collaborate with former classmates and colleagues within the Navy, Army, DoD, NASA, industry and academia. From AHS Technical Committees to winning the AHS Harry T. Jenson award with Navy, Army and industry partners, and being selected as an AHS Technical Fellow, rotorcraft have remained a central focus of my career. I don't know who the VFF scholarship selection committee members were that chose me but I would sincerely like to thank them again for setting me on such a fantastic career path in rotorcraft. And I want to encourage young students to explore rotorcraft – you might just get hooked like I did by these fascinating aircraft and the unique technical community surrounding them that AHS provides.

Dr. David Haas
Head, Sea Based Aviation & Aeromechanics Branch
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Reflecting back in time, I could trace the beginning of my fascination with rotorcraft to the helicopter group project I participated during the senior year of my undergraduate program at the India Institute of Technology—Madras. Upon graduation with a Bachelor of Technology degree, I joined Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in Bangalore as an Aeronautical Engineer. At that time, HAL embarked on its first indigenous helicopter design and development program, later came to be known as the Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) project [now the Dhruv]. The design experience I gained, first in the structures area and later in the flight controls area, from the ALH project motivated me to take a study leave from HAL to complete my MS degree with thesis work in the helicopter flight control area.

My MS thesis work intrigued me to pursue higher studies leading to my PhD in the School of Aerospace Engineering at Georgia Tech under the tutelage of Prof. G. Alvin Pierce in the rotorcraft aeroelasticity area. During my PhD program, I was fortunate to work as a graduate research assistant in the first US Army-sponsored Center of Excellence in Rotary Wing Aircraft Technology (CERWAT) program at Georgia Tech.

Thanks to AHS for initiating the Student Design Competition in 1984, when I got involved as a team leader to one of the student teams receiving cash awards in the first AHS/Boeing Vertol student design competition, with Prof. Daniel P. Schrage as the faculty advisor. Also, thanks to AHS for awarding me a Vertical Fight Foundation scholarship in 1985. These cash awards were very useful to me in defraying some of the costs associated with my education. Both these honors provided me definitive encouragement to continue to pursue a career in the rotorcraft area.

Dr. J.V.R. Prasad
Professor and VLRCOE Associate Director
Georgia Institute of Technology

*Please consider giving generously to the VFF scholarship fund to help draw the highest caliber students to careers in vertical flight technology. Go to **www.vtol.org/vff** to make a donation, or mail a check to the address at the top of this page.*