

Two former Society honorees turn 100

Mr. Aviation Safety

By Cheryl Walker
The News

Two former Historical Society Leisure Worlders of the Month will celebrate this month landmark birthdays.

Both Jerry Lederer, Sept. 26, and David Ast, Sept. 30, 2002 will turn 100 and both were recognized for that fact last week at the Sept. 18 Laguna Woods City Council meeting where they received Certificates of Commendation.

Jerry Lederer is known as "Mr. Aviation Safety," for his contributions to the aviation industry.

Lederer, a native New Yorker, received a bachelor's and a master's degree in engineering from New York University and in 1926 he became the only aeronautical engineer working for the U.S. Air Mail Service, the world's first scheduled air transportation system.

From the '20s to the present (he still is consulted for his expertise), he focused his career on solving air safety issues by helping draft regulations, developing accident investigation procedures and assisting in the development of standards and practices.

In 1947, he established the Flight Safety Foundation to foster sharing of air safety information to help with worldwide accident prevention programs.

Lederer's role in the development of international aviation safety is one of the reasons in 1999 he became the recipient of the highest honor in the world of civil aviation, the Edward Warner Award from the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

In a recent History Channel TV documentary on Charles Lindbergh, Lederer recalls how he solved a problem for the famed pilot: what caused



Jerry Lederer

his silk parachute to become full of holes.

Lederer discovered that the parachute had been left out overnight after use and was attacked by bugs. That spurred Lederer to find alternative materials that wouldn't be so fragile.

After Lindbergh's first solo flight to Europe, Lederer became a consultant to airplane manufacturers and from 1929-1940, he served as chief engineer for aviation insurance underwriters.

In 1940, at the request of the Civil Aeronautics Board, he accepted appointment as director of its Safety Bureau.

In 1942, he resigned and became director of the Airlines War Training Institute, "Safety Consultant to the 2nd Air Force" and a member of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey in Europe.

In World War II, he trained 10,000 airman and 35,000 mechanics for the Air Transport Command.

In 1947, he organized the Flight Safety Foundation (serving as its director until 1967) and organized the Cornell-Guggenheim Aviation Safety Research Center.

In 1967, after the deaths of three astronauts at the Kennedy Space Center, NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Association) appointed him director of the Office of Manned

Space Flight Safety (the Apollo Program).

In 1970, he became NASA's director of safety overseeing space and aircraft, industrial, fire and vehicle safety until he retired in 1972.

During his career, Lederer was the first director of the Safety Bureau of the Civil Aeronautics Board (the precursor of the National Transportation Safety Board) in charge of all civil aviation safety regulations and the investigation of all civil aviation accidents.

Lederer is the recipient of enough awards to fill a book from aeronautics organizations from the United States to Russia.

He is also affiliated with numerous professional organizations, and has authored more than 200 articles, lectures and a book entitled "Safety in the Operation of Air Transport."

The International Society of Air Safety Investigators thinks so much of Lederer it has an award named in his honor, the Jerome F. Lederer Award.

His special contributions to air safety include making flight-data recorders mandatory on all U.S. commercial flights; helping create a crash-worthy fuel system for U.S. military helicopters that did not ignite on impact; alerting U.S. air carriers to the dangers of a light coating of ice or snow on wings prior to takeoff and bogus replacement parts; developing a new wheel-landing system for the DC-3 which eliminated common stalls; requiring locks on all cockpit doors and flashing anti-collision lights on aircraft; and encouraging the use on aircraft of stall-warning indicators, comfortable seating in-flight radar, escape slides and airbags.

Reporter Teri Sforza contributed to the Lederer story.