

Major Donation

FROM A FORMER EMPLOYEE

Flight Safety Foundation has received a major gift from S. Harry Robertson — who, as an FSF employee in the 1960s, developed a flexible, puncture-resistant aircraft fuel tank housed inside a rigid structure — and Robertson's family.

The family donated \$1 million, to be utilized by Flight Safety Foundation for future technical programs.

"We have no greater believer in the Foundation than Harry Robertson," said Edward W. Stimpson, chairman of the Foundation's Board of Governors, noting that Robertson has spent most of his career studying injuries caused by aviation crashes and searching for measures to prevent them. "He started his career with [Foundation founder] Jerry Lederer."

Robertson began working for the Foundation in 1961, after his graduation from Arizona State University and a four-year stint as a U.S. Air Force pilot. He joined the Foundation's Aviation Crash Injury Research (AvCIR) division, which conducted crash tests as part of its efforts to develop safer aircraft and aircraft components.

AvCIR — renamed later in the '60s as the Aviation Safety and Engineering Research (AvSER) division, in part to reflect its expanding focus but also, Robertson said, to make it sound "less scary" to the public — had a contract with the U.S. Army to develop denser fuels that would be less likely to vaporize and ignite after an accident. Although that effort did not succeed, another project

involved tests of Robertson's concepts for a fuel tank designed to shield fuel from potential ignition sources. Ultimately, his fuel system was adopted for use by U.S. military helicopters and has been credited with reducing the number and severity of helicopter post-crash fires.

Later, Robertson founded Robertson Research Group and Robertson Aviation, which research, develop and produce crashworthy extended range fuel systems that feature self-sealing breakaway valves, frangible fasteners, and puncture- and tear-resistant bladders. Robertson remains president and CEO of Robertson Research Group; he has retired from Robertson Aviation, which continues his work on enhancing the crash-resistant qualities of helicopter fuel tanks. ➤



S. Harry Robertson meets with FSF officials. From left, Joan Sullivan Garrett, vice chairwoman of the FSF Board of Governors; FSF President and CEO William R. Voss; Robertson; and FSF Chairman Edward W. Stimpson. In photo at right, Robertson, left, greets Stimpson.