

Daniel Guggenheim Medal

MEDALIST FOR 1962(Posthumous)

For technical and industrial leadership in producing excellent aircraft and space equipment, from early fighters to the X-15 space plane.



JAMES HOWARD KINDELBERGER

James Howard Kindelberger, known to all his friends as “Dutch,” built more planes during his lifetime than any other man in history. Born in Wheeling, West Virginia, on May 8, 1895, he was forced to quit high school upon the death of his father in order to support his family. He continued to study at night, and in 1913 became a junior draftsman with the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Later he entered Carnegie Institute of Technology, but during World War I left to enlist and serve as a pilot and instructor in the Army Signal Corps.

He started his professional career as chief draftsman for the Glenn L. Martin Company in Cleveland. In 1925 he became Chief Engineer of the Douglas Aircraft Company. There he engineered the basic design that became the DC-1, followed by the DC-2 and DC-3. In 1934 he took over as President and General Manager of General Aviation Manufacturing Corporation, which presently became North American Aviation. He moved the company from Maryland to Los Angeles, and there built airplanes widely recognized by pilots as a pleasure to fly.

After a tour of Nazi Germany in 1938, he warned England of the Luftwaffe’s rising might. In the war that followed, his own company’s aircraft played a major role. Having started with a BT-9 trainer in the mid-1930s, North American built 15,400 T-6 Texas trainers during the war. More pilots learned to fly on the T-6 than on any other airplane. He and his staff completed the first P-51 Mustang in 127 days. Then came the B-25 Billy Mitchell bomber, used by General Doolittle on the first raid on Tokyo, and in every subsequent theater of World War II. By the end of the war, North American had built more airplanes than any other company in the world.

As airplane orders dwindled after the war. North American entered the missile, electronics, and atomic energy fields. The company led the industry in the development and manufacture of liquid rocket engines. North American pioneered in the field of inertial navigation, and provided the equipment that steered the first atomic submarines under the polar ice cap.

“Dutch” also kept his company in the front ranks in the airplane field, producing the first jet fighter for the Navy, the FJ-1, followed by the first four-jet bomber for the Air Force, the B-45 (Tornado). When the Korean War started, North America’s F-86 Sabre Jet assured air superiority

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to the Allies by defeating the Russian-built MIGs. The F-100 Super Sabre succeeded the F-86 and became the first operational supersonic aircraft. The A3J Mach 2 Navy attack bomber and the X-15 supersonic aircraft, holder of world altitude and speed records, followed. The XB-70 Mach 3 supersonic Valkyrie was his last contribution to the field of aeronautics.

“Dutch” became Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board of North American in 1948. He continued as Chief Executive Officer until 1960, and was Chairman of the Board until his death, July 27, 1962. The Medal was presented posthumously.