

MEDALIST FOR 1991

For pioneering the development of turbojet propulsion resulting in the first flight of a jet-powered aircraft in 1939 and his lifetime achievements in aeronautical propulsion dynamics.



HANS P. VON OHAIN

As World War II began to stir up, two engineers were working independently, one in England and the other in Germany. Dr. von Ohain theorized that jet propulsion offered thrust equal to a piston engine at a considerable weight saving. Many others had come up with theoretical designs, but none had been proven. Hans's third design was flown as the first pure jet-propelled aircraft on Aug. 27, 1939. Although both engineers developed their theories within a few months of each other, von Ohain produced the flying prototype almost two years ahead of the Englishman. As with Sir Frank Whittle, Dr. Hans von Ohain's theories and designs were met with skepticism. Dr. von Ohain went on to become the acknowledged leader in aircraft gas turbine research.

Dr. Hans von Ohain received his Doctorate in Physics and Applied Mechanics in 1935, at the University of Goettingen, Germany. After the war, von Ohain brought that expertise to the United States. The Wright Patterson Aeronautical Labs hired him as a research scientist, where he rose to the position of Chief Scientist. He advanced to the same position at the Aero Propulsion and Power Laboratory. In addition, he demonstrated concepts for a "jet wing" to provide cold air thrust augmentation for vertical or short strip take-off and landing aircraft. He published more than 30 technical papers and registered 19 patents. He retired from Wright-Patterson in 1979 and took up an associate professor position at the nearby University of Dayton.

Dr. von Ohain has been honored for his many accomplishments during his 32 years of U.S. Government service, some of which are noted here: the AIAA Goddard Award; the Air Force's Exceptional Citizen Service Award; the Air Force Association's Citation of Honor; and, not least of all, a Fellow of the AIAA along with many international awards of recognition. In 1991 von Ohain and Whittle (each a Guggenheim Medalist) were jointly awarded the Charles Stark Draper Prize for their work on turbojet engines.

Daniel Guggenheim Medal

He died in Melbourne, Florida on March 13, 1998.