

Dennis R. Scanlan Jr. Inducted into Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame



St. Paul, Minnesota – Dennis R. Scanlan, Jr. was inducted into the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame on April 24, 2010. Denny Scanlan, father of nine, world renowned surgical instrument designer, manufacturer, inventor, and aviation pioneer was honored and recognized for his contribution to aviation.

“A lot of guys would say, ‘Don’t volunteer for anything in the service.’ I’d volunteer for anything that would keep me learning about aircraft.” That’s the way Denny Scanlan felt about aviation.

He spent his life in and around airplanes. As a kid in the 1920s he spent afternoons watching the “Jennies” at the airfield near Larpenteur and Hamline in St. Paul. One winter, Denny's mother sent him to buy a winter hat. Instead, he bought a WWI aviation helmet. “It was an all leather helmet.” He said, “It wasn’t as warm as a regular hat, but I liked it.” He had to wear it all winter.

When World War II began, Denny enlisted and was assigned to the 8th Air Force in Alconbury, England where he was Captain, acting as Senior Flying Control Officer with the 482nd Bomb group. The 482nd Bomb group became famous for their pioneering use of airborne radar which allowed bombing even through nearly complete cloud cover.

Scanlan’s career after the war included Northwestern Aeronautical, which he operated out of the former Northwest Airlines Terminal in St Paul, and the Scanlan family surgical business, Scanlan International, where he worked shoulder to shoulder with heart surgeons the world over to design and manufacture specialized surgical instruments.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Scanlan had his fixed base operations at Holman Field in St Paul, leasing DC-3’s, and selling Aero Comander Aircraft. Mr. Scanlan then focused on the preservation of the 8TH Air Force, by playing a leading role in developing the 8TH Air Force Historical Society. He was a steadfast promoter of aviation and its history. He was an instrumental figure in the 8th Air Force Historical Society, coordinating yearly gatherings and symposiums with such aviation luminaries as Jimmy Doolittle, Gabby Gabreski and German WWII Flying Ace Adolph Galland, along with other Aviation heroes in his life such as Ira Eaker, Sir Harold (“Mick”) Martin and Red Morgan, all of whom he called friends. His constant support of aviation history was exemplified through his membership and leadership of the Commemorative Air Force (formerly the Confederate Air Force) and the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame.



Scanlan's mentorship and continued contribution to the history of aviation was shown in his financial contributions to the sponsorship and construction of a WWII control Tower at Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton Ohio, and establishing an 8TH Air Force Library at the University of St. Thomas, as well as donating his many papers and art to Penn State for the 8TH Air Force Archive.

Aviation was near and dear to Denny Scanlan's heart as were his country, God, his wife Peg, his nine children and his family business. In 1986 Dennis, along with his son Tim, helped establish the C. Walton and Richard C. Lillehei Surgical Society, endowing a chair in cardiothoracic surgery at the University of Minnesota, which continues today.



Thomas Schellinger, Chairman of the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame presented the Dennis R. Scanlan, Jr. induction plaque to Brigid Scanlan Eiyck and Timothy Scanlan at the Twenty First Annual Induction Ceremony.

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