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AIAA MOURNS THE DEATH OF CAPT. ROBERT C. TRUAX

Key Figure in Modern Rocket History Was Prominent Advocate of Manned Spaceflight

September 21, 2010 – Reston, Va. – The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) mourns the death of Capt. Robert C. Truax, past president of the American Rocket Society, organizer of the U.S. Naval Missile Test Center’s propulsion research laboratory at Point Mugu, Calif., and AIAA Honorary Fellow. Capt. Truax passed away in Vista, Calif., on September 17, 2010. He was 93.

AIAA President Mark J. Lewis stated: “We mourn the passing of Capt. Robert C. Truax, whose contributions to the field of propulsion made many of today’s systems possible. From his early work on Jet Assisted Take Off (JATO) systems and development of hypergolic fuels, leadership efforts on the Thor, Viking, and Polaris missiles, and later founding of his own company, Truax was an integral part of modern rocket history. He also had a more whimsical side, including work with motorcycle daredevil Evel Knievel to develop a steam powered ‘Skycycle’ for an attempted jump of the Snake River Canyon. Robert Truax was a past president of the American Rocket Society (one of the precursor organizations from which AIAA was founded), and an honorary Fellow of AIAA. While we are all saddened by his loss, we salute his many contributions to our nation’s development of rocket systems for commerce, defense, and entertainment purposes.”

In addition to his accomplishments in the field of rocket propulsion and weapon systems, Truax was a tireless and prominent advocate for manned spaceflight, urging the United States government to pursue a manned spaceflight program. For his technical accomplishments and his advocacy, Truax was presented the 1951 Robert H. Goddard Memorial Award by the American Rocket Society. In 1957 Truax became president of the American Rocket Society, which he had previously chided for not taking the concept of manned space exploration seriously enough. Truax was actively involved in rocket development through the final years of his life, working as recently as 2008 on the development of the “SkyLimo” steam powered rocket for showman Michael “Mad Mike” Hughes.

AIAA is the world’s largest technical society dedicated to the global aerospace profession. With more than 35,000 individual members worldwide, and 90 corporate members, AIAA brings together industry, academia, and government to advance engineering and science in aviation, space, and defense. For more information, visit www.aiaa.org.

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