

THE FLIGHT TOKU-HANA
FIRST NISEI TRANSPACIFIC SOLO - U.S.A. - JAPAN - GOODWILL FLIGHT

LONG BEACH • OAKLAND • HAWAII • MIDWAY • WAKE • GUAM • OKINAWA • TOKYO

JULY 7th, 1964



Henry Ohye

AERIAL WELCOME
IMPERIAL NAVY OF JAPAN
AT SAN PEDRO - 1932
FIRST JAPANESE-AMERICAN
TO RECEIVE COMMERCIAL TRANSPORT
LICENSE - 1933

FIRST JAPANESE-AMERICAN
AIR SHOW - 1933

NISEI CALIFORNIA AIR TOUR
1934

SPONSOR - HENRY OHYE
AIR TROPHY RACES
1950 - 1952 - 1954 - 1965 - 1966

1967-1968
1970

HENRY OHYE BIOGRAPHY

As the eighth annual Henry Ohye Air Trophy Race, Long Beach-to-Las Vegas, is readied for its Saturday, November 14, take-off, the distinguished pilot who founded the event looks back on a well spent life devoted to the positive ideals of aviation.

Henry Ohye, recognized as the dean of pilots of Japanese ancestry in the United States, has been "bitten by the airplane bug" since the age of 9 when, during World War I, he watched a vintage airplane land near his home in Watsonville, California.

His family moved to Los Angeles when he was 17 years old. He fondly recalls his experience as an eager young man determined to learn to fly. He worked in the lettuce patches to help pay for his flying lessons. His wages amounted to \$15 per week and the lessons cost him \$20 per hour, but somehow, struggling along, he managed to log enough hours to finally solo.

Henry Ohye

In 1931, he earned his private pilot's license, followed by a limited commercial license in 1932. A year later he became the first Nisei (second generation Japanese in America) to be awarded his commercial transport license.

At the same time, Ohye was actively founding the Japanese American Aeronautical Association (JAAA), an organization which would work to preserve the ideals of democracy and help forestall discrimination in the field of aviation.

When World War II erupted, he volunteered his services to the U.S. Air Force, but was refused because of his Japanese ancestry. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, all Japanese American pilots were grounded, but Ohye made a pledge to serve America. He even wrote to Washington, D.C., asking to be assigned as a liaison pilot for the All-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team, but once again was refused on the basis of his race.

The war ended in 1945 and Ohye had an idea--he would put together an all-Nisei air race which would show the rest of America the degree of proficiency and interest in aviation possessed by Japanese American pilots.

By 1950, he was able to hold the first Henry Ohye Air Trophy Race from Los Angeles to Chicago, with five Nisei flyers competing. He has successfully sponsored six subsequent races in 1952, 1954, 1965, 1966, 1967, and 1968. The 1970 race takes place this Saturday originating from Golden West Aztec Terminal in Long Beach and finishing at North Las Vegas Air Terminal. At least 40 contestants are expected to participate and vie for the \$1000 in total cash prizes. Competition will be in two divisions--Speed

Handicap and Proficiency.

Although the Trophy Race originated as an all-Nisei event, it has been open to flyers of all races and creeds since 1954, shortly after Japanese American pilots were finally accepted into the U.S. Air Force.

When he founded the first Trophy Race, he explained his reasons by saying:

"This is more than a race to me. It's an ideal, an ideal based upon the principle that ability is not measured by race, creed, or color, but on effort and hard work. I have confidence in Nisei pilots. I should like others to have that same confidence."

Throughout his career in flying he has demonstrated this philosophy by sponsoring and promoting a number of major events in aviation, including an aerial welcome for the Imperial Navy of Japan at San Pedro in 1932, the first Japanese American Air Show in 1933, and a California Air Tour to interest Nisei in flying in 1934. For many years Ohye operated a flying school. He has promoted some 17 major events.

Six years ago he became the first American of Japanese ancestry to fly solo the lonely, perilous journey across 6000 miles of Pacific Ocean from Oakland to Tokyo in a single-engine light airplane--"Tokuhana"--named in honor of his mother and father, whom he credits for having encouraged him in his endeavors. On the history-making transpacific flight, Ohye carried with him goodwill messages from 16 American mayors to their counterparts in Japan. The flight took several days, with stops in Hawaii, Midway, Wake,

Guam, Okinawa, and finally Tokyo.

Recognizing his achievements, the City of Long Beach in 1968 designated June 15 as "Henry Ohye Day." In a resolution citing the Nisei aviator's accomplishments, Mayor Edwin W. Wade said the following:

"Henry Shigeji Ohye has served as an airborne ambassador of goodwill from the United States to various sister cities in Japan and has greatly contributed to the furtherance of goodwill and friendship between these countries.

"He exemplifies by his soaring idealism, extraordinary courage, dogged determination, precise discipline in flight and a consuming love of flying, the highest and noblest traditions of aviation."

He has logged a total of 6,000 hours in his flying career and is holder of the now famous pilot's license number "19137."

Ohye declares he has "one more dream to fulfill" in the field of aviation. He wants to see the first International Air Meet between the U.S. and Japan take place as a spectacular demonstration of goodwill and has set 1972 as the target date. In conjunction with this event, he would like to honor one of Japan's leading diplomats, Vice Minister Moriki Tani--one of Ohye's early flying students. In fact, Moriki Tani became the first Japanese diplomat to learn to pilot a plane in the U.S. in 1952. (He was assigned to the Japanese Consulate General's office in Los Angeles at the time.)

According to Ohye, private flying is coming to a boom in Japan, with more licensed planes and more licensed pilots

emerging every day.

Largely because of his efforts which began nearly 40 years ago, there are today a number of Japanese American pilots flying for the Air Force and for commercial airlines. Ohye takes the greatest pride in this accomplishment.

Ohye is highly regarded in the automotive field in the Los Angeles area. His wife, Shizuko, is a floral designer.