

**1980**

**James S. McDonnell** - (Born Apr. 9, 1899; Died 22 Aug 1980)



James McDonnell was an aviation pioneer and founder of McDonnell Aircraft Corporation.

He graduated from Little Rock High School in 1917, just as World War I broke out. McDonnell served briefly as a private in the Army and then attended Princeton University, from which he graduated with honors in physics in 1921. While in college, he joined the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC).

After Princeton, he enrolled at Massachusetts Institute of Technology for graduate studies in aeronautical engineering. McDonnell recognized the need for an engineer to know how to fly an airplane. While still at MIT, he continued his ROTC affiliation, passed the Army Air Service physical and passed much of the ground-school work required for pilots. In August 1923, McDonnell was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army Air Service Reserve and assigned to Brooks Field, Texas, for flight training. He graduated from MIT in 1925. After earning his pilot's wings, McDonnell spent a year as a "gypsy pilot," doing odd jobs for people who owned airplanes.

He landed a job as aeronautical engineer and pilot with Huff Daland Airplane Co. in Ogdensburg, N.Y. In 1928, McDonnell started his first company to build the single Doodlebug, but since it found no market, he spent the next 10 years working for several aircraft companies, finally as a chief engineer with the Glenn L. Martin Aircraft Co.

McDonnell resigned from Martin in 1938, determined to form his own company. On July 6, 1939, he incorporated the McDonnell Aircraft Corp. in St. Louis, Mo. Within the next three decades, the company would become the leading producer of jet fighters and would build the first spacecraft to carry an American into orbit. By the mid-1960s, McDonnell Aircraft Corp. was the largest employer in Missouri, and in 1967, it expanded its operation by merging with the largest employer in California, the Douglas Aircraft Co.

1950, he founded the James S. McDonnell Foundation to "improve the quality of life," The Foundation has pursued his goals by supporting scientific, educational, and charitable causes locally, nationally, and internationally. Since its inception, the McDonnell Foundation has awarded over \$310 million in grants.

<http://www.boeing.com/history/mdc/mcdonnell.htm>