



RICHARD HANSFORD BURROUGHS, JR.

1935

While still a small boy, in April, 1931, Richard Burroughs was seriously injured when an explosive with which he was experimenting blew up in his hand. He had to dictate the answers to his entrance examinations, but he passed and came to St. Paul's that September. His spirit was remarkable. He made light of his handicap, a crippled right hand, and largely overcame it. He played guard on the Isthmian football team and was captain of the Isthmian track team. In 1933, in his summer vacation, he was already studying aerodynamics and aeronautical engineering. He won the Vanderpoel Prize and the Stewart Douglas Robinson Scholarship. He was Treasurer of the Scientific Association, a Supervisor and a member of the Council. He graduated *cum laude*, and was awarded the School Medal.

From St. Paul's, Burroughs went to Princeton. He studied mechanical engineering and his chief interest was aviation. In 1939, his paper on "The Stabilator for Longitudinal Stability and Control of Aircraft" won the first prize at a convention of the Student Branches of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

He began testing planes in 1940. He tried to get into the Navy, but was refused on account of his hand. Throughout the war he was Chief Experimental Test Pilot for Chance Vought.

Burroughs' work, wrote Wolfgang Langewiesche in 1947, "consisted of two parts. One was ordinary experimental test piloting, concerned with a multitude of technical detail, such as engine cooling, vibrations, control characteristics, stability, etc. It was while working on this phase that he lost his life. The other part was concerned with

'compressibility.' I think Dick was the first man,—certainly one of the first,—to investigate these dangerous and violent phenomena systematically and scientifically in actual flight. The troubles which Dick Burroughs investigated are now the only obstacle which keeps airplanes from flying 700 or 1,000 mph. While Dick was working on them, they were completely unknown to the public and most pilots."

He also had charge of the training and work of the group of test pilots of whom he was Chief. He collaborated with other pioneers, notably the designers of the V-173; and he did much writing, lecturing and demonstrating: to impart to combat pilots the knowledge he and others had obtained at the risk of their lives. In the production of the Navy's training film, MN-4895, "Compressibility Effects on Naval Aircraft," he served as civilian technical advisor.

Burroughs was married July 14, 1945, to Mary Drummond Page. They lived near New York, Burroughs continuing his work for Chance-Vought. On July 6, 1946, their son was born in the New Haven Hospital and named Richard Hansford Burroughs, 3rd.

Two days later, on July 8, Burroughs was testing a Corsair over the New Haven Airport. The plane's engine went dead. He had time to bail out, or set the plane down in Long Island Sound, and so save his life. But it was an experimental plane, and he made a desperate effort to set it down undamaged on the airfield. He almost succeeded, but a gust of wind struck him just as he started to bank turn for the strip. The plane crashed and he was instantly killed.