

Biography

Enshrined 1980
1907-1986

Six was one of the last of the colorful group of innovators, pioneers, and visionaries who built the airline industry into what it is today. He saw his own line grow from a tiny, three-stop operation into a major trunk carrier.

Six, who was born June 25th, 1907, in Stockton, Calif., learned how to fly in a single-engine OX-5 Alexander Eagle Rock bi-plane. After about 10 hours aloft, he received pilot's license number 5772 in 1929, at the age of 22. He bought an OX-5 Travelair from Walter Beech, founded the Valley Flying Service, and proceeded to sell scenic rides to passengers and race on weekends. To earn his full transport rating, Six moved to San Francisco and enrolled in the first flying class given by Boeing Air Transport (now part of United Airlines). He was expelled for keeping trainees in the Boeing mechanics' school up late at night working on the hot-rod airplane which he raced on weekends.

Six rounded out his aerial education by taking lessons from Ray Hunt, the famed acrobatic flyer. It was during this period that Six had his only close calls. While flying in a Pitcairn borrowed from United test pilot Mike Casserly, Six side-slipped in and undershot a sand runway at Alameda Airport, outside of Oakland. On another occasion, Six broke a crankshaft in his own Travelair in a race over Salinas, California, and had to land in a bean field. The bean field incident was actually more perilous than one might think. Six walked away from it without injury, but when he returned to pick up his airplane, he found it chained to the fence and guarded by a very annoyed farmer. Six retrieved his plane only after paying for a swath of defoliated beans.