



## ***Press Release***

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### **Airborne Systems Celebrates 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Irvin's Historic Parachute Jump**

Santa Ana, CA (April 19, 2009) Airborne Systems Group, which has combined the world's leading parachute brands specializing in aerial delivery, rescue and survival equipment, and engineering services, today marked the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic parachute jump by Leslie Irvin, who later pioneered an entire parachute industry.

Born near Los Angeles, Irvin started a ballooning and parachuting career in 1911 while in his early teens. In 1915, Irvin joined the Universal Film Company as a stunt man for the fledging Californian film industry where he performed acrobatics on trapezes from balloons and made descents using parachutes. His experience as a stunt man contributed to his later belief that a jumper in a free fall descent would not lose consciousness.

On April 19, 1919, Leslie Leroy Irvin, made the world's first premeditated free fall parachute descent using a rip cord, rather than using a canister or tether line attached to the aircraft to pull open the parachute. Working with the US Army's Air Service parachute research team, Irvin made the historic jump from a plane over McCook field near Dayton, Ohio. During the jump, Irvin broke his ankle but was inspired to start his own parachute business.

Later that year, he opened the Irvin Air Chute Company in Buffalo, NY. What became known as the Irvin parachute gained rapid acceptance, and by the early 1930's was in service with some 40 air forces around the world. With the start of World War II, Irvin became a major manufacturer of parachutes. During the war, Irvin parachutes saved over 10,000 lives. The Irvin name had set the standard for innovation, reliability, and quality.

As a humanitarian, Irvin was obsessed with saving lives with his equipment. He founded the Caterpillar Club to recognize individuals that had their lives saved by a parachute. Today, the Caterpillar Club is one of the most famous flying clubs in the world and has awarded thousands of airmen, and a few airwomen with a gold caterpillar pin, symbolizing the silk from which early parachutes were made. Some of its famous members included names such as Charles Lindberg, General James Doolittle and former astronaut John Glenn.

Irvin's design innovations weren't limited to parachutes. With aircraft flying at increasing altitudes, pilots were subjected to lowering temperatures. To address this requirement, Irvin designed and manufactured the classic leather and sheepskin RAF flying jacket which became recognized during the Second World War.

In later years, Irvin's company also made car seat belts, slings for cargo handling and even canning machinery. The company later changed its name to Irvin Aerospace to reflect the change to the newer markets it served. Today, Irvin Aerospace is a brand of Airborne Systems, a leading designer and one of the world's largest manufacturers of parachutes and related equipment.

“Leslie Irvin was a parachute pioneer and a true American hero” said Paul Colliver, a 50 year employee of the Irvin Company who worked for Leslie Irvin. “How many people can say they made something that saved tens of thousands of lives?”

### **About Airborne Systems**

Airborne Systems has combined the core technologies of four of the world's leading parachute brands, Irvin Aerospace, GQ Parachutes, Para-Flite and AML (Aircraft Materials, Ltd). Airborne Systems is a world leader in the design, development, and manufacture of best-of-class parachutes for military, personnel, and cargo systems, space and air vehicle recovery systems, and deceleration systems for high-performance aircraft. The company also provides airbags, ordnance flare chutes and weapons delivery systems. Airborne Systems has manufacturing facilities in the United States, Canada and in the U.K. Information about the various Airborne Systems products and services can be found on the World Wide Web at [www.airborne-sys.com](http://www.airborne-sys.com)

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