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**CONTACT:**

Michelle Montgomery  
Paradise Advertising & Marketing  
(727) 821-5155 ext. 120  
[Michelle@ParadiseAdv.com](mailto:Michelle@ParadiseAdv.com)

## **Tony Jannus Honored With Great Floridian Award**

*--Aviation legend recognized by the state for past achievements--*

**ST. PETERSBURG, FLA. (April 5, 2010)** – Although the achievements of the legendary Tony Jannus exist in an era since past, the state of Florida is recognizing Jannus as the recipient of this year's *Great Floridian* award.

Known for his groundbreaking flight across Tampa Bay in 1914, Jannus made aeronautical history as he piloted the very first commercial aircraft. Jannus was the first man to ever fly a plane with a passenger, signifying the beginning of the commercial airline industry. The first flight was made from St. Petersburg to Tampa and flew 21 miles in 23 minutes while the Benoist carried its first passenger, mayor Abe Pheil of St. Petersburg. After that success, Jannus piloted continual flights made across the bay beginning what was called the “airboat line.” As the Airboat Line grew, it was able to carry a second passenger and reach speeds of up to 70 mph. That same Airboat Line also became the very first air freight carrier, as it often carried cargo containing mostly hams and bacon for grocery stores.

The award is being presented to the family of Jannus, and will be accepted on their behalf by members of the Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society, in recognition of his outstanding achievements and significant contribution to the progress and welfare of the state. Recipients are selected by an ad hoc committee which includes representatives of the governor, each member of the Florida Cabinet, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the director of the Division of Historical Resources. Since the program began, 36 Great Floridian awards have been presented to people such as Zora Neale Hurston, Harry T. Moore, Marjory Stoneman Douglas and Henry Morrison Flagler.

To learn more about Tony Jannus, his legacy, or the Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society visit [www.TonyJannus.org](http://www.TonyJannus.org).

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About the Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society:

The Tampa and St. Petersburg Chambers of Commerce established The Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society in 1964. The Smithsonian Institute recognized Tony Jannus as the founder of the world's first scheduled airline. The airline- which began flights on New Year's Day, 1914- had only one plane, a single-engine Benoist flying boat that flew round trips daily between Tampa and St. Petersburg, Florida. For more information on the Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society please visit [www.TonyJannus.org](http://www.TonyJannus.org).

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