



From Autogiro to Gyroplane: The Amazing Survival of an Aviation Technology

By Bruce H. Charnov

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Predating the invention of the helicopter by two decades, the Autogiro was the world's first rotary-wing aircraft. The helicopter had the advantageous ability to rise straight up, while the Autogiro/gyroplane could only taxi. Yet the gyroplane was safer and more stable; both aircraft should have had value in market. Why did the helicopter survive and prosper, while the Autogiro became a nearly forgotten historical footnote? Why didn't the Autogiro catch on, and why is it being revived today?

This is the first book to tell the fascinating 80-year history of today's gyroplane and its antecedent, the Autogiro. Charnov explains that the near-eclipse of the Autogiro was caused by a potent combination of bad luck, the impact of the Great Depression and World War II, and egregious business decisions. Only by understanding the amazing manner in which this aviation technology has persisted and evolved can one fully understand the basis for its future. In contrast to the fate of the Autogiro, the gyroplane's unfolding story is characterized by successful business models, effective decision making, and the emergence of cutting-edge technology. The survival of the gyroplane may be a paradigm for the persistence of earlier, less complex technologies, and its future relies on grasping its colorful history.

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Editorial Review

Review

"[S]uperbly lays out the entire and intriguing 80-year history of rotary-wing aircraft....From Autogiro to Gyroplane deftly and comprehensively examines the impacts of the Great Depression and World War II upon these motorized aircrafts, as well as the simply bad business decisions, and the lessons that the fate and persistence of the gyroplane has for other old, long lasting, yet ultimately fully functional technologies. From Autogiro to Gyroplane is a unique and enthusiastically recommended addition to personal, academic, and community library aviation History collections."-Internet BookWatch

"Recommended. General readers; lower-division undergraduates through faculty."-Choice

"[A] great read....Bruce Charnov's enthusiasm for his topic leaps from the pages....This book is a great piece of work, may it be a huge success."-Wisconsin Bookwatch

"[p]rovides an excellent reference work on the afterlife of Cierva's rotary-wing principle, especially its 26-page bibliography of books, articles and films."-Air Power History

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"The book is a history demonstrating academic rigour while providing a good read. The literature researched and presented is exhaustive and should provide further scope for study. The bibliography and the 'Essential Library' are truly impressive.The book is impressive."-Aerospace Professional

"[T]his is the first comprehensive historical survey embracing both the Autogiro and the gyroplane, its closest modern counterpart. It is a comprehensive, well-referenced and well-indexed volume....If you feel you need just one good book on the subject, this is surely it."-Wingspan International, Number 22

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About the Author

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