



# The Mendonca Effect

## One gift can transform many lives

George Mendonca has always believed that a single event can transform a life. “If you change one thing in your life,” he says, “you can change everything.” For him, the event was the tragic loss of his father in a logging truck accident. Mendonca was only 10 at the time, but the incident changed the trajectory of his life forever. Anticipating that he’d follow his father into the lumber industry, Mendonca never expected to become a pilot, but after the accident, he turned to his love of aviation with a new determination.

“I decided then that I’d like to get into aviation somehow, especially as a pilot,” he recalls.

That early decision is a huge part of the reason Mendonca established the George Mendonca Endowed Scholarship Fund for aviation students at Embry-Riddle Prescott.

As someone who’d recently retired from a 29-year “dream career” as a pilot for United Airlines, Mendonca wanted to do something that would help young people turn their love of aviation into a learning and career opportunity. He spent a few

years looking for the right place to make an impact—and then he found Embry-Riddle.

“I had looked in a lot of places that offered flight training,” he recalls, “but Embry-Riddle offered students the opportunity to get a degree, something I wanted them to do, because I never did end up getting one myself.”

In setting up the endowed scholarship, Mendonca took advantage of a special provision that allowed him to make a donation out of a traditional IRA account, which he was able to fund by rolling over resources, tax and penalty free, from his employer sponsored retirement plan.

Mendonca also made an additional contribution the first year so that Embry-Riddle could begin awarding scholarships immediately. In fact, he was able to meet two of the first four Mendonca Scholars to see firsthand how his decision to create a scholarship has changed lives for the better.

“It was very gratifying,” he says. “I’m glad to give back to aviation what it’s given me.”