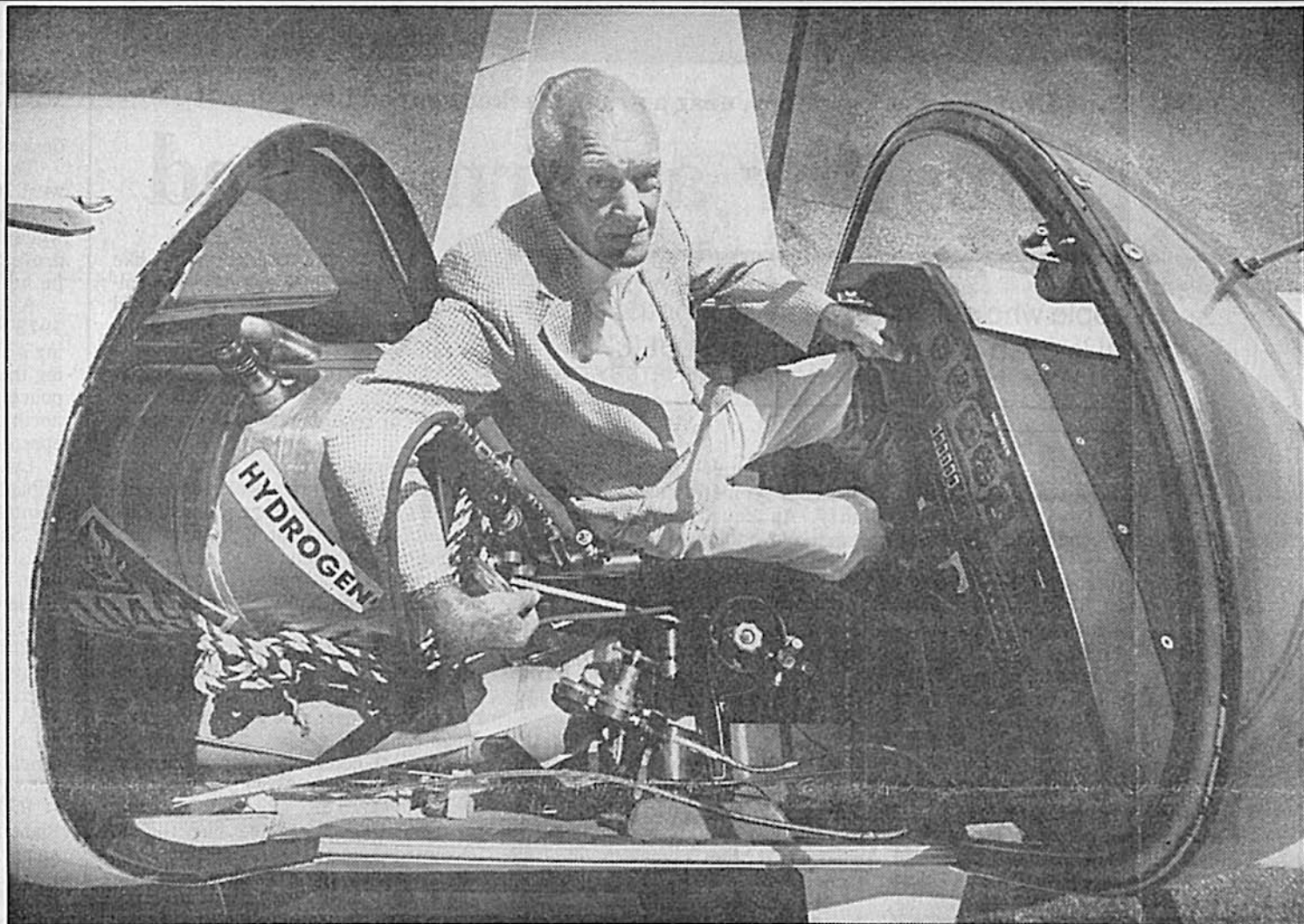


Broward News

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ALAN FREUND / Miami Herald Staff

With one arm across his fuel source, Bill Conrad has everything he needs to fly, except clearance.

Flying into history on hydrogen

14 years of work pay off in pilot's 36-second flight

By JOHN ARUNDEL
Herald Writer

For the last 14 years Bill Conrad tinkered with a project aviators said would never fly: a plane powered solely by hydrogen.

Last weekend, Conrad's conviction paid off.

His sleek, single-engine Grumman lifted off the tarmac Sunday at Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport and became the first plane to take off and land powered only by a tank of liquid hydrogen.

Officials at the Smithsonian Institution, U.S. Navy and the National Aviation Association confirmed Conrad's brief flight was the

first of its type in aviation history. They said his efforts topped those of the U.S. and Soviet military, which have failed in similar ventures.

"What he did was set aviation history," said Peter Foster, an NAA recording official who witnessed the event. "Having now crossed into that very special area called world record holder, he now walks in the same league as Lindbergh, Yeager and Orville and Wilbur Wright."

Experts differ on whether hydrogen flight has commercial promise. A Boeing Corp. spokesman said several companies are researching the topic, while a spokesman for

the Lockheed Corp. said his company has concluded that it isn't viable. Currently, hydrogen fuel costs three times as much to produce as an equivalent amount of jet fuel.

The Pompano Beach pilot's flight is nonetheless a milestone, said a University of Miami expert in alternative energy sources.

"It's very historic news," said T. Nejat Veziroglu, director of the university's Clean Energy Research Institute. "It's very important because it demonstrates how we don't have to be tied to jet fuel for plane engines."

Conrad's 36-second flight, which oc-

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