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Israeli institute promotes aeronautical science

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Herzle Bodinger was a warrior of the 20th century – not very tall, with a slight build and a handshake in no danger of crushing anyone's fingers. Yet in his heyday, he flew French-made Vautours and Mirages for the Israeli Air Force (IAF), fought in the 1967 and 1973 wars, commanded Israel's most prestigious and first squadron – Squadron 101 – headed the air force's flying school and served as chief of the IAF from 1992 to 1996.

Today, at age 68, he is still plenty busy, though he's put his days of active service far behind him. Instead, he serves as president and chairman of the board of RADA, an Israeli high-tech firm that produces sophisticated avionics installed in all new F-16s.

He's also retained a soft spot in his heart for the airforce, as he is president and spokesperson of the Israel Air Force Association, a support group for the families of air force veterans killed in the line of duty. And he's heavily involved with the Fisher Institute, a volunteer organization that, among its other works, operates the Fisher Institute for Air & Space Strategic Studies. The Institute is considered Israel's leading agency for interdisciplinary study and discussion of air and space issues. It holds international conferences, symposia and workshops, conducts research, and publishes position papers on its findings. Bodinger was in Toronto last week to tell his story and meet members of the community.

"We want to establish a relationship here," he said. "It was done in the past, but I think we can enhance and improve it."

Bodinger, who held the rank of major-general, said the Fisher Institute conducts research in conjunction with the Boeing Company on issues that have a profound implication on civilian aviation.

They are looking into the "glass cockpit," the contemporary cluster of digitized instruments whose arrangement, he said, has been found to contribute to accidents. The institute is also examining the question of "the golden hour," the 60-minute period after a catastrophic injury in which medical intervention is considered crucial to the victim's survival. Research on the subject, which should be concluded shortly, will lead to recommendations that can be done "in the field" to help survival, he said.

The Israel Air Force Association, he continued, is active in providing bereavement support to the families of soldiers killed in the line of duty. Among the activities sponsored by the association are annual get-togethers, a bar and bat mitzvah program in which youngsters visit an air base, fly in a helicopter and receive memorabilia, and the provision of financial assistance to veterans in need.

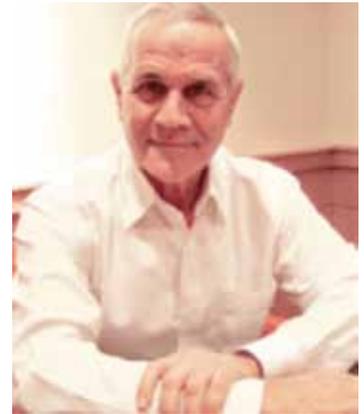
The Fisher Institute also sponsors several conferences each year. Among them is the recently concluded Fourth Civil Aviation

Conference, held in cooperation with the Israeli Ministry of Transportation, the country's civil aviation authority. Held in Israel, the confab tackled issues like aviation safety and the future of Israeli aviation.

One of the institute's high profile events is the Ilan Ramon Annual International Space Conference. Named for the former IAF pilot and astronaut, the conference brings together international experts in space transportation to discuss current technologies, programs and strategies related to space exploration and space sciences. The conference is held with the participation of NASA, the European Space Agency and the Canadian Space Agency.

As a result of the success of the annual space conferences, the Fisher Institute is planning to establish a space research centre in Israel to examine in detail issues related to space and space sciences.

Bringing together the work of the Air Force House Association and the Fisher Institute is the Institute's Digital Space Library. Its goal is to create a historical and educational legacy by putting in digital form the Air Force House's collection of books, periodicals, videos and archival documents. Once uploaded, the Digital Space Library would provide access to information and historic materials to the public around the world.



Herzle Bodinger [Paul Lungen photo]