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JOHN COBB COOPER
1 Armour Road, Princeton, New Jersey

John Cobb Cooper was born in Jacksonville, Florida September 18, 1887. Following his primary education in the public schools of Jacksonville, he attended the Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, New Jersey, from which he graduated in 1905. He entered Princeton University in the fall of 1905 and graduated Phi Beta Kappa with the degree of Bachelor of Arts (A.B.) in June, 1909. Following his graduation from Princeton, Professor Cooper read law in Jacksonville, Florida and was admitted to the Florida bar in June, 1911. From that time until his entry into the naval service in May of 1917 he held numerous civic and bar association posts. On being commissioned an Ensign in the Navy in May, 1917, he was called to active duty at the Charleston Navy Yard as a communications officer and throughout his service in the Navy he rose in rank and posts until he ultimately was in charge of all trans-Atlantic radio communications. While on duty in the Navy Department in Washington, he married Martha Helen Marvel, January 5, 1918. Mrs. Cooper died February 11, 1962.

On release from active naval duty in March, 1919, Professor Cooper returned to Jacksonville and reentered the practice of law, and in the period from 1919 through 1933 he served in numerous state and federal bar posts, the most important of which for our purposes was the American Bar Association Committee on Aeronautical Law. In 1932 Professor Cooper was appointed one of the first United States members of the International Technical Committee of Aerial Legal Experts (CITEJA), and in 1933 he was appointed chairman of the United States delegation to the Third International Conference on Private Aerial Law held at Rome, signing for the United States the first Rome Convention on Liability to Third Parties on the Surface.

In 1934 Professor Cooper was elected Vice President of Pan American Airways which he served in that capacity, and later as a director, until 1945. During those years he was active in negotiations which led to the organization and operation of the first trans-Pacific and first trans-Atlantic scheduled air services. In 1944 he was appointed one of the advisors to the United States delegation at the International Civil Aviation Conference in Chicago and served as the chairman of the two drafting committees which prepared the “Chicago Convention,” setting up the International Civil Aviation Organization. Following the Chicago Conference in 1944, Professor Cooper was made a member and subsequently became chairman of a committee representing international air transport operators, and he was influential in the organization and operation of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), serving the organization as Director General, member of the Executive Committee and Legal Advisor.

1945 Professor Cooper retired from Pan American Airways to accept appointment as a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton in order to engage in individual legal research on air law problems. In 1951, at the invitation of McGill University, he organized and became the first director of the International Institute of Air Law, which he served until 1955, with the rank of Professor of International Law. In 1952, McGill awarded him the degree of Master of Laws (LL.M.) and in 1953 made him Professor Emeritus. Throughout the entire period from 1944 to date Professor Cooper has engaged in scholarly research, and while working at the Institute for Advanced Study became interested in basic legal problems presented by high altitude flight, the subject now referred to as “Space Law.” On January 5, 1951 he presented an address at Escuela Libre de Derecho, Mexico City, entitled “High Altitude Flight and National Sovereignty,” considered by many to be the first modern discussion of basic space law problems. Since that time he has continued to publish articles and appear as guest lecturer throughout the world. He was a Founding Member of the International Academy of Astronautics and of the International Institute of Space Law, of which he was one of the first directors and the President for the year, 1961.

In 1960 Princeton University conferred on Professor Cooper the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D.). He is a Fellow, American Academy of Arts and Sciences; Fellow, British Interplanetary Society; member American Bar Association, American Law Institute, American Society of International Law, International Law Association, Institute of Aerospace Sciences, American Rocket Society, and other organizations. His publications include “The Right to Fly,” 1947; “The Fundamentals of Air Power,” 1943; “Roman Law and the Maxim 'Cujus Est Solum' in International Air Law,” 1952; and various articles on air and space law.