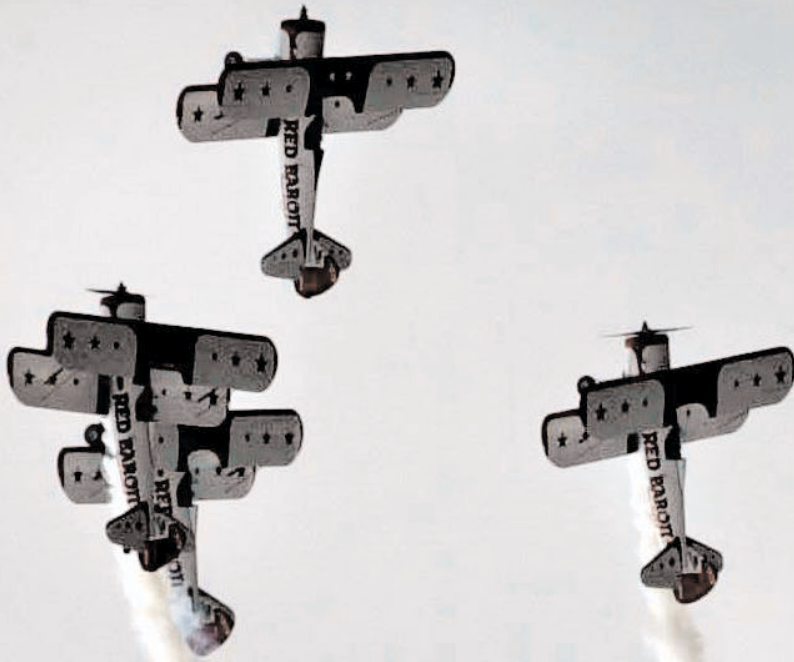


Dreams of flying have long preoccupied human imagination. Yet despite millennia of fascination with the aerial athleticism of birds and insects, the thought of people moving at will easily through air remained a cherished fantasy, celebrated only in plays or in paintings. * That is, of course, until Orville and Wilbur Wright solved a problem that had vexed the world's best minds. Unassuming, modest, methodical, innovative and technically brilliant, the brothers proved to the world on December 17, 1903 that powered flight was not only possible but practical. Their legacy includes not only the routine jetliner travel that we take for granted in the present day, but ambitious exploration programs that have sent people into space and robotic probes throughout the solar system and beyond. * In one sense, the stories that follow are a tribute to the Wright brothers' vision and determination. In another sense, they celebrate human ingenuity, the very quality that made flight possible in the first place. Whether in wind tunnels or in front of computer screens, people still yearn to soar. A century ago, that restlessness put us in the air. A century hence, who knows where we will have traveled?



Taking Flight