



**FÉDÉRATION AÉRONAUTIQUE  
INTERNATIONALE  
Ballooning Commission**

**Hall of Fame**

## **Umberto Nobile** **Inducted 2014**



Nationality: Italy

Date of Birth: 21 January 1885

Year of Death 30 July 1978

Umberto Nobile (1885-1978) is one of the great figures in the history of flight. Born in Lauro in Avellino province, January 21, 1885, he was designer, builder, author of numerous technical papers and distinguished himself especially in the design and construction of airships creating new types of aircraft in Italy and abroad. In the course of his life Nobile also dealt with numerous other aviation matters: in 1918, for example, invented the first Italian parachute and promoted in 1922, with engineer Gianni Caproni, the construction of the first Italian metallic airplane.

In the aftermath of the First World War he worked for a long time for Goodyear Corporation of Akron (Ohio) by participating, also to the design of large passenger airships such as the Shenandoah, the Macon and Akron. In 1919 the United States Navy bought his airship type "O-1" of 3,600 cubic meters volume and in 1920 the US Army acquired the semi-rigid airship "Roma" of 34,000 cubic meters.

Throughout his life he was also the plant manager of military aircraft construction in Rome and taught at the University of Naples aircraft construction. Framed in the body of the Italian Air engineers he rose to the rank of general.

Umberto Nobile, however, is universally known for the two transpolar flights over the North Pole: one sponsored by Norway in 1926 and the entirely Italian in 1928, for which he designed and built the airship NORGE and ITALIA. In 1926, together with the great Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen he made the first crossing of the North Pole with the airship N 1, NORGE which he had designed and built by an order of the Norwegian Aeroclub. The extraordinary success of the first flight pushed him to repeat the feat two years later with an entirely Italian expedition for which built the airship ITALIA. The latter ended but ' dramatically. Because of the difficult weather conditions the aircraft crashed on the ice and the survivors were rescued after forty-eight days in the legendary " Red Tent".

The story and the hot controversy that followed the reputation of Nobile glazed over that, unjustly accused by the Fascist regime, he chose a voluntary exile, first in France and then Russia with his his faithful dog, Titina, who was found by Nobile on the streets of Rome and is the only dog who has flown over the North Pole twice in an airship.

During his stay in Russia, Nobile led other polar expeditions aboard the icebreaker Malyghin and designed several other airships, including one semi-rigid type of 55,000 cubic meters and a rigid airship of 100,000 cubic meters. In 1937, the airship V-6 under the command of Captain Pankoff, his pupil, made a flight from Moscow to Arkhangelsk and back non-stop 130 hours, a world duration record for airships. In Russia Nobile also designed a rotating hangar.

At the end of 1936 he decided to return to Italy but failing to find work he decided to leave the country again returning to the United States where he remained until 1942, taking a professorship in the Department of Aeronautical Engineering at the Catholic University of Chicago.

After the fall of fascism, in July 1943, Nobile returned to Italy from 1946 to 1948 and was also an independent deputy to the Constituent Assembly.

Nobile was pursued throughout his long life by the controversy about the tragic expedition ITALIA and was forced very hard to defend himself from those who criticised his decisions and his behavior in that tragic story. Only in recent years, he was finally given back all the honours he deserves. Umberto Nobile died in Rome July 30, 1978 and must without any doubt be one of the most brave and daring aeronauts and Italian explorers.

(From Wikipedia, Italy)