

Inventor of modern ventilator dies at 94

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Forrest Bird, an American aviator who helped save countless lives by inventing the first modern ventilator, has died at the age of 94.

Bird passed away at his home in Sagle, Idaho on Sunday, the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) said in a statement.

"Dr Bird was truly a pioneer in respiratory care and pulmonary medicine," said Frank Salvatore, the association's president.

A lifelong pilot who met Henry Ford and Orville Wright as a young boy, Bird became interested in mechanical ventilation during his stint as a long-range ferry pilot with the US military during World War II.

Flying a captured Junkers 88 bomber to the United States, his curiosity was piqued by a demand regulator he discovered in its cockpit, used to deliver oxygen to German pilots at high altitudes.

Lessons he learned while improving upon the device eventually led to the development of the Bird Mark 7, which the AARC called "the first modern respirator for use in [critically ill patients](#)."

Within years it displaced the cumbersome iron-lung machines that had been used in hospital wards throughout the United States and beyond to treat polio.

Bird was particularly proud of the low-cost, mass-produced Baby Bird, introduced in 1970, which helped slash the mortality rate of infants with

[respiratory problems](#) to less than 10 percent.

He was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 1995, but in a 2009 documentary he stated: "I still don't see myself as an inventor."

Rather, he said, "you see a need and you correct it."

In an obituary Tuesday, the Bonner County Daily Bee in northern Idaho said Bird passed away "with his family by his side," but gave no cause of death.

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