

MEDALIST FOR 1984

For outstanding achievements in the development of an airline, of unique general aviation services; and of personnel training techniques, accomplished continuously during a period of more than 40 years.



THOMAS H. DAVIS

After learning to fly at the age of 16 in his home town of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Thomas Davis received his commercial and instructor ratings; using this experience to earn a living while at the University of Arizona. He returned to Winston-Salem in 1939 as sales manager of Camel City Flying Service. The company engaged in all phases of aircraft operations, from sales, to maintenance, to charter. Davis became majority stock holder as the company expanded to 17 outlets in North Carolina in 1940, and the name was changed to Piedmont Aviation. During World War II, Piedmont became one of the major flight and ground school training centers for the U.S. Government and several South American countries.

At the end of the war, 15 companies applied for airline routes on the East Coast, Piedmont being the only one accepted to provide service. In 1947 it became Piedmont Airlines.

Davis became Piedmont's chairman and CEO in 1981, then retired in 1983 and took the title of chairman of the executive committee. After rapid growth, Piedmont became the largest regional airline in the United States by 1984. In 1989, it merged with USAir (now US Airways),

Davis is the only non-Virginian who has been nominated to the Virginia Aviation Hall of Fame. In 1980, Mr. Davis received the Tony Jannus Award, named after the founder of the first scheduled air service, thus recognizing him as the outstanding contributor to the scheduled airline industry.

He continued to fly until 1998, piloting a variety of aircraft, including a restored Taylor E-2 and sail planes. The founder of Piedmont Airlines died on April 22, 1999.