

Thomas J. Smith

Class of 1962



Thomas Smith, former president and CEO of Mooney Aircraft Corporation and president of Fairchild Aircraft Corp., earned a reputation as one of the most effective leaders and managers in the aviation industry.

Smith began working as a chemical process engineer with Grumman Aircraft Corp., and later worked on NASA's Apollo Lunar Module Program. Subsequent employment took him to Aeronca Inc., Gemini Corp., then Mooney Aircraft, a manufacturer of high performance business aircraft.

Smith became Mooney's vice president of engineering and manufacturing in 1975 and two years later was elected president and chief executive officer. Smith led Mooney into a profitable position in his first year and directed a crucial product expansion program. In 1984, Smith accepted the position of president of Fairchild Aircraft Corp., where he turned around the company to profitability.

A private pilot in his own right, Smith left Fairchild to lead the operations of Fokker Aircraft in Amsterdam, Holland. Later, he entered the world of entrepreneurship by acquiring ownership interest in two small Texas companies involved in manufacturing and publishing. For eight years prior to his retirement in 2008, Smith was president and CEO of Strocchio Aerospace International, based in London and Moscow. He formerly chaired the board of directors of the General Aviation Manufacturer's Association and was president of Kerrville, Texas, Area Chamber of Commerce and a trustee of Schreiner College in Kerrville.

Additional study: Wittenberg University; Xavier University; University of Michigan