

MEDALIST FOR 1982

For his long-standing contributions to aviation and national defense, and his untiring efforts toward the development of superior aircraft.



DAVID S. LEWIS

From an Engineer to the top executive of two of the nation's leading defense contractors who produced three of the outstanding combat aircraft used by the United States and its allies since World War II was his reputation. The McDonnell Douglas F-15 Eagle, and the General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcon were his heritage; David Lewis was known for his ability to develop companies into efficient, cost competitive and on-schedule aircraft producers.

Dave Lewis joined McDonnell Aircraft Company in 1946 as Chief of Aerodynamics. He quickly rose to the position of Project Manager for the F3H Demon and later as the Chief Engineer for the F-101 Voodoo. These positions demonstrated his exceptional abilities in aircraft design. His manufacturing background and the important scheduling approach gave him recognition as a production leader.

After Lewis rose to President and Chief Operating Officer of the company in 1962, McDonnell won the contract from the Department of Defense to build the F-4 Phantom—producing 3000 of the aircraft during the next seven years, all delivered on time, to schedule.

In 1967, when McDonnell and Douglas Aircraft Company merged, David Lewis was named President and Chief Operating Officer of the combined corporation, along with the title of Chairman of the Douglas division, with the task of restoring on-time scheduling of the DC-8 and DC-9 commercial aircraft. He also directed the planning of the new three engine DC-10 wide-bodied aircraft; and the planning of the F-15, that resulted in a development contract in 1969.

In 1970, David Lewis became Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of General Dynamics, and directed the development of the F-16, using his aircraft engineering experience to make wing and landing gear changes for improved performance. This aircraft later became a multi-national NATO design, assembled in three countries.

He has received many awards, the most prestigious being the Collier Trophy for the “Greatest achievement in aeronautics or astronautics in America in 1975.”

Daniel Guggenheim Medal

Aggressively recruited by General Dynamics, Lewis became chairman and chief executive officer of General Dynamics from early 1971, and remained so until his retirement at the end of 1985. Lewis remained on the company's board of directors through 1994. A major force in the aerospace and defense industry, he died on December 15, 2003.