

## Daniel Guggenheim Medal

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### MEDALIST FOR 1977

*For significant public service of enduring value in development of military and civil air transportation and for his contributions as a dynamic leader and articulate spokesman for U.S. aviation progress.*



### CYRUS ROWLETT SMITH

No one has called him anything but “C.R.”

But Time magazine, in a cover story at the dawn of the jet age, also called him “a living legend in U.S. aviation” and a man who embraced “the shrewd calculations of a gambler, the financial sagacity of a banker, and the dedication of a monk.” And, added Time:

“He has done more than any other man to improve the service and standards of U.S. airlines.”

Strong words but deserved words for this tall, bluff Texan who got into the airline business in 1928 as treasurer of Texas Air Transport and took over as head of American Airlines in 1934—when American was an unprofitable, disorganized and disheartened carrier. Among its more dubious traditions was a predecessor president who was afraid to fly and a corps of pilots who went to work wearing different uniforms. Under C.R.’s leadership, American became one of the world’s greatest airlines.

It was Smith who convinced Donald Douglas to build the DC-3, and it was Smith who during World War II helped organize the Military Air Transport Command and build it into a world-girdling operation of incredible efficiency. At war’s end, he came back to American and told his colleagues to get ready for a new era in air transportation—one that would see the airplane replace the train and steamboat as the primary mode of travel. That prediction merely reflected a faith in the future of commercial aviation that ran through his veins like super-charged blood.

An airline chieftain who combined the paternalism of a W. A. Patterson with the tough command charisma of a Robert F. Six, C. R. guided American into the jet age before retiring in 1968. Typically, he could not stand to be inactive; he served briefly as Lyndon Johnson’s Secretary of Commerce and returned to American in 1973 to serve as interim Chairman while the airline was being reorganized.

C.R. died on April 4, 1990 and is buried in Arlington National in Virginia.