



BRIAN H. ROWE

1931–2007

Elected in 1983

“For extraordinary contributions to the conception, design, development, and application of advanced high performance aircraft gas turbines.”

BY M. J. BENZAKEIN

BRIAN H. ROWE, a successful engineer, business leader, and former chief executive officer of General Electric Aviation, died on February 22, 2007, at the age of 75. Brian was an innovator who developed technology decades before his time. He was a man who helped define aviation in the 20th century.

Brian Rowe’s legacy began as a young man in an apprenticeship at deHavilland Engine Company, where he designed a jet engine component for the deHavilland Comet, one of the world’s first commercial jet aircraft. After graduating from college and returning to work at deHavilland, Brian soon left Britain to pursue a career in the Flight Propulsion Lab at General Electric in Evendale, Ohio.

After a few years, Brian began his ascension through the ranks, eventually moving to Lynn, Massachusetts, to lead GE’s efforts on lift fan technology. Brian’s team in Lynn demonstrated the astounding amount of air that could be pulled through lift fans. He discovered that when turned at 90 degrees these lift machines could become efficient cruise fans. This newly revealed technology would greatly contribute to a jet propulsion revolution that led to the introduction of high-bypass turbofan engines. Brian soon became manager of the

J85 advanced component engineering group with primary responsibility for compressor design on the GE1 demonstrator engine. The hot section of the GE1 would later be used on GE's TF39—the world's first high-bypass turbofan engine. Gerhard Neumann, chief operating officer of GE's aircraft engine business, established the Commercial Engines Project Operation in Cincinnati, and made Brian Rowe CF6's project manager. The CF6 would transform commercial engines, offering better reliability and more power to American and European airlines.

The late 1960s saw demand rise for wide-bodied, two-engine aircraft intended for short- and medium-range destinations. This demand was met with the A300, an application developed by the newly formed Airbus Industrie, a European consortium created to develop and produce exportable airliners. In an exciting engine decision, Airbus selected GE's CF6-50 as the sole power for the A300. With this deal intact, Brian forged deep relationships with Airbus and the French engine maker, Snecma. These relationships dramatically changed the course of GE's aviation business. Brian also oversaw the development of the F101 military engine. Later, the core of the F101 engine would be combined with a front fan developed by Snecma to create a new engine—the CFM56. Brian was key in supporting his longtime friend, Gerhard Neumann, in creating CFM International, a joint company of GE and Snecma.

As the 1980s began, GE Aviation had a new business model and a new goal—to become the industry leader. Under Brian Rowe's leadership, GE's portfolio of engine developments and technological breakthroughs continued to grow. Brian, now chief executive officer of GE Aviation, helped convince Boeing to choose the CFM56 engine for the new 737 Classic Series, and two years later the CFM56 was selected for the Airbus A320. With these two aircraft, the CFM56 was on its way to becoming the most successful commercial jet engine in history. For his work with CFM, Brian was awarded in 1985 the *Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur*, France's highest civilian honor. And good news kept coming. The U.S. Air Force selected GE's new F110, derived from Brian's original

F101 core design, to power the F-16. Brian introduced the CF6-80C2, the most popular jet engine for a wide body in its day, powering Boeing, Airbus, and McDonnell Douglas aircraft. And in 1987 he helped secure CFM56 and CF6 positions on Airbus's A340 and A330 aircraft.

As a new millennium was approaching, Brian oversaw development of the GE90—the world's largest and most powerful jet engine and the first to use composite fan blades. The success of the GE90 family helped solidify Brian's reputation as a pillar of aviation technology. In the 21st century, the GE90 architecture is the basis for the new GENx engine for the Boeing 787—the fastest-selling large commercial engine in GE's history. The legacy of Mr. Rowe lives on.

After retiring from GE in 1993, Brian Rowe continued to stay on as a leader, maintaining an office in Evendale and working as a consultant. Later, Brian published his memoirs, *The Power to Fly: An Engineer's Life* (AIAA, 2004). Brian Rowe was a fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society and the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics and a member of the National Academy of Engineering. He was awarded an honorary degree of doctor in science and technology from the University of Cincinnati and from the University of Dayton. In 1995 he was inducted into the GE Aviation Propulsion Hall of Fame and in 1996 into the Cincinnati Business Hall of Fame.

Brian was a 25-year Cincinnati resident and civic leader. He served as a board trustee for the Cincinnati Museum Center, the Institute of Fine Arts, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and the University of Cincinnati Foundation, including co-chair of the University of Cincinnati Campaign Committee. He chaired the World Affairs Council of Greater Cincinnati, served on the Ohio State President's Advisory Council, and served as president of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. He also served on several Federal Aviation Administration advisory boards. He was a member of several corporate boards, including 5th/3rd Bank and Convergys Corporation, both in Cincinnati; Stewart & Stevenson Services, Inc., Houston, Texas; Atlas Air, Inc., Golden, Colorado; and Acterna Corporation, Burlington, Massachusetts.

Brian's principal residence in recent years was Key Largo, Florida. His wife, the former Jill Trapp, survives him. They have three grown children: daughters Linda Hernandez (Miami, Florida) and Penny Dinsmore (Cincinnati, Ohio) and son David Rowe (Savannah, GA) as well as six grandchildren, including Nicholas Dinsmore, an engineer at GE Aviation in Evendale.

His daughter wrote:

"My Dad was a wonderful, generous dad. He always had time for his children and his grandchildren. I will never forget the look of joy he had on his face when his grandkids were all gathered around him. He was a gentle man and loved children from infancy to young adults, maybe because he was such a kid at heart.

The family spent many wonderful summers together on Cape Cod. He was an avid sailor and passed on that love to his family. Sports were a big part of my dad's life, tennis and golf were his favorites, and he loved to play with the family. He had yearly golf trips with the men of the family, and a special father/son trip he went on each year with other men. The winters were spent in Ocean Reef, Florida, where he had more opportunities to go boating and play golf.

My mom and my dad were a team that enjoyed many years of traveling and relaxing. My father always thought he had a great job and enjoyed all the people he worked with. He always said to go for the job you love and try to do the best job you can. We miss him terribly and are grateful for the love and guidance he shared during his lifetime."

Brian Rowe was an influential person in aviation technology. His business intelligence, exceptional creativity, and keen technical insight will leave a lasting mark on the lives of countless people, companies, and organizations around the world.

