



## **Artillery OCS Hall of Fame**

### **Jimmie L. (Jim) Hamilton Class 2-56**

Jim Hamilton completed Army Primary Flight Training and Fixed Wing Tactical Flight Training after graduating from OCS. He then served with XVIII Airborne Corps Artillery, Aviation Section at Simmons Army Airfield, Fort Bragg, North Carolina and was discharged in 1958.

He became a flight instructor at the Columbia Metropolitan Airport, Columbia, South Carolina, but immediately saw promise in developing Owens Field located about six miles to the east. Only five private airplanes were based at Owens Field and there were no hangars. He started Midland Aviation in a one-room office in 1962 and soon moved the business to Owens Field. In twenty years, the Midland Aviation grew to 26 full-time and six part time employees with a six instructor, eight plane FAA approved flying school. Jim Hamilton went on to spend 46 years as the Volunteer Airport Manager and the airport grew to a modern IFR Day/Night FAA designated reliever airport serving the flying public and home base to 119 aircraft. He and his family provided all the personnel and equipment necessary to operate the airport at their own expense and his donated time as Airport Manager saved the county hundreds of thousands of dollars. Upon his retirement, the airport was renamed Jim Hamilton-L.B. Owens Airport in recognition of his significant contributions to its preservation and improvement.

Jim Hamilton organized the Jamil "Flying Fezzes" in 1974 to fly burned and crippled children to Shrine Hospitals all over the country. He flew many of the missions, including transportation of donated organs to distant cities and continued this charitable service to the community for more than 45 years. He made hundreds of flights at his own expense reuniting the deathly ill with loved ones or helping others in crisis. Over the years he donated aircraft for use by State Law Enforcement, the FBI, the DEA and the Richland and Lexington Sheriff's Departments before those entities were able to acquire aviation assets. He Served on the South Carolina Aeronautics Commission from 1985 through 1993 by special appointment from two governors. He was elected Chairman of the Aeronautics Commission serving in that capacity from 1989 through 1993 and was elected again to Aeronautics Commission from February 2005 through August 2007.

When he sees a need, he resolves to fill it in one way or another. He has guided hundreds of kids toward aviation through the Young Eagles program with his Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter that has given more than 10,000 free airplane rides to youth. He was named South Carolina Aviator of the Year and Inducted into the South Carolina Aviation Hall of Fame in 1993. He is the recipient of the Order of the Palmetto, the highest civilian honor awarded to citizens of South Carolina for extraordinary lifetime service and achievements of national or statewide significance.