



**Don Champion
Banyan Air Service
Fort Lauderdale, FL**

**Recipient of 2009
FATA Entrepreneurial
Excellence Hall of Fame Award**

Don Champion – A Lifetime Commitment to Aviation Excellence

Don Champion is a leader with vision, integrity, and a passion for aviation. His life-long dedication and passion for aviation is evident at Banyan Air Service, an 85-acre aviation complex at Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport.

Don was born a missionary kid in Nigeria, West Africa and routinely flew aboard Cessna and Piper aircraft to attend classes at a Protestant American boarding school. Flying in these aircraft started his life-time passion for aviation.

At Seneca College, in Toronto, Canada, Don participated in a four-year aviation course which also included a commercial, multi-engine pilot's license and one year of aircraft maintenance. In 1979, he moved to South Florida and worked as a co-pilot for a small charter operation flying primarily to the Bahamas.

As a charter pilot, he quickly realized there was an opportunity for a maintenance facility to service the aircraft he was flying and that of other similar charter companies. With one small hangar, one friend, and two employees, he began Banyan Air Service at Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport to service these aircraft.

Banyan once a small maintenance facility, now has 150 teammates and has grown to become an internationally recognized full-service FBO with a multitude of services available in one location; including, turbine airframe and engine maintenance, avionics service and installations, aircraft sales and management, parts sales and distribution, Hangar63 (Banyan's Aviation Store), and TropicAero.com (Banyan's catalog and on-line store division). The Banyan Complex is also home to flight schools, charter operators, air ambulance, a helicopter maintenance shop and property managers.

Don's entrepreneurial spirit allows him to continually visualize and improve services for the aviation community. A few of his many achievements include:

- Banyan being ranked #1 Best Independent U.S. FBO by *Professional Pilot* 2008 PRASE Survey
- the recent opening of Jet Runway Café, a breakfast and lunch spot with an aviation theme
- the opening of the new Banyan terminal in 2006
- extended hours at U.S. Customs at Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport 2005
- serving on the NATA Board from 1999-2002
- serving as President of the FXE Airport Association
- serving on the Everglades University Aviation's Program Advisory Committee
- participating as a member of both the "20 Group" and "TEC"
- fostering a learning environment for schools groups with facility tours
- providing an excellent work environment for teammates which includes a gym, company Chaplain, health benefits, and assisting with expenses for teammate's flying lessons
- Philanthropic Work that includes helping others through aviation:
 - Challenge Air
 - Angel Flight
 - Holy Smoke
 - Mission Flying in Nigeria
 - Lifework Leadership