

Remembering Bobby McDonald

1 Aug 1936 – 2 May 2020

AOC Dixie Crow Chapter



Bobby Gerald McDonald was born in Doerun, Georgia on August 1, 1936. He began his career in electronic warfare at the age of 18, when he served as a Naval Aircrew aboard P2V “Neptune” anti-submarine and patrol aircraft. As an in-flight avionics technician, he operated and repaired early generation electronic warfare avionics systems. Later, Bobby was also part of the Navy’s Blue Angels flight demonstration team when they flew F9F Panthers.

After his naval service, Bobby attended the Georgia Institute of Technology and received his Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering. After graduation, he worked engineering roles in several fields. He helped design early memory systems at IBM, worked on avionics design at Lockheed Martin and worked for NASA on telemetry systems installed on the Saturn V rocket.

Bobby moved to Warner Robins in 1969 and began working as an engineer at Robins Air Force Base shortly after. His career took him from major technical roles in the design of the AN/ALQ-131 ECM pod to the deputy division chief of his organization. One highlight of Bobby’s career was his instrumental involvement in the establishment of the Electronic Warfare Avionics Integration Support Facility (EWAISF) at Robins in the mid-1970s. He briefed the need for an EW reprogramming facility to all management levels, up to the Pentagon. The end result was that Robins was selected as the location for the new EWAISF facility and is now the Air Force avionics and EW depot. The EWAISF Bobby lobbied for is even more important today, as work done here continues to help the warfighter through changing EW operational environments.

On a humorous note, Bobby traveled for work under the name BG McDonald. On at least one occasion, he mistakenly received brigadier general accommodations. It was not his mistake, so he did not change his travel name.

Bobby retired from government service in 1995. Bobby's calm demeanor and fair leadership style influenced many throughout his life. His work still impacts Air Force systems and processes today. He was a dedicated sailor, engineer, civil servant, husband and father. Bobby passed away May 2, 2020.