



Robert M. Elder, Captain, USN (Ret.)
 “Bob”

Date of Designation: 25 April 1941 NA # 7549

Dates of Active Duty: June 1940 - January 1964

Total Flight Hours: 8,258

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 948 Rotary: 28

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 3,600 Prop: 4,400 Helo: 35 VF/VA: 5,000+

Other: Flight test - approximately 2,000+

Combat Tours:

WW II: Combat experience during WW II spanned from the outbreak of hostilities on 7 December 1941 through every major carrier engagement in the Pacific Theater until September 1943, flying missions from the USS *Saratoga* (CV-3), the *Yorktown* (CV-5), and *Enterprise* (CV-6).

Korea: Air Group-19 aboard the USS *Oriskany* (CVA-34) played a minor support role in the Korean War. Deployed Westpac September 1953 - March 1954.

Aviation Commands:

CO, VF-191, Sep. 1952 - Jun. 1954.

CAG-12, Apr. 1956 - Dec. 1957.

CO, USS *Coral Sea* (CVA-43), Jul. 1962 - Mar. 1963.

Combat Awards:

Navy Cross

Distinguished Flying Cross

2 Presidential Unit Citations for actions in the Battle of the Coral Sea, Midway, Guadalcanal and Eastern Solomon Island campaigns.



Duty Assignment Chronology

- 9/36-8/39 University of Washington - Engineering Student/NROTC.
- 6/40-5/41 Flight Training, Pensacola and Miami. Was Commissioned Ensign A-V(N) on 15 May 1941.
- 6/41-9/43 Bombing Squadron 3 - USS *Saratoga*, (CV-3), San Diego, CA. WW II - deployed, Dec. 41-Sep. 43, Pacific Theater in *Saratoga*, *Enterprise* and *Yorktown*.
- 9/43-2/44 NAS Deland, Florida - Instructor, Combat Tactics, VA/VF.
- 3/44-10/45 NAMC, Philadelphia and NATC Patuxent River - Flight Test, Carrier Suitability.
- 10/45-7/46 Commissioning Detail, USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Air Operations Officer.
- 7/46-6/47 General Line School, Newport, Rhode Island - designated USN.
- 6/47-11/47 XO, Bombing Squadron 5, San Diego, CA.
- 12/47-12/49 XO, Fighting Squadron 51 (FJ-1 Fury).
- 1/50-8/52 Test Pilot School, NATC Patuxent River, MD. (Honor Graduate, Class 4 - assigned Tactical Test Division).
- 9/52-6/54 CO, VF-191 (F9F-6) deployed Korea, USS *Oriskany* (CVA-34).
- 6/54-3/56 COMNAVAIRPAC, Air Group Training Officer.
- 4/56-12/57 Commander, Air Group Twelve - USS *Lexington* (CVA-16).
- 1/58-8/58 NATC Patuxent River, Assistant Director, Service Test Division.
- 8/58-9/59 NATC Patuxent River, Director, Flight Test Division.
- 10/59-7/60 Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island.
- 8/60-8/61 CO, USS *Waccamaw* (AO-109).
- 8/61-7/62 Pentagon, OP-03 Carrier Training.
- 7/62-3/63 CO, USS *Coral Sea*, (CVA-43).
- 4/63-11/63 Commander Fleet Air Alameda, Staff
- 1/1/64 Retired from active duty.

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Summary of Significant Career Events

- (1) From the F8F Bearcat era through the mid-1960's, Bob Elder was recognized in the Navy flight test community for his expertise in the test and development of flying qualities, performance, carrier suitability, and in-flight refueling of Navy tactical aircraft. He was among the first Naval Aviators to fly jet aircraft, beginning with the Bell YP-59, the YP-80 and ME-262, and is a pioneer in the introduction of operational jets (FJ-1 Fury) into Naval Aviation. His "firsts" in the test and development of naval aircraft are numerous, and his contributions to the conception of the F/A-18 Hornet were his legacy to the United States Navy.
- (2) Flown in 142 aircraft types. Carrier qualified in 34 aircraft types, on 28 different aircraft carriers.

- (3) Notable honors during his career were:
 - Selection by the Tailhook Association, upon his retirement in 1964, as Tailhook Aviator of the Year;
 - President of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots (1973-74) and a Fellow in that organization;
 - Enshrinement in the Carrier Aviation Test Pilot Hall of Honor (1990); and
 - Membership in the prestigious Early and Pioneer Naval Aviators, "The Golden Eagles."

During Captain Elder's 24-year career in the U. S. Navy, he was notably: Director of Flight Test, Patuxent River, MD; Commanded a fighter squadron, an air group, and the aircraft carrier, USS *Coral Sea* (CV-63). He retired on 1 January 1964.