

Robert M. Elder, Captain, USN (Ret.) "Bob"

<u>Date of Designation</u>: 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.

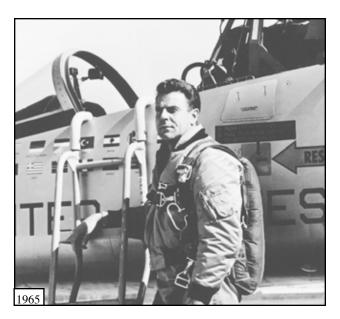
CO, USS Coral Sea (CVA-43), Jul.1962 - Mar. 1963.

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
	Saratogaa, 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.
12/47-1249	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

Retired from active duty.
- Continued -

1/1/64

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 inflight 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.