



John R. Leenhouts, Captain, USN (Ret.)
 “Lites”

Hometown: Olney, Illinois

High School and College Career:

East Richland High School (1969)
 Attended Southern Illinois University (1970) and graduated from University of Oklahoma (1973) in Mechanical Engineering

Dates on Active Duty: March 1974 to January 2001

Date Commissioned/Source:

8 March 1974/ Source AVROC

Date of Designation: 22 August 1975

Total Flight Hours: 12,000 in 35 different types of aircraft

Carrier/Ship Landings: 1645

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 5980 Prop: 30 VF/VA: 5760 VT: 250

Combat tours:

El Dorado Canyon: April 86
 Desert Storm: January to March 91
 Enduring Freedom: July to August 94

Combat missions: 34 (A-7E, F/A-18C)

Commands:

VFA-136
 Strike Fighter Wing Atlantic

Awards:

Legion of Merit (2)
 Distinguished Flying Cross with Combat “V” (2)
 Meritorious Service Medal
 Individual Air Medal with Combat “V” (4)
 Strike Flight Air Medal with Combat “V” (2)



Joint Service Commendation Medal
 Navy Commendation Medal with Combat “V” (2)

Duty Assignment Chronology

03/74-04/74	VT-1, SNA, Saufley Field, T-34B
05/74-06/74	Recruit Command Oklahoma City, TAD, T-34B
07/74-02/75	VT-23, SNA, Kingsville, T-2C
03/75-08/75	VT-22, SNA, Kingsville, TA-4J
09/75-03/76	VA-174, FRS, Cecil Field, A-7B
04/76-03/79	VA-46, LSO/PAO/Personnel, Cecil Field, A-7B/E, F-14A, USS <i>John F. Kennedy</i> and USS <i>Eisenhower</i>
04/79-09/81	VA-174, LSO, PAO, Weapons/DACT Instructor, Cecil Field, A-7E, TA-7C
10/81-09/83	CAG-1, CAG Paddles, Cecil Field, A-7E, F-14A, USS <i>Carl Vinson</i> and USS <i>America</i>
10/83-01/86	NavAirLant, Fleet Paddles and PCAG Coordinator, Norfolk, A-7E, F-14A
02/86-03/86	VA-174, Refresher Training, Cecil Field, A-7E
04/86-0/88	VA-46, Department Head (Ops, Maint, Safety, and Admin), USS <i>America</i> and USS <i>Eisenhower</i>
11/88-04/89	CLAW-1, Ops Officer, Cecil Field, A-7E
05/89-05/89	VA-125, CQ Refresher, Lemoore, A-7E
06/89-04/91	VA-72, XO, Cecil Field, A-7E, JFK
04/91-08/91	VFA-106, Hornet training, Cecil Field, F/A-18A/B/C/D
09/91-08/94	VFA-136, XO/CO, Cecil Field, F/A-18C USS <i>Eisenhower</i> , and USS <i>George Washington</i>
09/94-05/95	Air War College, student, Montgomery, AL.
06/95-08/95	SFWL, Captain at large, Cecil Field, F/A-18A/B/C/D
09/95-12/95	JTFSWA, Deputy J-3, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
02/96-03/97	7th Fleet, Ops Officer, Yokosuka, Japan, F/A-18C, USS <i>Independence</i>
04/97-01/01	SFWL, Commodore, Cecil to Oceana, F/A-18A/B/C/D/E/F
01/01	Retired

Summary of Significant Career Events

1. In ten major deployments, primarily flew the A-7 Corsair, the F-14 Tomcat, and the F/A-18 Hornet and holds the distinction of performing more carrier landings (1645) than any other naval aviator in USN history (16 different Carriers).
2. Lead VA-46 to 1986 Battle E as Ops Officer
3. Never had one single landing incident while paddles on the platform for 10 years
4. First and only LSO to cross-train, carrier qualify, and fly the F-14 concurrently with the A-7 as a junior officer for 9 years
5. Obtained his private pilot license in 1970, holds Commercial, CFI, Instrument, multi-engine, Seaplane, and ATP Ratings and has accumulated more than 12,000 flight hours piloting various military, antique, and civilian aircraft (35 types of aircraft)
6. Over 10,000 aerial photographs taken with many images published worldwide.

Summary of Post Active Duty Events

1. In 2001, "Lites" joined Northrop Grumman where he conceptualized and created the US Navy/Marine Corps' first ever commercial MRO Facility for the F/A-18. Teamed with the Boeing Corp., he grew the facility from its infancy to a multi-million-dollar program modifying hundreds of Hornets annually.
2. Upon retiring from Northrup Grumman, "Lites" joined SUN 'n FUN in 2011, and within three years lead the organization to be totally debt free for the first time in over three decades. Once SUN 'n FUN became financially stable, he envisioned a world class education facility based on aerospace principles and technology. On August 04, 2021 that vision became reality as the Aerospace Center of Excellence (ACE) on the SUN 'n FUN Expo campus, unveiled the Skylab Innovation Center! This is now the world's first purpose-built, aerospace-based, hands-on, STEM learning laboratories. ACE is now fully meeting their mission of engaging, educating, and accelerating the next generation of aviation professionals in an aviation education ecosystem where the sky is just the beginning!
3. Based on the many accomplishments enjoyed by ACE and SUN n' FUN, the Lakeland City Commissioners and Mayor voted unanimously to designate 21 March as "John and Nancy Leenhouts Day" and name a street "Leenhouts Way" in his honor.

4. Additionally, the ACE Board of Directors created a multi-media center to produce aerospace themed STEM learning videos to be share throughout the world and named it "The John Lites Leenhouts Media Center" so as to recognize his vision to entice more young men and women to pursue a career in aviation.

5. Upon retiring in April 2022, numerous major donors collaborated to establish the "Lites Leenhouts Advanced Flight Training Scholarship" where they invested over \$300,000 as a protected account that will last in perpetuity while funding advance flight ratings through investment growth.

6. Lites was selected by the Warbird community in December 2022 to stand-up and become the first CEO and President of the "Association of Professional Warbird Operators" whose mission is to "Create and maintain the high level of professionalism across the entire spectrum of warbird operation." www.apwo.org

Personal

1. In their spare time, "Lites", and wife Nancy, enjoy flying their 1964 Piper Comanche 250 to visit family and friends or driving one of their many antique British sports cars on the back roads of our great nation.

Associations

1. Seaplane Pilots Association