



**William P. Lawrence, VADM, USN, (Ret.)**  
"Bill"

Date of Designation: 7 November 1952

Dates of Active Duty: June 1951 - February 1986.

Total Flight Hours: 4,000

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 500

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 2,500 VF/VA: 2,000 VR/VP: 200  
VU/VFP: 200 VT: 500

Combat Tours:

Korea: Aug. 1953. - 25 combat missions.  
Vietnam: Jun. 1966 - Jun. 1967. - 150 combat missions.

Aviation Commands:

CO, VF-143, Apr. 1967 - Jun. 1967.  
COMLATWINGPAC, Aug. 1974 - May 1975.

Combat Awards:

Distinguished Flying Cross  
3 Silver Stars  
Bronze Star  
Air Medals  
Distinguished Service Medal (DSM)  
2 Purple Hearts

Other Awards:

3 DSMs

### **Duty Assignment Chronology**

VADM Lawrence was born in Nashville, Tennessee on January 13, 1930, and graduated with distinction from the U. S. Naval Academy in June 1951. After receiving his Naval Aviation Wings in November 1952, he served during his career in the following Navy fighter squadrons: VF-193, VF-101, VF-14 and VF-143 and made deployments in the Atlantic and Pacific on the following aircraft carriers: USS *Oriskany* (CV-34), USS *Saratoga* (CV-60), USS *Essex*



(CV-9), USS *Shangri La* (CV-38), USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* (CV-42), USS *Ranger* (CV-61) and USS *Constellation* (CV-64).

He graduated number one in his Naval Test Pilot School class in 1956 and while a Test Pilot at the Naval Air Test Center Patuxent River, MD., was the first naval aviator to fly twice the speed of sound in a Navy airplane, the F8U "Crusader III." He was among the final 32 candidates for the Mercury astronaut program, being disqualified for a minor physical defect.

While Commanding Officer of VF-143 aboard USS *Constellation* on his second combat deployment to Vietnam, he was shot down on June 28, 1967, and held as a P.O.W. until March 4, 1973. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for inspirational leadership of fellow P.O.W.'s as senior ranking officer of Camp Vegas in North Vietnam.

After repatriation and convalescence, he became a distinguished graduate of the National War College, followed by promotion to Rear Admiral in 1974. As a Flag Officer he served in the following positions: Commander, Light Attack Wing, U. S. Pacific Fleet, Director Aviation Programs Division on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations, Assistant Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air Warfare), Superintendent, U. S. Naval Academy, Commander, U. S. Third Fleet in the Pacific, and Chief of Naval Personnel, retiring in 1986.

From 1986 to 1991, VADM Lawrence occupied the Chair of Naval Leadership at the U. S. Naval Academy and is currently a visiting professor at the Academy.

He is the recipient of the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame Gold Medal and the National Collegiate Athletic Association Theodore Roosevelt Award, the highest honors of these organizations. He is also a past President of the Association of Naval Aviation.

### Duty Assignment Chronology continued

He holds a masters degree in International Affairs from George Washington University and an honorary doctorate in humane letters from Fisk University.

#### **Summary of Significant Career Events**

- (1) Honor Graduate, Navy Test Pilot School.
- (2) First Naval Aviator to fly Mach II in Navy airplane.
- (3) Member of team that conducted Navy preliminary evaluation of the F-4 and F-8U3 aircraft.