

William Peter Olsen



“Bill” Olsen died at age 77 of complications from a stroke on 25 July 2013. A native Californian, Bill was born to the late Commander Peter Olsen, USCG, and Sylvia Olsen. He spent his childhood in Petaluma, CA. Bill had a love of the sea and flying at an early age, so much so he bartered bailing hay for flying lessons. He received his pilot’s license at age 16 and wanted to become a naval aviator. After high school, he attended prep schools in San Francisco and Washington, DC, and received his appointment to USNA from V.P. Nixon. He entered the Academy in June 1956 and graduated with the 19th Company on 8 June 1960.

Next was flight school in Pensacola. He entered the jet pipeline and received his Wings in 1962. He then joined Attack Squadron

VA-195 at NAS Lemoore, CA. He completed two combat tours in the Tonkin Gulf aboard BON HOMME RICHARD (CVA-31). While flying A-4s in the Gulf, he conducted 221 combat missions over North Vietnam and had 776 carrier landings, 300 at night. For his actions in combat, Bill was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and 12 Air Medals. In 1965, Bill joined RAG Squadron VA-125 at NAS Lemoore as a flight instructor and maintenance officer.

He resigned his commission in September 1967 and joined American Airlines in 1968. Home based in New York and Miami, he flew the 727, 707, DC 10 and Airbus 300. Bill retired from American Airlines as a captain of the A300, at the age of 60, in 1996. From the Aeronca Champ, to the A-4, to the A300, what a ride!

Bill met his wife, Lynda, aboard one of his flights in 1976. After retiring, he and Lynda enjoyed living in Connecticut, Florida and aboard his “Big Boat.” Bill is survived by his wife, Lynda of Boca Raton, FL; daughter, Susan and son, Chris, both of Virginia Beach, VA; and his sister, Marilyn McDowell of California.

Bill will be remembered for his big smile, great sense of humor, fearlessness and constant projects. His favorite saying was, “If I ever have a day off, I’ll retire.” He touched many of our lives and the world is a better place because of him. He will be missed.

Lynda Olsen & Bill’s roommates, Bill Townsend ’60 & Jim Worthington ’60