



Rhode Island Aviation Hall of Fame

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Next group of honorees includes a Flying Tiger, two bomber fliers who were POWs in Europe and one of the founders of the Civil Aeronautics Board

February 4th awardees have Cranston, Barrington, North Kingstown, Newport, Tiverton, East Providence, Narragansett and Providence connections, and include graduates of Central, Mount Pleasant and East Providence High Schools, DeLaSalle Academy and LaSalle Academy

PROVIDENCE – The Rhode Island Aviation Hall of Fame will induct six new members, present a seldom-given President's Award and recognize the service of two others at a ceremony and dinner to be held at the Varnum Armory in East Greenwich on Saturday evening, February 4.

Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend. Tickets cost only \$50 each (\$90 per couple) and can be obtained by emailing riahof@aol.com, or logging in to our website at www.riahof.org. For further information, please call 401-398-1000 or 401-831-8696.

Two inductees are still living:

Riverside resident **Roland E. Stumpff** flew for more than 68 years. He was a WWII B-24 bomber pilot who participated in the dangerous raids on the Ploesti oil fields. On his 13th Ploesti mission his aircraft was hit by flak over the target and lost two engines. With a wounded copilot he nursed his B-24 to dead-stick landing. He and his crew were captured and held in a Bulgarian POW camp. When Bulgaria dropped out of the war in late 1944, he and more than 200 allied POWs eventually made their way to Istanbul and safety. In a little-known footnote to history, he and a handful of others volunteered to go back into Bulgaria with the OSS to identify and round up those guards who had mistreated prisoners. Through this team's actions, some 135 were brought to justice. After the war, he continued to fly with several Air National Guard units, including a stint flying F80 fighter jets with the New York Air Guard. He worked for Trans-Ethiopian Airlines, and eventually settled into a career as a mechanical engineer. Roland added glider flying and soaring to his repertoire before finally folding his wings in 2010. He was a Colonel in the Confederate Air Force, where he worked on (and flew) aircraft that participated in their famous Missing Man formation.

Tiverton native **LTC James Webber Lent, Jr. USMC (Ret)** had the distinction of serving three combat tours in Viet Nam, flying three different aircraft with distinctly different missions. During these three tours, Jim flew a total of 842 combat missions and 949 combat hours, an accomplishment surpassed by only a select few US military aviators. Lent graduated from De La Salle Academy in Newport and Holy Cross College. Lent was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps in 1960, and designated a Naval Aviator the following year. In his first Vietnam tour (1964-65) he flew the H-34 helicopter in support and medevac missions out of Danang. From April, 1968 - May, 1969 he flew the A-4 Skyhawk attack jet with VMA-311 out of Chu Lai, providing close air support for marines on the ground. In 1972 he flew the F-4J Phantom II fighter/attack jet in combat. During his 21-year career, Jim amassed a total of 3,482 flight hours flying 18 different aircraft. He also completed 123 day and night carrier landings. Lent's combat awards include three Distinguished Flying Crosses, two Bronze Stars with Combat V, and forty-two Air Medals, with

one meritorious single mission gold star. After leaving the service he earned his JD and a Master of Law Degree in International Business and Taxation. He continues to practice in Pensacola, FL where he now resides.

The four deceased inductees are:

Born in Providence, **Parker S. Dupouy (1917–1994)** was one of the 57 combat pilots serving as the Flying Tigers in China in the early days of World War II. A Central High School grad, he enrolled as an Aviation Cadet after graduating from Brown University in 1939. In May, 1941 he resigned his Army Air Corps commission to volunteer with General Claire Lee Chennault and the Chinese Air Force. He eventually moved to Kunming, China as vice-commander of the Hells Angels Squadron. In July of 1941, his unit (with 18 planes and 25 pilots) destroyed 81 Japanese planes while being outnumbered ten to one. Parker is officially credited with getting 4.5 kills, although records show he probably had an additional seven that could not be independently confirmed. He was awarded the “Chinese Sixth Cloud Banner” after his encounter with a Jap Zero on Christmas day, 1941. Out of ammunition, DuPouy dove on the more maneuverable Zero and sheared off the enemy plane’s left wing. In the process he lost the last four feet of his own right wing. Knowing how scarce P-40’s were, he managed to nurse the plane back to base. This encounter is memorialized in a painting by Dan Zoernig named “One the Hard Way”. Parker also flew Madame Chiang Kai-shek around China while she acted as a keynote speaker throughout the country. After the AVG disbanded, DuPouy went to Republic Aviation on Long Island where he became Chief Test Pilot. He and one other AVG pilot did all of the testing on the P-47 Thunderbolt, directing some fixes which made the plane such an effective weapon. In 1946 he moved to Pratt & Whitney where he tested the experimental B-50 bomber. After the war, he went back to work as an engineer, ending his career with KG Engineering in Woonsocket. He died of cancer at the age of 77.

Captain James R. Henderson USN (Ret) (1924 – 2010) retired from Quonset Point Naval Air Station in 1975 after a 32-year Navy career that started in 1942 and spanned three wars. He flew more than 10 different aircraft and served in torpedo and anti-submarine squadrons on 12 different aircraft carriers. He served as Landing Signal Officer (LSO) with VS-31, Flag Secretary to the Admiral of Carrier Division 20, Commanding Officer of VS-32, Executive Officer of Command Air Group-54 (CAG-54), Joint Chiefs of Staff Action Officer for the Office of Chief of Naval Operations at the Pentagon, and Director of Naval JROTC for the First Naval District. As Air Group Commander he oversaw all training and operational readiness of three air squadrons, 600 personnel and 50 aircraft. He also participated in the 1965 Gemini 5 space capsule recovery carrying Astronauts Alan Shepard and Pete Conrad. He continued to enjoy flying in North Kingstown and Florida after his retirement. He was also a founding member of the National Naval Aviation Museum Foundation in Pensacola, Florida. His family still lives in North Kingstown and West Warwick.

Cranston native **Pasco “Pat” Melone (1913-2007)** was an accomplished flight instructor, aerial photographer, aerial banner tower, and aerial acrobat. Called "Rhode Island's version of Waldo Pepper", he soloed at the old Buttonwoods airport at the age of 17 after less than 7 hours of dual flight time. According to his family, he was told "not to come back" because he did a loop during the 1930 solo flight. Undaunted, Melone sent away for an airplane kit and first assembled it in his bedroom. He then disassembled it, carried the parts outside, reassembled and flew it—getting written up in Horatio Alger's newspaper at the age of 18. Family lore has him buzzing the state house and "crashing" on Spectacle Pond in Cranston, only to fly away again when the police showed up. He allegedly rented an aircraft that he had never flown before, flew it for an hour, then took and passed the test for his commercial license in that aircraft. He enlisted in the 243rd Coast Artillery of the RI National Guard, and by 1940 he was a corporal. He had become a flight instructor prior to WW2, and during the war he served as an Army Air Corps civilian flight instructor at Hawthorne School of Aeronautics in South Carolina. He also taught French cadets at Hawthorne—one of whom eventually became a Concorde pilot. By 1950 he was a commercial pilot examiner for the Civil Aeronautics Administration, and was flying for Allen Airways at Hillsgrove. His work ranged from ferrying *Providence Journal-Bulletin* photographers to aerial banner towing—a skill at which he became quite adept. After a break in service, Mr. Melone re-entered the RI Air National Guard, serving 16 more years before retiring as a staff sergeant.

Providence native **Robert T. Murphy, (1915-1996)** was instrumental in the drafting of many federal statutes relating to air safety, air transportation, and related economic issues. He participated in the creation of the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), and served on that board for 12 years, acting as Vice Chair for eight years. During his years on the CAB board he had a lot to do with promoting air service to New England in general and Rhode Island in particular. Murphy graduated from LaSalle Academy and Providence College before receiving his LL.B. from Georgetown University Law School in 1940. In 1956 he was chosen as Counsel to the Senate Aviation Subcommittee. During his career as a CAB Governor and Member, Murphy was involved in more than 55 bilateral aviation negotiations, 25 of which were with foreign governments. He served as the U.S. representative to the Conference of International Civil Aviation Organization (CIAO) in Buenos Aires in September 1968. He died in 1996

Our Special Recognition Award recipients, both living, are:

Master Army Aviator **Thomas P. Shortall** is best known for safely crash landing the helicopter carrying Governor Noel after a mechanical failure in May of 1976. He was raised in the Mount Pleasant section of Providence and graduated from Mount Pleasant High School in 1950. He joined the RI Air National Guard in 1949, and attended the Allen School of Aeronautics where he became an FAA licensed master mechanic. He worked for American Airlines at Idlewild Airport in New York, and as an Air Force civilian contractor and technical rep. At the age of 38 he transferred to the Army Guard as an aviation maintenance officer and, unusual for someone his age, graduated from flight school in 1970. Shortall was an aeronautics inspector for the RI National Guard and the helicopter pilot for the governor of Rhode Island until 1979. From 1979 to 1990 he was assistant chief of airport operations at TF Green Airport. He retired in 1990, and remained in the Army Reserve until 1991. He holds numerous commercial and instrument ratings, and is also an A&P (aircraft and power plant) master mechanic. He resides in Narragansett.

Major General Kevin R. McBride is now The Adjutant General and Commanding General of the Rhode Island National Guard. Also an Army Aviator, he has commanded an Attack Helicopter Battalion, a Light Utility Helicopter Battalion and the 56th Troop Command (Airborne). General

McBride served as the Commander of the 43rd Military Police Brigade from February 2003 to January 2009. In 2005, he took over the responsibility for cleaning up the notorious Abu Ghraib, along with two other prisons in Iraq. An East Providence native, he graduated from the University of Rhode Island in 1980 with a degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering. He also received an ROTC commission. He also earned a masters in National Security and Strategic Studies from the US Naval War College in 2000. He earned his aviator wings in 1982 at Fort Rucker, has a Commercial Instrument Rotary Wing rating and has accumulated more than 1700 flight hours.