

Class of 1942

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William Houser grew up in sunny Miami, where his natural leadership skills

took root. He was president of his high school class for three years, and entered the U.S. Naval Academy at the tender age of 16.

Though younger than his classmates, Bill more than compensated with his toughness, hard work and enthusiasm. The *Lucky Bag* summed it up with “Gangway there! Here comes Bill!” While at the Naval Academy, Bill ran cross-country and track, and was known for his polished manner and ability to cheer up his classmates.

After Pearl Harbor, Bill and his 1942 classmates were graduated in December 1941, and went to war. He spent three years in *USS Nashville* as a gunnery and deck officer during the Pacific war. Using the new tool of radar, *Nashville* escorted the aircraft carrier *USS Hornet* to launch the Doolittle raid over Tokyo on April 18th 1942. In December 1944, then-Lieutenant Houser survived a kamikaze attack on *Nashville* that killed 131 and wounded 180 of his shipmates.

After the war, Bill was designated a naval aviator, and served in a new post-war organization, the Joint Navy/Air Force Intelligence Division for strategic atomic bombing. In March 1946, Bill married Betty Lou Worrall, a former Wave. The two met while he was in pilot training and she was serving at Corpus Christi Naval Base for the doctor from *Nashville*.

During the Korean War, Bill commanded Fighter Squadron 44, flying F4U-4s. As commander of Fighter Squadron 124, Bill helped prepare some of the Navy’s best pilots for the Navy’s newest fighter in action in Vietnam. Soon, he was there himself, serving as Commanding Officer of *USS Constellation* in 1966—his toughest but most rewarding year of naval service.

Bill quickly moved higher through the chain of command, making important contributions all along the way. As Deputy Chief of Naval Operations Air Warfare, Vice Admiral Houser personally blocked the termination of the F-14 fighter by the Congress and Department of Defense.

Since retirement in 1976, Bill has remained active in defense and business affairs. He directed the installation of the first satellite system in the United States for broadcasting television and radio.

Bill also remains an active supporter of the Navy and Naval Academy, spearheading efforts to erect a monument to the Battle of Midway at the Academy and organizing efforts to annually commemorate the key battle throughout the Navy. He also sponsored two videos profiling examples of Naval leadership from the Revolutionary War to the conquest of space.

Bill is the proud father of three daughters, Cynthia, Gayle and Francie, and has six grandchildren. He and his bride, Jan, reside in Arlington, Virginia.