

## OBITUARY CAPTAIN BOBBY C. WILKS

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SUBJ: DEATH OF CAPT BOBBY C. WILKS, USCG (RETIRED)

1. I AM SAD TO REPORT THE PASSING OF CAPT BOBBY C. WILKS, USCG, RETIRED, ON 13 JULY 2009 IN FAIRFAX, VA. HE WAS 78 YEARS OLD.

2. CAPTAIN BOBBY CHARLES WILKS WAS A PIONEER IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD, HOLDING THE DISTINCTION AS THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN COAST GUARD AVIATOR, THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN TO REACH THE RANK OF CAPTAIN IN THE COAST GUARD AND THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN TO COMMAND A COAST GUARD AIR STATION. HE ACCUMULATED OVER 6,000 FLIGHT HOURS IN 18 DIFFERENT TYPES OF AIRCRAFT. HE WAS ALSO THE COAST GUARD PROJECT OFFICER FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF THE SIKORSKY HH-3 HELICOPTER IN THE 1960S. BORN 12 MAY 1931 IN ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, HE GRADUATED FROM SUMNER HIGH SCHOOL IN 1947. AFTER RECEIVING HIS ASSOCIATES DEGREE FROM STOWE TEACHERS COLLEGE IN ST. LOUIS, HE WAS ACCEPTED INTO THE U. S. NAVAL ACADEMY, AND ATTENDED FROM 1950 TO 1951, BUT RETURNED TO STOWE TEACHERS COLLEGE TO COMPLETE HIS BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE. HE THEN COMPLETED HIS MASTERS DEGREE IN EDUCATION FROM ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY IN 1954, AND FOLLOWING A YEAR ON THE ST. LOUIS BOARD OF EDUCATION, HE WAS SELECTED FOR, AND ATTENDED, COAST GUARD OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL IN NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT, EARNING HIS COMMISSION IN 1956. HIS FIRST ASSIGNMENT WAS A DUTY OFFICER AT COAST GUARD GROUP BALTIMORE, BUT HE WAS SOON ACCEPTED TO FLIGHT TRAINING AND EARNED HIS AVIATOR WINGS. UPON COMPLETING FLIGHT TRAINING IN 1957, HE WAS DESIGNATED AS COAST GUARD AVIATOR NO. 735, AND WAS DESIGNATED A COAST GUARD HELICOPTER PILOT TWO YEARS LATER. HE SERVED AT A VARIETY OF COAST GUARD AIR STATIONS, INCLUDING SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES DURING THE EARLY STAGES OF THE VIETNAM WAR, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS, AND BARBERS POINT, HAWAII. HE HELD COMMAND CADRE POSITIONS AT VARIOUS UNITS, INCLUDING EXECUTIVE OFFICER AT AIR STATION NAPLES, ITALY AND COAST GUARD SUPPORT CENTER, NEW YORK, CULMINATING IN A SECOND ASSIGNMENT TO AIR STATION BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, THIS TIME AS COMMANDING OFFICER. CAPT WILKS ALSO SERVED IN STAFF TOURS IN THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL, AS ASSISTANT CADET PROCUREMENT OFFICER WHERE HE WAS INVOLVED WITH MINORITY RECRUITING FOR THE COAST GUARD ACADEMY, AS CHIEF OF THE SEARCH AND RESCUE BRANCH IN THE THIRD COAST GUARD DISTRICT (NEW YORK), AND FINALLY AS THE COAST GUARD LIAISON TO THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION/FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION WHERE HE HELPED

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES. WHILE DETAILED TO FAA, HE SERVED AS CHAIRMAN FOR THE HELICOPTER OPERATIONS SECTION OF THE NATIONAL AIRSPACE REVIEW, LEADING A TEAM OF TECHNICAL SPECIALISTS FROM

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, DEVELOPING A PLAN TO GUIDE THE FAA ON THE WAY TO SUCCESSFULLY USE HELICOPTERS IN THE UNITED STATES THROUGH THE LATER PART OF THE 20TH CENTURY. AMONG HIS NUMEROUS AWARDS IS THE AIR MEDAL, EARNED FOR INITIATIVE, FORESIGHT AND AERONAUTICAL SKILL WHILE ATTEMPTING TO RENDEZVOUS WITH A RUSSIAN VESSEL 120 MILES EAST OF HILO, HAWAII IN HEAVY WEATHER. HIS COURAGE, SOUND JUDGMENT AND UNWAVERING DEVOTION TO DUTY CULMINATED IN THE SAFE MEDICAL EVACUATION OF THE STRICKEN MASTER, THUS SAVING THE MANS LIFE. ADDITIONALLY, CAPTAIN WILKS WAS TWICE RECOGNIZED WITH THE HELICOPTER RESCUE AWARD WITH THE WINGED-S AIR RESCUE EMBLEM FOR COURAGE AND SKILL WHILE PILOTING A SIKORSKY HELICOPTER IN AIR RESCUE MISSIONS. OTHER PERSONAL AWARDS INCLUDE THE MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL, THE COAST GUARD COMMENDATION MEDAL, THE HUMANITARIAN SERVICE MEDAL, ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL AND NATIONAL DEFENSE MEDAL, AS WELL AS THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM CAMPAIGN AND VIETNAM SERVICE MEDALS. CAPTAIN WILKS RETIRED IN 1986 AFTER 30 YEARS SERVICE IN THE COAST GUARD AND SETTLED IN FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA.

3. THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE, HE PUT SERVICE FIRST, BOTH TO THE NATION AND TO THE COAST GUARD. HE LEAVES A TREMENDOUS LEGACY AND WILL LONG BE REMEMBERED FOR HIS EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AS A PIONEERING LEADER AND AVIATOR.

4. HE IS SURVIVED BY HIS WIFE AIDA (AZORES) WILKS AND SON BOBBY

JULY 23, 2009, FOLLOWED BY A MEMORIAL SERVICE AT 1300 AT FAIRFAX MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME, 9902 BRADDOCK ROAD, FAIRFAX, VA. INURNMENT WILL BE AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY AT A DATE TO BE DETERMINED.

5. IN LIEU OF FLOWERS, THE FAMILY REQUESTS DONATIONS BE MADE TO WORLD VISION, THE UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND, OR THE SOCIETY FOR PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

6. MR. CURTIS B. ODOM, DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT, SENDS.

7. INTERNET RELEASE AUTHORIZED.

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