

Captain William E. Bailey

Stafford, Virginia



Inducted in 2016, Captain William E. Bailey's love of aviation began when he was stationed at Rhein Main AFB, Germany. Bailey began his flight training at Fort Rucker, Alabama, completing Fixed Wing Officer Aviation flight training in 1966 and later the Rotary Wing Officer Aviator Training. During the first of two combat tours in Viet Nam, Bailey was assigned to the 3rd of the 5th Cavalry, 9th Infantry Division to fly UH-1 Hueys and selected to be the personal pilot for General William Westmoreland, Commander of US Forces in Vietnam, a testament to his exemplary piloting knowledge and skills. Between tours, Captain Bailey returned to Fort Rucker to train student pilots and pilots in transition to multi-engine and instrument training and then went back to Vietnam for a second tour. While in the Army he flew the Bell H-13, Hiller-23, UH-1 Huey, OH-58 Kiowa, Jet Ranger, Cobra, O-1 Birdog, de Havilland Beaver and Otter and the Beechcraft C-12 Huron (Super King Air) and C-23. He received 3 Purple Hearts, 2 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 3 Bronze Stars including 1 for valor and 32 flying medals. Upon retiring from the Army in 1983, Bailey went to work for People's Express Airlines, later acquired by Continental Airlines. Noticing that the airlines had a dearth of minority pilots, he accepted a request from Continental to assist the airline in recruiting minority and women pilots. He was the ideal person to fulfill this responsibility as he had experienced discrimination himself in both civilian and military life. His dedication was evidenced by the fact that he recruited 28 new pilots the first year and 48 the second year. Upon his retirement from Continental in 2002, it was noted that in his aviation career of over 52 years Captain Bailey trained over 1000 pilots and mentored roughly 200 African Americans with 25 flying for the airlines. Bailey continues to be a member of Virginia State University's Alpha Phi Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Mentoring Program. He has been an integral component of fundraising efforts for Virginia State University and former St. Paul's College in Lawrenceville. Captain Bailey has made instrumental contributions and his visionary leadership in aviation and education as well as his personal passion and dedication have opened the aviation industry to greater numbers of young professionals, especially minorities, with his personal mentoring of the multitudes of young Virginians to be successful in whatever endeavor they chose in life.