

OFHS



WALL OF FAME

Inducted June 2, 2013



WILLIAM (BILL) BAST

Just as World War II was ending in March of 1945, William (Bill) Bast was born in Oconto Falls to Victor and Geraldine Bast. That military connection was to set the stage for his life. As a young man, Bill was active in scouting, becoming an Eagle Scout. He graduated from Oconto Falls High School with the Class of '63.

Inspired by his father, a WWII pilot, Bill attended the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. Following graduation from the Academy in 1968, he continued with extensive training to become a military pilot. Bill served in the U.S. Navy for 29 years, achieving the rank of Commander. During this time he married Sue Van of Abrams, and together they had two sons, Scott and Chad.

During those years of service, he completed over 800 landings on aircraft carriers, while he and his family lived at Naval bases in Spain, Mississippi, Florida and California. In Rota, Spain, he was a part of NATO defense of the Mediterranean, flying Corsairs, the fastest Navy jets. In Mississippi, he trained Navy pilots to fly twin engine Navy jets. In Florida he flew missions guarding our shores from southern incursions.

In 1984, he married Mary Olson and formed a blended family including the Bast boys and Mary's children Dan, Lynn, Scott and Michael. At Point Mugu Naval Air Station in California, Bill acted as a test pilot for Naval Weapons Systems development and testing of what at that time were secret laser weapons. He also tested new guidance systems, flying blindly down California coastal canyons via commands from developing missile guidance systems.

After his retirement from the Navy, Bill was employed as a radar specialist with the U.S. Customs Service, working with ground based law enforcement agents, flying interception and capture of drug loaded planes illegally crossing the U.S. border. Later, he was promoted to direct air and ground enforcement of such interceptions from a central control center at March Air Force Base in Moreno Valley, California.

Like many OFHS alumni who relocate, Bill's heart was in Wisconsin and with the Green Bay Packers. After a life of service in many places, Bill planned to retire and return to Oconto Falls. Those plans were cut short when he was killed by a hit and run driver in June, 2000. His memory lives on with the many lives he touched and the inspiration he shared.