

BRIGADIER GENERAL WILLIAM W. SPRUANCE

William W. "Bill" Spruance, a pioneer in the early use of aircraft in the forward air control role, flew 362 missions in the China-India-Burma Theater and continues to be a major force in aviation.

A native of Wilmington, Delaware, General Spruance received his commission in the U.S. Army Field Artillery Officers Reserve Corps from Princeton University in 1939. He was assigned to Fort Benning, Georgia, as a field artillery forward observer in the 2d Armored Division, commanded by George S. Patton. In his spare time Spruance flew his own aircraft, a low-wing Culver Cadet, at the municipal airport where Patton was also learning to fly. Spruance and Patton met and discussed the role of light aircraft on the battlefield. Patton was duly impressed with the young officer's innovative ideas and understood their applicability. Reporting directly to Patton, Spruance was given authority to develop new techniques, train observers, and fly leaders over their units during maneuvers. Because the Army Air Corps (AAC) lacked light aircraft, he flew his personal Culver or rented private aircraft. His pioneering work promoted the use of light aircraft throughout Europe in World War II, laying the foundation for today's forward air control mission.

General Spruance transferred to the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1942 and enrolled in the first aviation class of officers. He received the top score in class 43A in aerial gunnery but, because of a shortage of transport pilots, he was assigned to the Troop Carrier Command, flying the C-47 Skytrain. In 1944 he activated and commanded the 4th Combat Cargo Squadron, flying the C-46 Commando. General Spruance completed his 362nd combat mission while flying the High Hump in the C-54 Skymaster.

In October 1945 he left active duty and in 1946 helped found the Delaware Air National Guard. He was later named Chairman of the Delaware Aeronautics Commission.

In 1961 General Spruance received extensive burns in a near-fatal T-33 crash. He has since delivered a powerful Flying Safety and Crash Survival message to over 150,000 people in more than 1,500 presentations.

General Spruance was the first reserve officer awarded the Air Force Distinguished Service Medal for his presentations in Vietnam, where in 1968 he briefed over 100 times to more than 10,000 people at 58 bases in 60 days. Other honors include two Distinguished Flying Crosses, four Air Medals, and three Delaware Conspicuous Service Crosses.

General Spruance is a command pilot with over 4,500 hours. He has served on advisory boards for the Department of the Air Force and the Department of Defense and for three decades, he served on the governing board of the Air Force Association. He is Chairman Emeritus of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, after having served as Board Chairman for 17 years. He is a permanent member of the Board of the Air Force Association and serves on the Board of the Aerospace Education Foundation.

In his retirement, Brigadier General Spruance continues to be an influence in the advancement of aerospace military power by sponsoring AFROTC scholarships and encouraging young individuals to become the motivated leaders in the total Air Force of the future.

I. G. Brown Air National Guard Training and Education Center

Dedication Ceremony

Master of Ceremony

Chief Master Sergeant Thomas W. Smith

Chief, Training and Education Development Branch

Welcoming Remarks

Colonel Richard W. Burris

Commander

Guest Speaker

Major General Craig R. McKinley

Deputy Inspector General, Air Force

Honored Guest

Brigadier General William W. Spruance

USAF, Retired

Reception following at McGhee Tyson Armed Forces Club
McGhee Tyson Air National Guard Base, Tennessee