



NEWS

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Civil Air Patrol's first Spaatz award recipient dies after distinguished public service career

Decorated CAP cadet from Michigan became a skilled Air Force combat pilot who flew with the Thunderbirds and served as a trusted congressional aide

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – Douglas C. Roach, the first recipient of Civil Air Patrol's highest cadet award, the General Carl A. Spaatz Award, died Jan. 11 at Sibley Memorial Hospital in Washington, D.C., from complications related to cancer. He was 70.

"The Spaatz Association wishes to express its deep regret and condolences in the passing of Doug Roach," said retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Ted Bowlds, the association's president. "As the first Spaatz award recipient, Doug certainly set the standard in the qualities represented in all Spaatz recipients that followed. We have him and his family in our thoughts and prayers."

Roach made Civil Air Patrol and Spaatz history as a Michigan Wing cadet in the 1960s. He was born in Romulus, Mich., on Nov. 18, 1942.

"Doug was handpicked by Jack Sorenson (CAP's cadet program leader at the time) to be tested for the first Spaatz," said Col. Larry Trick, a Spaatz recipient and former president of the association. "Jack noticed Doug in 1962 at the National Cadet Competition, where he was commander of the Michigan Wing drill team that won the competition that year."

Trick said the Spaatz test in its infancy was handwritten, with mostly essay-type questions. Today the test has evolved into a more sophisticated, multi-step process, but the Spaatz award remains the most coveted of CAP's cadet honors.

Named after the first chief of staff of the Air Force and the first chairman of the CAP National Board, the Spaatz award is presented to cadets who demonstrate excellence in leadership, character, fitness and aerospace education. Cadets typically qualify for the award after devoting an average of five years to progress through 16 achievements in the CAP Cadet Program.

Once a cadet achieves the award, he or she is entitled to the grade of cadet colonel. On average, only two cadets in 1,000 earn the Spaatz award. Since the award's inception in 1964, CAP has presented the Spaatz award to less than 1,900 cadets.

Roach became a highly decorated officer and skilled U.S. Air Force pilot. After flying 516 combat missions during several tours in Vietnam between 1969 and 1972, he was a pilot with the Air Force flight performance team, the Thunderbirds, from 1973-75. He began with the aerial demonstration team flying Thunderbird #6 when the team flew the F-4 Phantom and he served as the team's logistics officer. Roach retired from the Air Force with the rank of colonel.

Despite the notoriety he gained above the clouds in the Air Force, Brig. Gen. Richard L. Anderson said Roach was grounded in the achievements of his youth, which included his “place of honor in the annals of CAP history” as the first Spaatz recipient.

“I remember meeting Doug for the first time at a Spaatz Association event soon after the organization was created in the mid-1990s,” said Anderson, past president of the association and former CAP national commander who now chairs the organization’s Board of Governors. “Although Doug’s professional military and congressional staff career precluded his remaining active in CAP, he remained dedicated to the purposes of the CAP Cadet Program and attributed CAP with his later accomplishments in life.”

“He was a hero to me and many cadets in the ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s,” said Trick. “Often, we would see him on the Hill during National CAP Legislative Day. He always had a great smile and handshake for the cadets.”

Roach earned a bachelor’s degree in government at the University of Michigan and, after his distinguished service in the Air Force, a master’s degree in national security studies from Georgetown University.

He continued his career of public service on Capitol Hill, most recently as the longtime staff director for the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces.

In his obituary this week, *Congressional Quarterly’s* Roll Call said Roach was a cornerstone of every defense authorization law since 1991, whether as a professional staff member on the veteran defense panel, or its staff director since 2001.

“His work was key to developing the smart weapons we use today,” said Trick.

The longtime congressional aide also was noted for serving both Democrats and Republicans, working through important national security legislation. In the *Roll Call* obituary, Rep. Michael R. Turner, the Ohio Republican who chairs the Tactical Air and Land Forces panel, said, “Doug Roach was a trusted counselor to members on both sides of the aisle for many years. He always gave us his best advice, regardless of party interest or agenda.”

Roach’s boss, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Howard “Buck” McKeon, R-Calif., called him “a selfless servant and true hero.”

Civil Air Patrol, the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a nonprofit organization with more than 61,000 members nationwide, operating a fleet of 550 aircraft. CAP, in its Air Force auxiliary role, performs 90 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and is credited by the AFRCC with saving an average of 80 lives annually. Its volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and drug interdiction missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The members play a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to nearly 27,000 young people currently participating in the CAP cadet programs. CAP received the World Peace Prize in 2011 and has been performing missions for America for 71 years. CAP also participates in Wreaths Across America, an initiative to remember, honor and teach about the sacrifices of U.S. military veterans. Visit www.gocivilairpatrol.com or www.capvolunteernow.com for more information.

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