

Colonel George T. Bright is inducted into the Pennsylvania Air National Guard Hall of Fame in recognition of his outstanding accomplishments and contributions to the Pennsylvania Air National Guard as demonstrated by forty-two years of service to his country, his state, and his community.

At 18, George Bright joined the Army Air Corps and was accepted into the Aviation Cadet Program. He graduated in January 1943 and within six months he was flying combat missions from the Island of Corsica over Italy and France in a P-47D Thunderbolt. By the time World War II ended in Europe on 8 May 1945, the young Lieutenant Bright had completed 59 successful combat missions and earned three Air Medals. He was released to reserve status in November 1945 and continued to fly with the Air Force Reserve until joining the Air National Guard in 1951.

After flying the P-51D Mustang for several years, Colonel Bright attended Air Force Jet Qualification School in 1954. Within a year he was selected for a full time position with the 147th Fighter Squadron, then in the process of converting its propeller driven fighter fleet to the F-84F Thunderstreak jet fighter. With Colonel Bright's flying skills and experience, he was instrumental in a safe, smooth conversion, and later that year the 147th received the Flying Safety Award. His "no nonsense, lead by example" management style was constantly put to task as he was given the charge of several commands over the next 29 years. In 1968, Colonel Bright was called to active duty along with the entire 171st Aeromedical Airlift Group. As the 147th Aeromedical Airlift Squadron Commander, he was entrusted to perform an overnight "stand up" of the C-121 aeromedical evacuation mission out of South Vietnam, earning the unit the Vietnam Service Medal. The 171st was relieved from active duty status in December 1968, and shortly after Colonel Bright was assigned as Group commander. In 1973, the 171st converted its mission to aerial refueling for the Tactical Air Command, flying the KC-97L Stratocruiser. With the new mission Colonel Bright's Air Refueling Group became the lead tanker unit for "Operation Creek Party," forward based in Germany. The 171st was re-designated as a Wing and reassigned to Strategic Air Command in 1975 when the unit converted to the KC-135A Stratotanker. Colonel Bright was then assigned as the Director of Air Operations for the Wing, a command he held until he was appointed as the Wing Vice Commander and Wing Safety Officer. Over the span of 41 years of military flying, Colonel Bright accumulated in excess of 9,000 flying hours in no less than 20 different aircraft types. Colonel Bright's performance was instrumental in the Pennsylvania Air National Guard units he was affiliated with, earning a total of four Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards.

Colonel George T. Bright's forty-two years of dedicated service to his country serve as a shining example for all to emulate. Colonel Bright's distinctive accomplishments reflect great credit upon himself, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Air National Guard and warrant his induction into the Pennsylvania Air National Guard Hall of Fame.