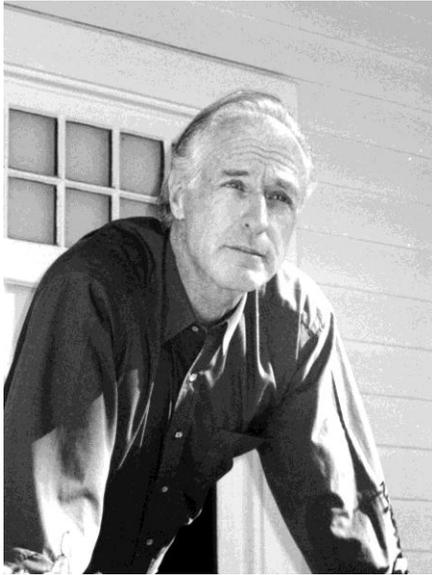


## HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

### Ralph Wetterhahn '59



Ralph Wetterhahn, from Sacred Heart Parish in Cambria Heights, entered Power Memorial Academy in September, 1955. Upon graduation in 1959, Ralph accepted a nomination to the U.S. Air Force Academy, graduating in 1963 with a Bachelor of Science degree. From there, he attended pilot training at Vance AFB in Enid, Oklahoma and then served three combat tours during the Vietnam War with both the Air Force and the Navy. During that period, he completed 180 combat missions, 144 carrier landings and is credited with one confirmed victory, a MiG-21, in aerial combat over North Vietnam.

He has flown over 4,500 hours, primarily in the *F-4 Phantom*, the *A-7 Corsair*, and the *F-15 Eagle*. In addition to the Navy's *Top Gun* award, his citations include the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with 19 Oak Leaf Clusters, the Air Force Commendation Medal and the Navy Achievement Medal. In 1973, he attended Auburn University-

Montgomery and received a Masters in Business Administration. He was promoted early to Major and Colonel and in 1983 completed the Air War College as a distinguished graduate. Following that, he served as Chief of Safety for the Pacific Air Force, Hawaii, achieving the highest safety record in command history during his tenure. He retired in 1992 and entered the University of Southern California's Professional Writing Program

Fluent in Thai, and a qualified aircraft crash investigator, he has traveled to and written extensively about Russia, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines and the South Pacific while in search of aircraft wrecks, our nation's missing-in-action, and the thought-provoking stories that those discoveries revealed. His writing is widely read in magazines such as *Air & Space/Smithsonian*, *Popular Science*, *Leatherneck*, *Military Officer*, and *VFW*, among others. His photographs and documentary efforts air on *NOVA*, *National Geographic*, *The History Channel*, and *Discovery Channel* in the U.S., *Windfall Films* and *Channel 5* in the UK and *Parallax Films* and *Cineflix Productions* in Canada. He has been a contributing editor for *Military Officer Magazine*, doing a bi-monthly travel column and feature stories, including an assignment in Iraq that involved surviving a mortar attack and a winter expedition deep into Russia's former gulag system.

His first novel, *Shadowmakers*, is a mystery-suspense thriller about the search for Vietnam War POW's. His first non-fiction book, *The Last Battle*, about the fate of the final three MIAs from the Vietnam War, garnered the 2002 *Colby Award* for its' significant contribution to the public's understanding of intelligence operations, military history and international affairs. His latest non-fiction book, *The Last Flight of Bomber 31*, is about the Aleutian-Kurile Island bombing campaign of World War II and the discovery in Kamchatka of a Navy bomber and crew missing since 1944. Both of his nonfiction books have resulted in documentaries, and he has also completed the documentaries *Missing in MiG Alley*, about F-86 pilots taken into the Gulag system in Siberia during the Korean War as well as *Dogfight Over Guadalcanal*, about aircraft and pilots in combat in the South Pacific during World War II. His latest documentary, *Air Aces*, is about his role in planning and flying in *Operation Bolo*, during which the USAF downed seven MiGs over Hanoi during the Vietnam War.

Ralph, and his wife Carol, reside in Long Beach, California. They have 3 sons-Scott, Thomas and Michael-and six grandchildren.

Upon looking back, this true life Indiana Jones says, without reservation, that all the positive things that happened in his life find their roots in the books, classrooms, teachers and friends encountered at Power.