

Bill Donovan - A wild & crazy guy!

William (Bill) Donovan, died on May 12, 2018 in Orlando at age 95. Three days before he died Bill received a surprise phone call from a fellow WW2 veteran: former President George H.W. Bush. Donovan was in Bush's naval aviator training group in 1943. A photo of the air team was seen by a member of the hospice team where Bill was last residing. He contacted the Presidential Library and informed them. Shortly thereafter, President Bush called Bill reminiscing with him for a moment & wishing a fellow comrade a final goodbye. A very touching moment to Bill & his family. Born on November 24, 1922 in Brooklyn, NY, Bill joined the Navy at age 19 and wanted to "get in on the action" and become a pilot. He attended the US Naval Air Academy in Pensacola. He served in the Pacific, along with President Bush, and flew Corsairs. After the war, Donovan flew as a test pilot, a Corporate pilot for General Motors, after which he flew for Pan Am in the 1950's. That's where he met & married Betty, now deceased, who was working as a flight attendant. He was involved in the founding of FedEx, and in the 1960's joined Bird & Son then on to Air America flying covert missions in Southeast Asia, being based in Vientiane, Laos. He was a personal friend of General Vang Pao and made many trips to his up- country site & also did many a rescue mission for downed pilots. He was known for his daring and his infectious personality! He had a wide variety of interests and a wider variety of friends thru out the USA and had a knack for meeting famous people in his pilot years – even including Chuck Yeager and John Lear of aircraft fame. With his love of aviation never leaving him, he even started and became the Editor of a Business Aviation Flight Safety magazine devoted to cockpit safety. He eventually retired in Vero Beach and later to Ocala, Fla. in the 1990s. Bill is survived by his son JJ Donovan, a retired pilot for Northwest, and his daughter, Kristina Donovan Carmichael. His ashes were distributed over the waters of Pensacola - where it all began!!!