

**GREATER HUNTSVILLE SECTION MEMBER EARL PEARCE HONORED IN EMERITUS MEMBER CEREMONY**

On 6 February, the AIAA Greater Huntsville Section held a ceremony at the Southern Museum of Flight in Birmingham, AL, to honor Commander Earl H. Pearce, U.S. Navy (retired), in recognition of his attainment of Emeritus Member status. Over 55 AIAA members and guests gathered in a historic aviation venue to laud a man who lived much of that history.

CDR Pearce's contributions to AIAA and aviation span seven decades. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering degree from Auburn University in 1952; his Bachelor of Science in Aeronautical Engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School where he joined the Institute of the Aeronautical Sciences; and an MBA from the University of Alabama in Birmingham, where he was the Fiscal Officer from 1973 to 1980, and was on the faculty of the Mechanical Engineering Department from 1980 to 1990. CDR Pearce served as a fighter pilot in the U.S. Navy, accomplishing over 500 landings on 11 different aircraft carriers. He survived ejection from his F3 Demon fighter after an engine failure.

CDR Pearce is an AIAA Senior Member Emeritus, having been a member for over 50 continuous years. He served as the Supernumerary of the Greater Huntsville Section for many years, routinely making the two-hour drive from his home in Birmingham to Huntsville to attend council meetings. In 2011, the Section named its Professional of the Year Award for him. The Earl Pearce Professional of the Year Award is given annually to a Section member in recognition of extraordinary dedication, creativity, and leadership within the aerospace community.

After an AIAA group tour of the Southern Museum of Flight, including a behind-the-scenes look at the museum's restoration facilities, a luncheon and emeritus recognition ceremony followed. Guests included AIAA Section members; AIAA Student Members from the University of Alabama, Tuskegee University, and Auburn University; members of the Association of Naval Aviators; and friends and family members. The colors of the United States and the State of Alabama were presented by members of the Homewood High School AFJROTC honor guard, followed by the playing of the National Anthem. Past Section Chair Lt Col Ken Philippart, USAF (ret.) served as the master of ceremonies.

CDR Pearce cut the cake using his military dress sword, after which he was honored by various groups. He was presented with an Emeritus Certificate by Section Chair Dr. Kurt Polzin. Past Section Chairs Alan Lowrey, Dr. Arloe Mayne, and Ken Philippart gave him an AIAA Emeritus clock, followed by the presentation of the Section Coin by past recipients of the Pearce Professional of the Year Award, John Dankanich, Richard Jozefiak, and Tim Pickens. The Section's Young Professional members presented him with a framed print of the well-known aviation poem "High Flight" superimposed on a picture of a



Students from Tuskegee University with CDR Pearce



Left: Section Chair Dr. Kurt Polzin present Emeritus Certificate to CDR Pearce. Right: CDR Pearce speaks about his career and AIAA.



soaring gull donated by Lisa Philippart. Finally, on behalf of Air Force Association (AFA) Tennessee Valley Chapter 335, Ken Philippart presented CDR Pearce with an AFA coin along with an Air Force coin depicting an F-4 Phantom, one of the many aircraft types he flew during his military service.

CDR Pearce then spoke about his career, including being an instructor pilot and using afterburner to boost F-4 Phantoms to fly over 100,000 feet in altitude, where the curvature of the earth could be seen, and the value of being an AIAA member. After the event was adjourned attendees visited with CDR Pearce, with many staying well after the conclusion of the event to talk with CDR Pearce and each other.

While this was the first dedicated emeritus recognition ceremony conducted by the Greater Huntsville Section, it was an unqualified success, bringing together multiple generations of AIAA members to share in the Section's proud history and carry on the legacy of excellence. The Greater Huntsville Section intends to institutionalize an emeritus recognition program to ensure that its longest serving members are publicly recognized for their devoted service in a timely manner and to pass on their achievements to the Institute's younger members.



Presentation of the AIAA Emeritus clock.



AIAA Young Professionals presented CDR Pearce with a gift.