



SCHOLARSHIP IN HONOR OF

---

**BRIGADIER GENERAL  
ROBERT F. McDERMOTT**

---

U.S. AIR FORCE

# Brigadier General Robert F. McDermott

---

**R**obert F. McDermott was born in Boston, Massachusetts. He attended the Boston Latin School and Norwich University before entering the U.S. Military Academy. Upon graduating from West Point in January 1943, he left with pilot wings, his wife Alice, and the nickname “McD” to pursue an unusual and illustrious career as an officer, educator, and business leader.

After flight training, he flew his P-38 in 61 combat missions in Europe and served as group operations officer of the 474th Fighter-Bomber Group. Following V.E. Day, he served tours as a staff officer at Eisenhower’s headquarters in Europe and in the Pentagon.

His career as an educator began after his graduation from the Harvard Business School in 1950, with a tour on the faculty of the Department of Social Sciences at West Point. While there, he wrote textbooks on personal finance and insurance which turned out to be the first step towards his ultimate business career.

He left West Point in 1954 to become one of the founding fathers of the U.S. Air Force Academy as Vice Dean of the Faculty. He became Dean of the Faculty in 1956 and was promoted to Brigadier General and Permanent Dean of the Faculty in 1959. With that promotion he became the youngest flag officer of any service on active duty at that time. He served as Dean for the first 10 graduating classes until his retirement from active duty in 1968.

General McDermott’s contributions to the Air Force Academy are summarized in two tributes paid to him at the time of this retirement. The first is from the official Board of Visitor’s Report of that

year, signed by then Chairman, General Emmett “Rosy” O’Donnell:

“As the first Permanent Professor and the first Dean of the Academy, General McDermott can truly be called “the father of the curriculum.” His innovations, to include the whole-man selection system, the enrichment program, the majors-for-all program, the cooperative masters program, the Tenure Associate Professor concept, and the faculty research program all attest to his inventiveness, professionalism and leadership.”

The second tribute is from Professor Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard, one of the nation’s leading authorities on military education, who wrote:

“The innovations which you were so largely responsible for introducing at the Air Force Academy have, as you know, revolutionized service academy instruction in general. Frankly, I don’t think anyone has had the same impact on academy education since Sylvanus Thayer (known as “the father of West Point”). You really brought the Academy curriculum out of his world and into that of the twentieth century.”

Their words were echoed 20 years later by the then Under Secretary of the Air Force, Ann Foreman, who said McDermott indeed deserved the sobriquets as “Father of Modern Military Education” and “Father of the Air Force Academy.”

General McDermott’s career in the business world has been innovative and rewarding as his career in the Air Force. During the 25 years he headed USAA, he led the growth of USAA as a property and casualty insurer with about \$200 million in assets to a financial services conglomerate with

# Brigadier General Robert F. McDermott

---

over \$31 billion in owned and managed assets and #21 on the Fortune Service 500 list of Financial Services companies. He led USAA's successful diversification into such services as banking, credit cards, mutual funds, discount brokerage, and cruise services. In addition to growth, he guided USAA to be a leader in the insurance and service sector.

In 1993, Fortune noted USAA as the top service provider in the insurance industry and USAA was top rated among all U.S. companies in The 100 Best Companies to Work For In America. His leadership in business has led to his induction in the Texas Business Hall of Fame and the American National Business Hall of Fame. It has also been the source of positive articles in periodicals such as Fortune, Forbes, and The Harvard Business Review. After 25 years at the helm of USAA, he became "Chairman Emeritus" in 1993.

His influence has spread far beyond USAA. In San Antonio, he has been President of the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, founder of the Economic Development Foundation, and founder and chairman of the Texas Research and Technology Foundation. He is nationally known for his leadership in children and family issues and automobile safety.

He has often been recognized for his accomplishments. He was selected for West Point's Distinguished Graduate Award and the USAFA Association of Graduates selected him as an honorary graduate. He holds five honorary doctorates.

General McDermott is a member of the board of Trustees of the Falcon Foundation.

---

*Dear General Bellis:*

*The USAA Board of Directors established a Falcon Foundation Scholarship in honor of Brig. General Robert F. McDermott, USAF, (Ret.).*

*General McDermott distinguished himself as a military officer, educator, community leader, and corporate executive. He is a role model for all young people who wish to attend the Air Force Academy and to serve their country as officers in the U.S. Air Force. We wish all recipients the wisdom and will to carry on in the tradition of excellence that has been established by General McDermott.*

*Sincerely,*



*Robert T. Kerres  
General, USAF (Ret.)  
Chairman  
USAA*

---



The Falcon Foundation is a 501(c)(3), non-profit foundation. Its purpose is to provide scholarships to College or Preparatory Schools for motivated young people seeking admission to USAFA and a career in the Air Force.

Although it is a separate organization, the Falcon Foundation works closely with USAFA.