



Bob Vandel

Stepping Down

The Foundation salutes its retiring executive vice president.

Only one person has spent more time with Fight Safety Foundation, advancing its causes and developing new solutions to old problems, than Robert H. Vandel, and that was the Foundation's founder, Jerome Lederer. At the end of December, after more than 20 years with the Foundation, Bob Vandel's time with the organization comes to a kind of end as he retires from his position as executive vice president.

We note his "retirement" in conditional terms. No one with Bob's energy level truly retires, and it seems likely we'll see him in a Foundation role for some time to come.

But going back to August 1988, when John H. Enders, then president and chief executive officer of the Foundation, hired Bob to be director of technical programs, Bob already had a significant career behind him.

Bob's start in aviation was as a U.S. Army helicopter pilot. Two tours flying helicopter gunships in Vietnam in the early and mid-1960s brought him challenges so profound that he received the Distinguished Flying Cross three times and the Air Medal 47 times. Between and after his combat tours, Bob filled a number of roles, teaching flying and serving as a

standardization pilot until the late 1970s, when he assumed command of a major U.S. forces aviation facility in South Korea.

His talent for being able to communicate with people was becoming known, and in the early 1980s, he was education and training management officer for the U.S. Army. Presaging his eventual FSF role, he co-authored a plan for the organization and management of air safety for the Army, providing data, trends and analysis for the Army safety program.

Seeing an opportunity to be the Army's liaison with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Bob moved over to the civil agency and became immersed in air traffic control issues. He designed advanced precision approach procedures and initial traffic alert and collision avoidance system procedures, and provided technical advice to the U.S. representative to the International Civil Aviation Organization while still staying in touch with rotary-wing issues.

He stayed in the FAA liaison position until that fateful phone call in 1988 from Jack Enders. Bob retired from his military career to come to the Foundation.

Joining the Foundation widened Bob's scope to big-vision issues at a time when safety

advances were maturing but needed high-level coordination to come to fruition on an operational level, and he excelled in that role.

Here's a partial list of some of the FSF programs he organized and led:

- Safety indicators study.
- Crew-associated accident study.
- Flight operational quality assurance (FOQA) program, creating a template for airlines to establish their own FOQA programs.
- Wind shear training application study, creating training and techniques for aircrews to use to handle wind shear events.
- Controlled flight into terrain (CFIT) accident reduction study, developing training and procedures to reduce what then was the most deadly cause of aircraft accidents.
- Approach and landing accident reduction (ALAR) study, developing the tool kit that is helping pilots worldwide avoid this most common of accidents.
- Continuing airworthiness risk evaluation study.
- Fatigue in corporate aviation operations study, establishing an industry standard for managing fatigue.
- Co-chairman of an international working group that defined crewing parameters for the safe introduction of ultra-long-range aircraft operations.
- Co-chairman of the ground accident reduction effort.
- International aviation safety workshops, conferences and seminars.

When James M. Burin joined the Foundation in 1999 as director of technical programs, Bob became FSF's executive vice president. Among the important programs with which he has been associated in that position were those that spread both the CFIT and ALAR tool kits around the world.

Lately, after a protracted development period, the FSF FOQA program for corporate operators began to bear fruit and now is rapidly expanding as more and more operators seek to add new levels of risk-reduction to their programs while benefiting from the insight flowing from the analysis of their FOQA data aggregated with other participating firms.

Serving for six years with Jack Enders, Bob then worked under Stuart Matthews for 12 years before William R. Voss took the FSF helm a little more than two years ago.

The time spent working with the Foundation team and all the people in the aviation industry who support FSF efforts made an impression on Bob. "Shortly after I came to the Foundation, I was talking with [a safety colleague]. He told me that I had the best job in aviation," Bob said this past October at the International Air Safety Seminar (IASS).

"I have always remembered that comment, and I have come to agree very much with his assessment, with one caveat. It is not the job that is so great. It is the people that you get to work with ... people who are very successful in their jobs, who are totally consumed by their individual jobs but who find the time to volunteer their individual expertise to the Foundation in the pursuit of improved safety."

Don Bateman, corporate fellow-chief engineer, flight safety technologies, Honeywell Aerospace, and inventor of the Ground-Proximity Warning System (GPWS) and Enhanced GPWS, wrote this to Bob: "You have been the driving force for the FSF and improving safety for all of us. I know that flight safety people like you are very exceptional and are always needed."

In closing his remarks at an IASS ceremony honoring Bob for his service, he shared with colleagues his appreciation for his time at the Foundation, "for allowing me to work on my passion for the last 20 years. I believe we have had a wonderful relationship and accomplished much along the way.

"As I leave, I see the Foundation in a strong position with excellent leadership under Bill Voss and with a great staff. With each of you helping where you can and with the expertise you have, the Foundation can move to the next level." ➤

Bob received a citation honoring his service from Bill Voss at the most recent IASS.

