

**Mr. William O. Troetschel
Inducted 2004**



Mr. William O. “Bill” Troetschel was born on 15 July 1922 in Chicago, Illinois. He completed two years of college-level engineering studies before enlisting in the US Navy during World War II. The Navy sent him to Corpus Christi, Texas, for radar training and to the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, DC, for electronic countermeasures training. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve just prior to being recalled to active duty for the Korean conflict.

During 1953-1955, he attended the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT). Before graduating from AFIT with an engineering degree in August 1955, he spent one month at White Sands Proving Ground, New Mexico, collecting information for a report on the status of U.S. missile efforts. On his return to the classroom, Troetschel told his AFIT advisor that he wanted to help the Air Force get to the moon. Dubbed “Captain Space Cadet” by the advisor and fellow students, Troetschel began searching through organizations at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, for a space-oriented effort. He eventually found Major Quanten “Q” Riepe and Captain James Coolbaugh, the first two people in the infant WS-117L satellite program office.

Needing someone with a strong background in electronics, Major Riepe personally selected Captain Troetschel as the third member of the Air Force satellite team. The original imaging reconnaissance satellite concept required good communications for control of the satellite as well as for transmission to Earth of 5-6 megacycle data from the proposed on-orbit data storage subsystem. Captain Troetschel convinced Rome Air Development Center (RADC) and the Air Force Cambridge Research Center (AFCRC) to fund research and system-design work to satisfy WS-117L communication requirements. In addition to overseeing that aspect of the program, he was project officer for the electronic reconnaissance subsystem.

When the satellite office transferred from Wright-Patterson AFB to the West Coast under General Bernard Schriever's Western Development Division (WDD) in early 1956, Troetschel continued his oversight of the subsystems for communication, command, and control and for electronic reconnaissance. He oversaw the resolution of orbital tracking problems through the creation of a radar system, helping to site the Annette Island station near Ketchikan, Alaska, and conducting an on-site review for the station at Kaena Point, Hawaii. In 1958, Colonel Fritz Oder assigned him to a new field office in Sunnyvale, California, where he contributed significantly to the establishment of an on-orbit operational control point for the relevant program offices in Los Angeles. The field office soon grew to become the Air Force Satellite Control Facility, with operational responsibility for all Air Force space missions.

After leaving active duty as a major on 5 June 1960, Mr. Troetschel worked another twenty years for Lockheed Corporation on issues associated with satellite tracking, communications, commanding, and controlling. He designed and successfully tested a space-borne burst communications capability. His space-related responsibilities at Lockheed included directing a subcontract with Airborne Instrumentation Laboratories (AIL) in New York, as well as involvement with Reeves Corporation, which supplied the radar equipment for tracking the Agena spacecraft during launch and orbit. Mr. Troetschel died in January 2005.