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*For Immediate Release*

**COLONEL EDWARD T. ROCK (USAF Ret.) TO RECEIVE 2016  
ANNUAL OUTSTANDING AVIATOR AWARD**

**New York, NY – (March 3, 2016)** – This year, The Wings Club Foundation, Inc. and IAWA (International Aviation Women’s Association), will honor Colonel Edward T. Rock (USAF Ret.) with the 2016 annual Outstanding Aviator Award. The presentation of this year’s Award will take place during The Wings Club Foundation’s Annual Meeting, to be held on the evening of Wednesday, March 30, 2016, at The Yale Club in New York City.

Colonel Edward T. Rock began his life-long love affair with aviation, particularly flying, upon his enlisting in the United States Air Force in July, 1950. In March, 1952, Rock was accepted for pilot training in an “experimental” program established by the Air Force.

In September, 1953 he was commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. and awarded his Air Force Pilot Wings. He was assigned to Korea, Okinawa, Formosa (Taiwan), Arizona, Alabama, California, Japan, Nevada, Thailand, Virginia, Kansas and Florida and also served temporary duty in several other countries and states. During these assignments he flew eleven different military aircraft, mostly fighters, including the North American F-80, F-86 and F-100, the Lockheed F-104, The Republic F-105 and the McDonnell Douglas F-4.

He logged more than 4,500 total military flying hours almost all in fighter type aircraft, including 489 hours combat time.

In March, 1965, Rock received a new assignment to the Wild Weasel program to begin in June, 1966. After completing training missions in Wild Weasel (WW) configured F-105F aircraft at a North American Aviation facility located at Long Beach International Airport on June, 19, 1966, he departed for Thailand. He arrived at Korat RTAFB (Royal Thailand Air Force Base) in late June and was reassigned to the 355<sup>th</sup> TFW at Takhli RTAFB. Rock thus became the very first Wild Weasel pilot assigned to Takhli.

The Weasels' mission was to seek out and engage North Vietnamese surface-to-air (SAM) sites and destroy them. Often times, the only way the Weasel pilots could locate a SAM site was to get the North Vietnamese to fire a SAM at them, thus revealing their position. The Wild Weasel missions were amongst the most dangerous sorties of the Vietnam War.

Rock completed his first Weasel combat tour in February, 1967, and returned to the States and an assignment to Headquarters Tactical Air Command, Langley Air Force Base, VA, where he was initially the Chief of The Avionics Branch, Fighter Requirements.

On December 15, 1970, Rock was installed as the Commander of the 561st. On April 1, 1972, Tactical Air Command (TAC) initiated operation Constant Guard and the 561st was the first unit to deploy aircraft to Korat RTAFB in support of the renewed bombing of North Vietnam.

Rock later volunteered to take over the 17th Wild Weasel Squadron, PACAFs only F-105 Wild Weasel unit, upon the request of the 388<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing Commander, then Col. Stanley Umstead, Jr. (later, Lt. Gen.). While at Korat, he was selected for promotion to full Colonel and became the Wing Assistant Deputy Commander for Operations.

In June, 1973, he completed his second Wild Weasel combat tour and was assigned to Eglin AFB, FL, as the Deputy Chief of Staff For Electronic Warfare, Reconnaissance, and Remotely Piloted Vehicles.

Rock retired from the USAF in 1977, and returned to his home-town of Dixon, IL where he was employed primarily as Chief Pilot and Engineering Test Supervisor, Woods Division of Heston Corporation. In 1983, he began working for McDonnell Douglas, St. Louis, MO and remained there as first a Principal Technical Specialist, then went on to become the Manager of Engineering until his retirement in 1997.

Colonel Rock has earned more than fifty military awards and decorations including two Silver Stars, The Legion of Merit, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, and sixteen Air Medals. He has published *First In, Last Out, Stories by The Wild Weasels*, is co-holder of two US patents, and holds a commercial single and multi-engine pilots license.

Recognizing significant achievements that contribute to the advancement of aeronautics and aviation, The Wings Club Foundation recognizes and honors people throughout the year with the Distinguished Achievement Award, Distinguished Scholar Awards and the Outstanding Aviator Award.

The Wings Club Foundation's Outstanding Aviator Award has been presented annually since 2010. The first recipients honored were the Tuskegee Airmen, followed by the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), the Doolittle Raiders, Patty Wagstaff, Robert A. "Bob" Hoover and Suzanna Darcy-Hennemann.

Founded in 1988, the International Aviation Women's Association (IAWA) brings together women of achievement in the aviation industry and promotes their advancement internationally through the establishment of a worldwide network of aviation professional contacts. IAWA is an international organization for women who hold senior positions in the aviation and aerospace industry including airline, airport, finance, insurance, law, manufacturing, operations, suppliers and government.

If you are interested in attending this year's presentation of the award to Colonel T. Edward Rock and would also like to attend the Annual Meeting, please RSVP to Lea MacDougall at (212) 867-1770 or email [wingsclub@aol.com](mailto:wingsclub@aol.com). For more information on The Wings Club visit [www.wingsclub.org](http://www.wingsclub.org).

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