



CAPTAIN

BRUCE McCANDLESS II '58, USN (RET.)

“I am deeply moved by my classmates’ efforts in nominating me and advancing my nomination for the Distinguished Graduate Award.”

Captain Bruce McCandless II '58, USN (Ret.), the first human to fly untethered in space, led the way to on-orbit servicing of satellites such as the Solar Maximum Mission, the Hubble Space Telescope and, ultimately, the International Space Station.

McCandless was born in Boston to a well-known Navy family. Two ships, BRADLEY and MCCANDLESS, are named in honor of his grandfathers and father. The third generation to attend the Naval Academy, he graduated at the top of his class academically.

He served in Fighter Squadron 102 from 1960 to 1964 in three deployments with the Sixth Fleet, including the Cuban Missile Crisis naval blockade, during which he flew night missions off Cuba to protect U.S. efforts to verify the presence of Soviet long-range missiles.

Captain McCandless earned a master's in electrical engineering from Stanford, where his doctoral work ended with his selection as an astronaut in 1966. Captain McCandless provided ground support to APOLLO missions 10, 11 and 14. For APOLLO 11, he was given the critical task of controlling the communications voice link between Mission Control and the astronauts during Buzz Aldrin's and Neil Armstrong's exploration of the lunar surface.

Captain McCandless made his historic space flight as a mission specialist on CHALLENGER STS 41-B in February 1984,

during which he made the first untethered solo flight. This earned him the Department of Defense Superior Service Medal and the NASA Exceptional Engineering Achievement Award. In 1985, he received the National Aeronautic Association Collier Trophy and the first Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Trophy. He was inducted into the NASA Astronaut Hall of Fame in 2005.

He served a leadership role in the design and development of the Hubble Space Telescope and was a member of the space shuttle crew that deployed the telescope into orbit in 1990. Captain McCandless also holds a patent for a “drop-proof” tool tethering system still used in space today. After a 32-year career with the Navy and NASA, he worked in the aerospace industry, retiring from Lockheed Martin in 2005. A lifetime member of the Alumni Association, his support of the Academy continues with his recent submittal of an unsolicited proposal to the Academic Dean for a midshipmen project to design, build and operate a remotely operated underwater vehicle as part of a national competition among universities. Captain McCandless is providing mentoring and advising services pro bono for the duration of the project.

Captain McCandless now lives in Conifer, CO. He and his wife, Bernice, have two children and two grandchildren.