



Dale Bernell Atkinson

July 23, 1935 - November 19, 2023

Dale Bernell Atkinson, 88 of Mooresville, passed away on Sunday, November 19, 2023.

He was born on July 23, 1935, in Sabetha, Kansas to the late Lloyd and Hazel (Tobie) Atkinson. He was preceded by his beloved wife, of 60 years, Carol Atkinson. He is survived by his brother John (Elizabeth) Atkinson; children, Doug (Laura) Atkinson, Lisa Kloss, Laura (Scott) Ballenger; grandchildren, Heather Atkinson, Shannon (Ray) Kopchinski, Dillon Krupka, Hayley Atkinson; and great grandsons, Nathan Kloss, and Kaleb Kerr.

Dale began his career as a US Air Force Airman working as an Aircraft Mechanic primarily on the Boeing B-47 Bomber. Upon completion of his military service, he returned home where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Aeronautical Engineering from the University of Kansas.

He began his engineering career at the Air Force Flight Dynamics laboratory at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. An early assignment sent him to Southeast Asia with a team to determine why the Air Force was losing so many aircraft and pilots to enemy fire. When he returned, he established the Air Force Combat Survivability Program based on the results of the in-field surveys he conducted. Dale was appointed Chief of the newly established Survivability/Vulnerability Branch and directed the Air Force Survivability R&D

Program and laboratory systems support efforts. This began an over 60-year career as a pioneer in the establishment of aircraft combat survivability as an aircraft design discipline, resulting in saving the lives of countless pilots and improving aircraft combat mission capabilities.

In 1973 Dale accepted a position at the Naval Weapons Center in China Lake, CA, where he helped establish the Survivability and Lethality Division and was appointed the Associate Division Head. His support of the Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) resulted in a move to Washington D.C. where he was appointed Head of the Combat Survivability Office.

His last DOD assignment was as the first Staff Specialist for Survivability and Battle Damage Repair (BDR) for Tactical Systems within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition in the Pentagon. He was responsible for overseeing the survivability programs for tactical systems and providing a formal evaluation of the survivability of major weapons systems across all services.

Dale retired from the Office of the Secretary of Defense in 1992 after 34 years of government service. He was one of the founders of the aircraft survivability design discipline and was a nationally recognized expert on the subject.

Dale worked for many years as a consultant for the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), the Survivability/Vulnerability Information Analysis Center (SURVIAC), and the Joint Aircraft Survivability Program (JASP) and served as an editor for the Aircraft Survivability Journal. His expertise has directly impacted multiple USAF, USN and USMC aircraft including the A-10, F-15, F-18, V-22, F-35 and others.

He received a multitude of awards including the prestigious National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) Arthur Stein Award for outstanding contributions in Live Fire Test and Evaluation (LFT&E) and the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) Survivability Award. In addition, the NDIA Air Combat Survivability Lifetime Achievement Award and the Naval Air Weapons Station Live Fire Test Range were named in his honor.

Dale was a loving husband and father and inspired us with honesty, wisdom, and a steadfast presence in our lives. He was the epitome of an honorable man and unwavering family love. Dale was married to the love of his life for nearly 60 years and was a cherished Father, Father-in-law, Uncle, Grandfather, and Great Grandfather, making time for each of us. Always a humble man, despite his many accomplishments, he focused on his family and was proud and supportive in all they did.

Funeral services will be held at 11:00 AM, Saturday, December 2, 2023, at the chapel of Cavin-Cook Funeral Home with full military honors.

The family will receive friends at Cavin-Cook Funeral Home and on Saturday, December 2nd, prior to the service from 10:00 - 11:00 AM at the funeral home. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research.

Cavin-Cook Funeral Home, Mooresville is proudly serving the Atkinson family. Condolences may be made to the family at www.cavin-cook.com.

Cemetery Details

Glenwood Memorial Park

273 Glenwood Drive
Mooresville, NC 28115

Previous Events

Receiving Friends

DEC 2. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Cavin-Cook Funeral Home
494 E. Plaza Drive
Mooresville, NC 28115

Funeral Service

DEC 2. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Cavin-Cook Chapel
494 E. Plaza Drive
Mooresville, NC 28115

Tribute Wall



“ *Cavin-Cook Funeral Home & Crematory created a Webcast in memory of Dale Bernell Atkinson*



Cavin-Cook Funeral Home & Crematory - December 02, 2023 at 09:00 AM

DH

“ *I've known Dale since the early 1970's from his work on aircraft survivability: he was a truly decent human being and a joy to work with. We all miss him, and I especially miss the over 50 years of "Dale Mail" he'd send out almost every day. - Dave Hall*

Dave Hall - March 05, 2024 at 01:34 PM

DL

“ *Dale was a founding father of modern aircraft combat survivability. Forever a gentleman and scholar Dale's influence is broad and deep, impacting every aspect of aircraft combat survivability and generations of practitioners in the military, government, industry and academia. We will miss him dearly and strive to live up to his legacy providing the very best, combat survivable aircraft for our nation's warfighter.*

*Dennis Lindell
Joint Aircraft Survivability Program.*

Dennis Lindell - December 01, 2023 at 02:12 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Dale Bernell Atkinson.*



November 30, 2023 at 08:59 PM



“ *Love, Gail planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dale Bernell Atkinson.*

Love, Gail - November 30, 2023 at 08:59 PM



“ *Be My Love Bouquet with Red Roses was purchased for the family of Dale Bernell Atkinson.*



November 30, 2023 at 12:51 PM



“ *Bob amd Coleen Coale planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dale Bernell Atkinson.*

Bob amd Coleen Coale - November 30, 2023 at 12:51 PM



“ *Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of Dale Bernell Atkinson.*



November 30, 2023 at 09:31 AM



“ *Love Jeff, Denise, Jacob and Alyssa planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dale Bernell Atkinson.*

Love Jeff, Denise, Jacob and Alyssa - November 30, 2023 at 09:31 AM



“ *Doug, Lisa n Laura I am deeply and sincerely sorry for the loss of your amazing father.*

Darlene U - November 30, 2023 at 08:18 AM



“ *Magnificent Life Spray was purchased for the family of Dale Bernell Atkinson.*



November 29, 2023 at 01:05 PM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Dale Bernell Atkinson.*



November 27, 2023 at 11:15 PM



“ *I truly miss Dale - it has been weeks since I got one of his 'Dalemails' and I think about him every day since. He was a founding member of the engineers that incorporated survivability into combat aircraft as a result of the losses in Vietnam. Since then Dale was continual champion of this design discipline - countless aviators literally owe their lives to Dale. Regards, Bart*

Bart - November 27, 2023 at 07:25 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Dale Bernell Atkinson.*



November 27, 2023 at 02:51 PM