

Donnie Cochran

July 6, 1954 – present

Guardianship



“I have not crashed any airplanes, none of my pilots have crashed an airplane, none of my pilots have been hurt.”

Captain Donnie Cochran

Captain Donnie Cochran, a distinguished Savannah State University Alum, was the first African American pilot with the United States Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron (aka Blue Angels). Flying three positions in the six position formation, he became Commanding Officer and Flight Leader. He flew 2,200 hours in more than 300 air shows during his service with the Blue Angels in addition to his 888 accident-free day and night landings in service as a fighter pilot from the decks of aircraft carriers, leading the best rated squadron in the Pacific Fleet in 1994.

Donnie L. Cochran was born and raised on a farm in rural Georgia where he attributes the inspiration of his foundational work ethic to his parents. He earned a bachelor's degree in Engineering from Savannah State University in 1976.

His commitment to his country, his squadron and himself is evident in his decisions about the great responsibility he had as a pilot. He was selected to fly with the Blue Angels after an airshow accident, killing one pilot and causing another to eject from his plane. The responsibility of carrying that knowledge was taken with the utmost seriousness as he became a member of the Blue Angels squadron. His implementation

of **super skill of guardianship** was evident throughout his service career and the numbers speak for themselves. At the end of his career, he decided it was time for him to stop for the safety of the squadron as well as for himself. After his military service, he became a flight supervisor for United Parcel Service (UPS) and a Manager of Aviation for the Coca-Cola Company for 10 years. Now, he is a motivational speaker for both military and civilian audiences.

Captain Cochran has received multiple awards for his service and character including a Distinguished Graduate Award from Savannah State University, the 1989 Black Engineer of the Year Award, two (2) Legion of Merit Medals, three (3) Meritorius Medals, the Navy Commendation Medal, and the Air Medal among many others. He was inducted into the Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame, as well as the Georgia Aviation Hall of Fame.

Captain Donnie Cochran's A4 Skyhawk stands in front of the SSU ROTC building as a monument to his roles with the Flying Angels. He continues to inspire current and future students through his engagement with Savannah State University.

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How are you showing guardianship through your work at SSU in preparation for your future?