

# William Robinson

## Hall of Fame Inductee

**“Bill Robinson was a gentleman ... He was fair, honest and my mentor. He always had time for people.”**

By Tanekwa Bournes

William Robinson, a former director of the Market Research and Analysis office, was inducted into the Defense Logistics Agency Energy Hall of Fame for his leadership and cost savings practices.

He began his career with the organization in 1971 and spanned 30 years, ending Aug. 3, 2001.

Before becoming a DLA Energy team member, Robinson worked as a contract administrator for the Defense Contract Administration Services Region in Chicago. After three years with the organization, he decided to change careers and became a contract specialist purchasing bunker fuel for ships with DLA Energy.

Along the way, he has worn many hats within the organization.

“I was the deputy program manager in the

Strategic Petroleum Reserve office where I managed [DLA Energy’s] support to the Department of Energy,” Robinson said. “I was the deputy director of Supply Operations for twelve years and held a few other positions before becoming the deputy director of [the organization] near the end of my career.”

Robinson was instrumental in the conversion of JP4 fuel stocks to JP8. The conversion program required drawing down JP4 inventories so storage tanks could accept JP8, and modification of acquisition programs to prepare and acquire JP8 fuel.

“The initial planning with the Air Force began toward the end of Army Brig. Gen. James Bickford’s command and the conversion took place during Army Brig. Gen. Stephen Bliss’s command,” he said.

Robinson explained that the biggest challenge was managing the conflicting expectations. The military services wanted the conversion to go as quickly as possible for safety reasons, and small refiners wanted the conversion to go as slowly as possible because many of them could not make JP8 and would possibly go out of business.

The staggered/phased-in approach also involved coordination between DLA and the military services, as well as meetings with members of Congress before and during the conversion he said. The conversion began overseas and finally migrated to the

continental U.S.

“I don’t like talking on the telephone, so I spent a lot of time working issues with people face-to-face,” he said.

While serving as the deputy director of Supply Operations in 1991, Robinson was named one of ‘Ten Outstanding DLA Employees of the Year’ and was nominated by Deputy Commander Thomas Boland for several issues he resolved.

He assisted in the reduction of inventories by DLA Energy as directed by the Department of Defense. Robinson developed the plan in order to minimize the impact on the wholesale fuel distribution network and was able to enlist the support of the fuels community for the drawdown plan. This resulted in the drawdown being completed ahead of schedule and causing no interruption in fuel support to the military services.

Robinson’s other efforts included his assistance during the Middle East crisis and providing guidance and support for the development of tools estimated to result in \$3 million in annual savings. During the first Gulf War, he led an effort to work with all DLA Energy’s worldwide suppliers to acquire fuel stocks to support U.S. and coalition forces during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Forces deploying from the east and west coasts along with support requirements throughout Europe, the



Pacific and within the Mideast area itself required large amounts of fuel.

This is considered to be one of the largest and most historic fuel support missions accomplished by DLA Energy.

“I always tried to do what I thought was best for the organization and the taxpayer which was also one of my biggest challenges,” Robinson said.

He explained that although the organization is highly visible because it spends so much money, operates in an industry that touches everyone, is affected by political events around the world and handles commodities that are environmentally sensitive, outside the organization very few people understand what it does and how it does it.

“I spent a lot of time explaining our business processes and demonstrating our performance against industry benchmarks so that we earned the trust and respect of those we served and those with whom we did business,” he said.

Marc McConahy, chief of Customer Relationship Management, who worked for and with Robinson since 1988 said, “Bill Robinson was a gentleman, first and foremost. He was fair, honest and my mentor. He always had time for people and always put the needs of our military and civilian customers first.”

Robinson added that he always tried to set an example for those who worked for him and be the guy who worked the hardest and smartest.

These qualities were on display when he received buy-in by senior management and employees during the restructuring of the organization. In 1995, DLA put out a directive for DLA Energy to review its business practices as part of a cost savings initiative.

Robinson led a team effort which involved taking the agency from a “stove-piped” element into the commodity business unit format which remains today. His concept involved combining all business disciplines into business units per the specific areas.

Reflecting on his time at DLA, Robinson said that he was extremely lucky to work in an organization that was a key link in a fascinating niche of defense logistics.

“People in DLA Energy, the military services and the energy industries have an incredible depth of talent and experience,” he said. “My peers helped me to have confidence in myself and them because together we brought to bear whatever we needed to solve the challenges the organization faced.” 



William Robinson, DLA Energy Hall of Fame Inductee, talks to DLA Energy Deputy Commander George Atwood after the hall of fame ceremony May 19 at the McNamara Headquarters Complex, Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Photo by Tanekwa Bournes



Robinson poses for a photograph with DLA Energy coworkers. While with the organization, he served as the deputy commander and retired in 2001. Courtesy photo