

## 1998 Eagles – Flying Wing

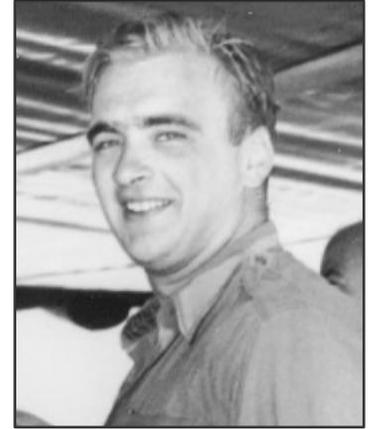
### ***Fred C. Bretcher***

Fred Bretcher enlisted in the Army Air Corps in May 1941 as a Flying Cadet. He was in the first class to graduate from flight training (42A) after Pearl Harbor. Of the class of approximately 200, Bretcher was one of only three graduates assigned to the Wright Field Flight Section and became part of the first class of the "Test Pilot School." Most of the 'education' was by flying as co-pilot with experienced pilots. He flew everything the Army Air Corps had, including the P-36, B-17, B- 24, C-54 and XB-19. While on temporary duty from Wright Field, Bretcher flew P-40, P-47 and P-51 combat missions in the European Theater of Operations and visited the Royal Air Force to fly the Spitfire, Tempest and Lancaster.

Upon his return to Wright Field in 1944, Bretcher was assigned to the B-29 and then the B-32 program. He was promoted at that time to major and became chief of the Bomber Flight Test Section. He also did test work at Muroc Army Airfield, now known as Edwards AFB. While there, he had his first experience flying the jet powered YP-59, YP-80A and the N9-M Flying Wing.

Bretcher joined Northrop as a test pilot in 1946 and built his experience in the cockpit of the N9-M. He flew as co-pilot on the first flight of the XB-35, as pilot or co-pilot on the next two B- 35s, as co-pilot on the first flight of the YB-49 and pilot of the first flight of the YRB-49. He flew the first flight and Phase I tests of the XF-89 and was co-pilot on the first flights of the N-23 and the YC- 125.

In 1950, he transferred to Holloman AFB, NM., to head the flight portion of the Snark Missile program. He retired from Northrop in 1952. He was honored as an Eagle in 1998. Bretcher passed in 2003.



### ***Brig Gen Robert L. "Bob" Cardenas, USAF (ret.)***

Bob Cardenas began his military career as a Private in the Army Coast Artillery. He then became a pilot as a Cadet in the Army Air Corps. He was commissioned in July 1941 and flew B-24 bombers in World War II. He was shot down over Germany, but escaped into Switzerland and then into France.

After returning home to the United States, he graduated from the Flight Performance School in 1945. In 1947, Cardenas was a key member of the X-1 supersonic test project, as the Operations Officer and pilot of the B-29 that launched the X-1 into supersonic flight for the first time. In 1948, he was assigned as Officer in Charge of Flight Test Division projects at Muroc Army Airfield. Replacing Captain Glen Edwards, he was the chief Air Force test pilot of the YB-49 Flying Wing program and conducted performance and stability testing. In 1949, Cardenas flew the YB-49 from Muroc to Andrews AFB setting a transcontinental record of four hours, 20 minutes covering 2,258 miles at a speed of 511.2 mph.

During the Korean War, Cardenas was at Wright Field and Edwards AFB testing new jet fighters and bombers. He was then Commander of the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing on Okinawa during the Gulf of Tonkin crisis and flew the F-105 over Southeast Asia. He returned stateside to command the 835th Air Division at McConnell AFB, Kansas, training F-105 crews for combat. He was honored as an Eagle in 1994, 1995, 1997 and 1998.



***Col Richard S. "Rick" Couch USAF(Ret.)***

Rick Couch graduated from Texas A&M with a degree in Mechanical Engineering and entered the Air Force in 1968. He received his wings in 1969 and was assigned to the 20th Military Airlift Squadron in Dover, Del., flying the C-141. In 1972, as part of the 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron, he flew 199 combat missions in Southeast Asia as a forward air controller in an OV-10.

After graduation from the Air Force Test Pilot School in Class 75A, Couch was assigned to the 4950th Test Wing at Wright- Patterson AFB, where he flew test missions developing the all-weather landing system for the C-141, and other research and development projects in the C-141 and T-37. In 1978, he returned to Edwards AFB as a Test Pilot School instructor.

In 1985, Couch became the first commander of the B-2 Combined Test Force at Edwards AFB. He oversaw development of the B-2 Test Support Facility and building of a test force of over 1,200 persons. Couch was the Air Force pilot on the B-2's first flight, and he participated in all early development activities of the Stealth Bomber. He was later assigned as the Test Wing Vice Commander at Edwards AFB, then as Deputy Director of the Tri- Service Standoff Attack Missile System Program Office at Wright - Patterson.

After Air Force retirement in 1992, Couch joined Martin Marietta, now Lockheed Martin, where he manages a team that designs, develops and produces support equipment and training systems for the F-16 and F-2 in Fort Worth, Texas. He was honored as an Eagle in 1998.



***Lt Col Bruce J. Hinds, USAF (Ret.)***

Bruce Hinds graduated from the Air Force Academy with a Bachelor's Degree in Metallurgy in 1961 and graduated from the USAF Aerospace Research Pilot School in 1968.

He had four tours of duty as a test pilot and test manager at Edwards AFB from 1967 to 1982. As Deputy for Strategic Systems Test, he was instrumental in integrating ALCM and B-52 improvements, B-1 development and other strategic test programs. Hinds served as director of the KC-10 Combined Test Force, chief of the Bomber-Transport-VSTOL Branch, Operations Officer and Director of the C-5 Joint Test Force, and Operations Officer of the AWACS Joint Test Force.

Hinds was a project pilot on many systems, including the A-3 barrier tests, U-2 modifications, STOL assault landing tests, receiver air refueling tests, record airdrop testing on C-130s and C-5s and radar programs on the C-5, B-52 and FB-111 aircraft.

In 1982, he retired as a Colonel Selectee and was hired by Northrop as a Senior Technical Specialist on a classified program. As the B-2 program was declassified, his real title was revealed as B-2 Chief Test Pilot. He flew the first flight of the B-2 and the initial envelope expansion flights clearing the airplane for further testing. He flew the first low speed, high altitude and high Mach number flights.

In 1995 Hinds retired from Northrop. He consults on Unmanned Aerospace Vehicles for the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency, flies as a "Vectorvision" Learjet pilot for airborne photography, and is a technical advisor to the motion picture industry. He was honored as an Eagle in 1998.



***John Myers***

John Myers aviation career began while he was a student at Stanford in the early 1930s. A friend told him how to fly, and Myers made his first flight in a two cylinder, single- place Cycloplane. Myers then bought and rebuilt an old biplane for his personal use. After graduation, Myers entered Harvard Law School and went on to head a firm specializing in entertainment law. World War II brought him out of the conference room and back into the cockpit, this time ferrying Hudson bombers for Lockheed and flight-testing company aircraft, such as the P-38.

In 1941, he joined Northrop as Chief Test Pilot. He performed early development testing on the P-61 and spent six months in the South Pacific assisting in the formation of night fighter squadrons. Myers flight-tested all of the early prototypes of Northrop's flying Wing configurations. In 1942, he piloted the first flight of the N- 9M. The following year he flew the first flight of the XP-59 tailless fighter, and piloted the first glide flight of the MX-334. Following his illustrious test pilot career, Myers became a Senior Vice President and Director at Northrop. In 1955, he became Chairman and principle stockholder of Pacific Airmotive Corporation. He formed Airflite, a modern FBO at Long Beach Airport. He was honored as an Eagle in 1998. He passed away February 10, 2008.



***Col Russell E. "Russ" Schlee, USAF(Ret.)***

Russ Schlee earned a football scholarship to Washington State College, but in 1940, when the Civilian Pilot Training Program offered him a chance to fly, he took it. As an apprentice aircraft mechanic, he earned room, board and 15 minutes of flight time a day. During 1941, as an aviation cadet, Schlee requested fighter assignment. But the Air Corps had other plans: He flew B-17s in the 305<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group over Europe during World War II.

While in England, he flew RAF fighters and bombers and a captured FW-190 German Fighter. He became interested in test flying and in 1947 graduated from the Flight Performance School at Wright Field. He became Chief of Bomber Flight Test Pilots and later Chief of Fighter Flight Test. A year after getting into fighters, a shortage of qualified pilots required his return to bombers. After the YB-49 Flying Wing crash that killed test pilot Glen Edwards, Schlee took over the program for the Air Force.

In 1949 and 1950, Schlee conducted 16 test flights in the YB-49, gaining 45 hours of flying time. The program ended when the nose wheel collapsed during a high speed taxi test and the YB- 49 broke in half and burned.

After eight years of flight test, Schlee went to the Strategic Air Command, where he served first as aide to SAC. He was honored as an Eagle in 1998.



**Max R. Stanley**

Max Stanley's first flying job was with Lockheed as a co-pilot ferrying Hudson Bombers from Burbank to the East Coast where they were surface-shipped to England. He was later loaned to Pan American and spent two years ferrying twin-engine aircraft from Miami to the British in Africa, Egypt and India. When Pan Am ended its ferrying operation, Max worked as a captain for United Airlines flying cargo/passenger aircraft from San Francisco to Australia.

In 1943, Stanley began work at Northrop as an experimental test pilot. He flew the first flights of all models of the P-61 Black Widow except the initial XP-61, and first flights of Northrop's F-15, Tri-motor Pioneer and Tri-motor C-125. He also participated in F-89 and T-38 flight test programs. His most significant assignment was with the Northrop Flying Wings. After many flights in the N-9M, one-third scale model of the flying wing bombers then under construction, he was selected Chief Test Pilot for the first flight of the XB-35 Flying Wing and the Contractor Phase I test program. The XB-35 was converted to the YB-49 by replacing the four piston engines with eight jet engines. He was chosen as Chief Pilot for the YB-49 program, including the first flight in 1947.

As the flying wing program wound down, Stanley was assigned to the SM-62 Snark missile program as Chief Pilot of the many aircraft used in its development and testing. After a 28-year career at Northrop, Stanley is known as the "Dean of Northrop Test Pilots". He was a Fellow in the Society of Experimental Test Pilots and an Honoree of the Lancaster Aerospace Walk of Honor. He was honored as an Eagle in 1994, 1996 and 1998. Stanley passed away in 1999.



**Charles "Chuck" Tucker**

Having learned to fly in the Civil Pilot Training Program while a student at Pasadena Junior College, Chuck Tucker joined the Army Air Corps as a Flying Cadet in June 1941. He graduated as a second lieutenant in 1942 and was assigned to fly a C-47 transport in convoy to China, via South America, the South Atlantic, Africa and India.

On arriving in China, Tucker met the legendary Gen Claire Chennault and made a convincing case for transfer to fighters. Flying a P-40, Tucker shot down four Japanese fighters before returning to the U.S. in 1943. The following year he flew his first jet, the P-59, and later was made Operations Officer of the 412<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, the first unit to be equipped with Lockheed P-80 jets.

Leaving the military in 1946, Tucker entered air racing with two surplus P-63s, and worked as a production test pilot for Lockheed, flying P-80s. In 1947, Tucker went to Northrop where he flew the X-4 research plan in 1948. He also flew the company's N-9M and the YB-49, which required spinning the aircraft during stall tests.

During a low altitude, high-speed pass in the XF-89, the aircraft disintegrated due to tail flutter, and pilot Tucker was hurled out, suffering major injuries. After his recovery, he flew B-29s and B-45s in tests of a new guidance system developed for the Snark missile.

Tucker returned to Lockheed to fly the XF-104 and the T2V Navy trainer. He ended his test-flying career in 1957 and joined the Lockheed Executive Flying Department, retiring from the company in 1975. He was honored as an Eagle in 1998.

