

## 1993 Eagles – First Gathering of Eagles

### **Robert A. “Bob” Hoover**

As an Army Air Corps Spitfire pilot, Bob Hoover was shot down in 1944 on his 59th mission in World War II, and was held a POW by Germany for 15 months. He escaped from the camp two weeks before the war ended, trekked through Germany and hijacked a German aircraft to fly to safety in the Netherlands.

Hoover's accomplishments span over five decades of test and aerobatic flying. He set a coast-to-coast record flying a P-51 Mustang from Los Angeles to Daytona Beach, Fla., was the first pilot to make a dead stick landing in an F-100, and continues to amaze air show crowds around the world.

Hoover conducted flight tests on the P-51 and P-80 and was the first to fly the XFJ-2 Fury jet and the Navy's T-28 trainer. He tested every type of Sabre Series aircraft and set three climb-to-altitude records at the Hanover Air show. He is the only test pilot to have served twice as President of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots.

Hoover's long and distinguished career includes being backup pilot for the X-1 Mach One flight. He flew the F-80 chase plane on the historic day when the sound barrier was finally broken. He was honored as an Eagle in 1993 and 1997.



### **Thomas V. Jones**

Thomas V. Jones began his career as an engineer with Douglas Aircraft Company after graduating magna cum laude from Stanford University in 1942 with a BS degree in engineering.

From 1947 to 1951, he worked with the Brazilian Government as technical advisor to the Brazilian Air Ministry in Rio de Janeiro. Concurrently, he held the post of professor and department head at the Aeronautical Institute of Technology in Brazil.

Later, while on staff of the Rand Corporation, Jones directed and wrote a widely influential logistical study, “Capabilities and Operating Cost of Future Transport Airplanes.”

In 1953, Jones joined Northrop as assistant to the chief engineer, and in 1958 was named senior vice president Development Planning. He was elected President of Northrop Corporation in 1959, CEO in 1960 and chairman of the board in 1963. Under his leadership, Northrop's sales grew from \$263 million in 1959 to \$5.2 billion in 1989. Northrop evolved from being primarily a maker of tactical fighters to a company involved in key national strategic and tactical defense systems. Jones retired from the company in 1990. He was honored as an Eagle in 1993. He passed away in January, 2014.



### **Col William J. “Pete” Knight, USAF (Ret.)**

Pete Knight enlisted in the Air Force in 1951 and received his commission through the aviation cadet program. Within a year of earning his wings, he was selected to fly an F-89 in the Allison Jet Trophy Race, which he won, during the 1954 National Air Show in Dayton, Ohio.

His aspirations set on flight test, Knight earned a bachelors degree in aeronautical engineering and later graduated from the Flight Test Pilot School in 1958 and the Aerospace Research Pilot School in 1964.

Between educational breaks, Knight conducted flight- testing on a variety of aircraft undergoing evaluation and development at Edwards AFB: T-38, F-100, F-101 and the F-104 among others. He was one of six pilots selected for the X-20 Dyna- Soar project.

But it was the rocket-powered X-15 that would bring Knight worldwide recognition. On Oct. 3, 1967, Knight flew the X-15A-2 to a record Mach 6.72, 4,520 mph, which remains the highest speed ever attained in a piloted airplane. Seared by heat, the airplane never flew again. But Knight went on to fly 253 combat missions in the F-100 over Vietnam.

Knight completed his military career as Vice Commander of the Air Force Flight Test Center at Edwards AFB.

Following retirement, Knight pursued his interests in the Antelope Valley community. He became the first directly elected Mayor of Palmdale, CA, and later won election to the State Assembly. He was elected to two terms as a member of the California State Senate. Knight 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 1993 and 1999. He passed away in 2004.



***Anthony W. "Tony" LeVier***

One of aviation's greatest test pilots, Tony LeVier took his first flying lesson in 1928 at the age of 15 and had his commercial license by 1932. In a flying career that spanned over fifty years he was also a flight instructor, charter pilot, barnstormer, and airline pilot. In 1936, he made the first flight in the Mendenhall Special. In 1938, he flew Flagship, the "world's smallest racer," and in 1939, the Schoenfeldt Firecracker, another racer.

LeVier's association with Lockheed Aircraft began in 1941. He conducted extensive developmental test flights on the P-38. He made the first flights on most of the aircraft produced by the "Skunk Works" between 1944 and 1955, including the XP-80A, T-33, XF-90, F-94, XF-104 and the U-2. Other Lockheed products, for which he flew first flights included the Saturn, a light transport and the Constitution, the world's largest transport at the time. Altogether he flew 24,000 flights in 240 aircraft. After ten years as Chief Engineering Test Pilot, he was appointed Lockheed's Director of Flying Operations.

His contributions to aviation are not limited to test flying. He invented the Master Caution Warning Light System, the Automatic Wing Stores Release System, the first practical Afterburner Ignition System, the "Hot Microphone" intercom and conceived the idea of placing the trim switch on the top of the control stick.

Having survived over 100 air accidents and incidents, LeVier was a staunch advocate of flying safety. In 1985, he created SAFE (Safe Action in Flight Emergency) a non-profit program dedicated to training pilots to handle life-threatening situations. 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 1993. Tony LeVier passed away in February 1998.



***Col John Paul Stapp, M.D., Ph.D.***

Col Stapp is known as "The Fastest Man on Earth" for a high-speed, track-mounted rocket sled test, on Dec. 10, 1954, during which he accelerated to a speed of over 632 MPH in 5 seconds and slammed to an abrupt stop in 1.4 seconds. He sustained deceleration forces of over 40 G's and the wind-blast of 1,105 pounds per square foot successfully proving that a pilot could survive ejection from an aircraft at 30,000 feet altitude and near supersonic speeds.

Holding a Masters degree in Zoology and Chemistry, a PhD in Biophysics and an M.D., he is credited among other things, for his lifelong research into crash safety research, for pioneering research on the effects of mechanical crash forces on living tissue and the development of data for human tolerance limits in ejection seats, escape capsules and space flight while conducting aeromedical research to determine the upper limits of human endurance to acceleration and deceleration forces.

He began his military career in 1944 in the Army Medical Corps as a Flight Surgeon. He later went on to found and organize two aeromedical field laboratories for the USAF; one at Edwards AFB and one at Holloman AFB. In 1946, he studied tolerance to crash impacts and sudden decelerations on the rocket test sled designed by the Northrop Corp. serving as his own human volunteer on 29 of the tests. He went on to direct the high altitude balloon tests at Holloman AFB and helped develop medical requirements for Astronaut selection for the Mercury Program.

In 1955, discovering more airmen were dying in auto crashes than in airplane crashes, he went on to found the annual Stapp Car Crash Conference, which is sponsored by the Society of Automotive Engineers. The conference continues as the world's premiere car crash safety organization and is a living memorial to his efforts in crash survival. In 1991, he was awarded the National Medal of Technology by President George Bush for his efforts in crash safety research. He was honored as an Eagle in 1993, 1994 and 1996. Dr. Stapp passed away in 1999.



***Evelyn “Bobbi” Trout***

Born just three years after the Wright Brothers' first flight, Bobbi Trout was 12- years old before she saw her first airplane. Knowing even then that, “someday I had to fly,” she followed her dream and took her first airplane ride at age 16. Five years later she used her savings from running a gas station to pay for flying lessons, soloing in April 1928. Orville Wright signed her FAI license. Later that same year she got her first flying job -demonstrating the Golden Eagle, a plane she also helped to build.

In 1929, Trout's exploits earned her a place in the history books. In January, she set a solo endurance record by staying aloft for over 12 hours. She set five world records in 1929, but it was as one of 20 pilots in the first Women's Transcontinental Air Derby (“Powder Puff Derby”), that she won national attention, along with fellow racers Amelia Earhart and Pancho Barnes. That same year, Trout and Earhart co-founded the women's flying organization later known as the Ninety-Nines.

In 1995, Trout was honored at Burbank Airport where 65 years earlier she had won the women's pylon race on the airport's opening day. In 1996, Trout loaned her FAI pilot's license to the first female Space Shuttle pilot, Lt. Col. Eileen Collins, who carried the document into space. She was honored as an Eagle in 1993. She passed away in 2003.



***Brig Gen Charles E. “Chuck” Yeager, USAF (Ret.)***

Chuck Yeager retired from the Air Force in 1975 after a brilliant 34-year career that took him from obscurity as a mechanic and crew chief to international acclaim as the test pilot who shattered the sound barrier.

Yeager earned his wings in 1943 and was posted to Europe where he flew the P- 51 Mustang. Shot down on his eighth combat mission, he evaded capture in German-occupied France and made his way to Spain with the help of the French Maquis. Returning to England, Yeager won permission from Gen Dwight Eisenhower to return to combat flying. As a result of that decision, Yeager ended his tour with 64 combat missions in which he scored 13 aerial victories, including five enemy aircraft on one mission alone.

Because of his flying skills and intuitive engineering instincts, Yeager was selected in 1947 as Project Pilot on the Bell X- 1 at Muroc Air Base. On Oct. 14, 1947, he flew the X-1 past the so-called sound barrier to become the world's first supersonic pilot. Later he made a ground takeoff in the X-1 to become the first American to do so in a fully rocket-powered aircraft. Over succeeding years, Yeager flew every type of experimental aircraft at Edwards AFB. In 1953, he flew the X-1A to a record 1,650 mph or Mach 2.44. Yeager was honored as an Eagle in 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997.

