

1995 Eagles

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.



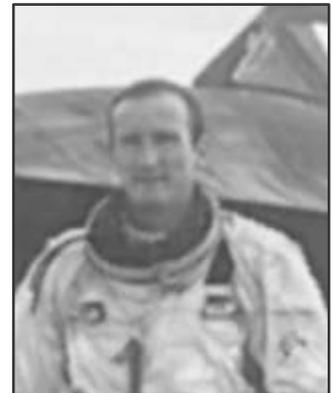
Robert J. "Bob" Gilliland

Bob Gilliland joined the Navy and fought in World War II as a fire control operator in gun turrets aboard the USS North Carolina. After the war, he entered the Naval Academy and graduated in 1949, choosing the Air Force as his new service branch.

After flight training in the T-6 trainers and the F-80, Gilliland was assigned to Europe, where he flew P-47s. During the Korean War, Bob flew combat missions in F-84s and was later stationed in Germany where he flew F-86s.

In 1954, Gilliland left the Air Force and returned to his hometown of Memphis, where he joined the Tennessee Air Guard. There, he flew many aircraft, including the F-104. He was hired by Lockheed in 1960 on the F-104G program and moved to Italy in 1962 as the resident Lockheed test pilot at the Fiat Company. He returned to the Advanced Development Projects (Skunk Works) in 1963 as a test pilot on the A-11 (YF-12A) project.

Designated Project Test Pilot on the SR-71, Gilliland made its first flight on Dec. 22, 1964. Departing from Lockheed's Palmdale facility, the SR-71 Blackbird flew that day for over an hour, reaching speed in excess of 1,000 mph. Bob remained with the SR-71 development program, testing virtually all of the aircraft's systems, until its conclusion. Gilliland was the only pilot to fly all models of the YF-12A and the SR-71. He flew the first flights not only on the SR-71A, but also the SR-71B and the SR-71C. He was honored as an Eagle in 1995.



J.J. Quinn

J.J. Quinn graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a bachelors in aeronautics in 1942, and received an ROTC commission into the Signal Corps. Having been a Civil Pilot trainee, he received a transfer to the Air Corps and joined the nation's first jet effort in 1945 in propulsion engineering and flying the YP-59.

Although he volunteered for the first U.S. jet fighter group, the 412th, World War II ended before his arrival. During his Air Corps service, Quinn flew every model of the P-38, P-47D and N, P- 51D, H and K, the YP-59 and P-61 on equipment test flights. He also flew the A-20, SBD and SB2C.

After leaving the Air Corps, Quinn joined the Reserves and then moved to the California Air National Guard to fly the P-51 and the P-80. In 1950, Quinn flew a P-51 into Hawthorne for an interview with Northrop. The company needed a fighter pilot with jet experience to fly the YF-89 after the demise of the XF-89. Quinn got the job, and flew the first flight of the afterburning YF- 89 from the dry lakebed at Edwards AFB in June 1950.

Three months later he flew the first flight of an F-89A from the runway at Los Angeles International Airport. He was the principal test pilot during envelope expansion of the F-89A and was responsible for the development of the front snap-up tactic for safe deployment of the nuclear warhead Genie air-to-air missile from the F-89J.

During his Northrop tenure, he flew the YRB-49, F-100, F-102, F-5, T-38 and Boeing 707. Quinn retired from the Air Force reserve as a lieutenant colonel with 15,000 hours of flying time. He was honored as an Eagle in 1995.



Brig Gen Charles E. "Chuck" Yeager, USAF (Ret.)