

News Report on Yeager at Nellis Air Show

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LAS VEGAS -- The Global Air Chiefs Conference and Air Force FIFTY took wing here Tuesday when Retired Brig. Gen. Chuck Yeager unveiled a full-size replica of the experimental jet that first broke the sound barrier.

Yeager flew the Glamorous Glennis, the orange dart-shaped Bell X-1 rocket plane, on its record-shattering journey Oct. 14, 1947, less than a month after the Air Force became a separate service.

The Air Force Flight Test Center, based at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., is displaying the X-1 mock-up at the five-day Air Force 50th birthday celebration and symposium sponsored by the Air Force Association.

Yeager made his historic flight over the Mojave Desert while assigned to Edwards. The test center will show the model of his jet at air shows and other golden anniversary events throughout the year.

"When I first saw the X-1 at Bell, I thought to myself 'It's got speed written all over it,' " said Yeager, 74. "And it did!"

The test pilot said the first time he went above Mach 1 was anticlimactic.

"We never planned to go faster than the speed of sound, it just happened on that day," he said. "I was at the right place at the right time, and got lucky. When I read on my gauges that I had done it, I was surprised. I was kind of disappointed that the plane didn't blow up."

This fall the U.S. Postal Service is releasing a stamp engraved with Yeager's X-1. The general said that postal patrons won't see his image on the stamp.

"The post office isn't supposed to issue stamps of people unless they've been dead for 10 years," Yeager said. "But if you look in the cockpit windows, you'll see my eyes peeking out."

Yeager said the service has made great strides, both in personnel and equipment, in the past 50 years.

"You guys have gotten really good," Yeager said. "Airplanes can do 10 times more than they could 10 years ago. Quality of life has improved. Back in the old days, we were kind of abused, if that's the right word. Today, the Air Force really takes care of its own."

"The Air Force is very close to my heart. It's very special."

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