

Jim Randall Biography



James E. "Jim" Randall was born in 1926 and raised in Roanoke, Virginia. His aviation career began in 1944 when he was accepted into the Army Air Force Reserves. In August 1945, Randall was called to active duty and sent to Keesler AFB for basic training. He successfully completed his training and was transferred to Tuskegee Army Air Field that same year.

In 1946, Randall was assigned to the Office of the Chief of Safety. While awaiting assignment to a flying class, he was called to the Personnel Office to be informed that all flight training had been terminated. After being discharged in February 1946, Randall enrolled in Hampton Institute the following September. In 1949, Randall was recalled into the newly formed Air Force and was assigned to Randolph AFB in Texas for basic pilot training as an Aviation Cadet. He subsequently was transferred to Las Vegas Army AFB, Nevada. In 1950, Randall graduated as a fighter pilot flying the P-51 Mustang. From 1950 -1957, Randall flew a variety of aircraft, including flying 75 missions in his favorite aircraft, the Mustang. In a 2009 interview with the Air Force Academy's Spirit Newsletter, Randall recalled that he piloted 75 total missions in Korea. He was later shot down in 1965 while flying an F-105 on his 44th mission in North Vietnam. The helmet that he lost during that mission while avoiding captivity in the jungles of North Vietnam eventually found its way back to him nearly 50 years later.

Among other significant accomplishments and achievements, Randall tested the F-111 as Operations Officer assigned to Nellis AFB. In this capacity he flew at 2.4 times the speed of sound. In 1972, Randall was assigned to Headquarters Air Defense Command, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. From 1976 -1978 he was the Base Commander at Tyndall AFB, Fl. Randall returned to Colorado in 1978 to assume duties as the Chief of Safety HDQ Air Defense Command. Col. Jim Randall retired in 1980 after 31.5 years and over 7300 hours of flying time. He and his wife Essie, reside in Colorado Springs, Colorado.