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**FLIGHT TEST MUSEUM  
FOUNDATION (FTMF)**

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**FTMF CELEBRATES THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEDICATION OF JOE WALKER  
MIDDLE SCHOOL IN QUARTZ HILL, CA.**

**PALMDALE, CA – February 23, 2022** — The Flight Test Museum Foundation and Aerospace Community is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of Joe Walker Middle School this coming Friday, February 25, 2022.

February 25, 2022, marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the dedication of Joe Walker Middle School in Quartz Hill, CA in the Aerospace Valley. Captain Joseph A. Walker was a NASA Chief Research Test Pilot and the first man to fly to space. He was an accomplished test pilot working on joint programs with the Air Force and NASA in the quest to break the sound barrier and develop the technology for man to fly into space. While best known for his supersonic flights in the X-15, Captain Walker was also the first test pilot of the Bell [Lunar Landing Research Vehicle](#) (LLRV), which was used to develop piloting and operational techniques for lunar landings.

Captain Walker tragically lost his life during a flight in an F-104 on June 8, 1966. The school was dedicated in his honor on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 1972, and traditionally, every year on this date the students at Joe Walker Middle School participate in special activities related to his legacy. For this Golden Anniversary, the community is coming together to celebrate this legacy in a very big way. The Air Force Test Pilot School, NASA Armstrong Research Center, the Society of Experimental Test Pilots (SETP), the Flight Test Museum Foundation, along with the STEALTH Academy (at Joe Walker Missile School) and Joe Walker's family have coordinated efforts to celebrate Captain Walker on this special anniversary.

The current NASA Armstrong Chief Research Test Pilot (and current SETP President) Nils Larson and NASA Test Pilot Glenn Graham will be presenting on Joe's professional accomplishments at NASA. Joe's family will be talking to the students about his personal history. Test Pilot School and Joe Walker graduate Jessica Petersen will provide an overview of the Air Force Test Pilot School and the current flight testing at Edwards Air Force Base. Author of **The X-15: Rocket Planes**, Michelle Evans, will present on the significance of the X-15 and the quest for space in the Golden Age of flight test in this suburb of Los Angeles.

The students will circulate through individual classrooms and participate in activities and talks led by Joe Walker alumni, test pilots, engineers, and aerospace professionals presenting on a variety of STEM based subjects, their careers, and about Joe Walker, the significance of the Aerospace Valley in the quest for space travel. The day will conclude with the opening of a time capsule buried on the day the school was dedicated on February 25, 1972.

The Flight Test Museum Foundation (FTMF) helped facilitate the coordination of the presenters and activities as a part of its on-going efforts to preserve the rich history of the Aerospace Valley, celebrate the legacy of the people who have contributed to this history, and to educate future youth.

This year, the FTMF is celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of supersonic flight by one of our founders Chuck Yeager (October 14, 1947) and the 75 years hence of breaking boundaries in aerospace advancement. We will be sending out more information about events and celebrations next week.

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## SUPPORTING PHOTOS



**PHOTO (left):** Joseph A. Walker is seen here after a flight in front of the X-15 #2 (56-6671) rocket-powered research aircraft. Joseph A. Walker was a Chief Research Pilot at the NASA Dryden Flight Research Center during the mid-1960s.

Photo provided by NASA



**PHOTO (right):** Joe Walker Middle School provides a safe and positive environment, which promotes academic success in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Learning Through Humanities. Photo provided by Niteshift36



**PHOTO:** The first X-15 arrived at the NASA High-Speed Flight Station in the early months of 1959. During its research program, the aircraft set unofficial world speed and altitude records of 4,520 mph (Mach 6.7 on October 3, 1967, with Air Force pilot Pete Knight at the controls) and 354,200 feet (on August 22, 1963, with NASA pilot Joseph Walker in the cockpit). Photo provided by NASA

## **More about Joe Walker**

Joseph Albert Walker (February 20, 1921 – June 8, 1966) (Captain, USAF) was an American World War II pilot, experimental physicist, NASA test pilot, and astronaut. Making the latter flights immediately after the completion of the Mercury and Vostok programs, Walker became the first person to fly to space twice.

In 1958, Walker was one of the pilots selected for the U.S. Air Force's Man In Space Soonest (MISS) project, but that project never came to fruition. That same year, NACA became the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and in 1960, Walker became the first NASA pilot to fly the X-15, and the second X-15 pilot, following Scott Crossfield, the manufacturer's test pilot. On his first X-15 flight, Walker did not realize how much power its rocket engines had, and he was crushed backward into the pilot's seat, screaming, "Oh, my God!". Then, a flight controller jokingly replied, "Yes? You called?" Walker would go on to fly the X-15 25 times, including the only two flights that exceeded 100 kilometers (62 miles) in altitude: Flight 90 (on July 19, 1963: 106 km [66 mi]) and Flight 91 (on August 22, 1963: 108 km [67 mi]).

Walker was the first American civilian to make any spaceflight, and the second civilian overall, preceded only by the Soviet Union's cosmonaut, Valentina Tereshkova one month earlier. Walker the first human to make multiple spaceflights with an altitude greater than 62 miles (100 km). On January 17, 1963, flight #77 also qualified Walker as an astronaut, according to the U.S. Department of Defense definition of greater than 50 miles (80 km).

Walker served for 15 years at the Edwards Flight Research Facility – now called the Neil A. Armstrong Flight Research Center. By the mid-1950s, he was a Chief Research Pilot. Walker worked on several pioneering research projects. He flew in three versions of the Bell X-1: the X-1#2 (two flights, first on August 27, 1951), X-1A (one flight), and X-1E (21 flights). When Walker attempted a second flight in the X-1A on August 8, 1955, the rocket aircraft was damaged in an explosion just before being launched from the JTB-29A mothership. Walker was unhurt, though, and he climbed back into the mothership with the X-1A subsequently jettisoned.

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**FTMF BACKGROUND** – The Flight Test Museum Foundation's educational mission is to promote interest and generate excitement for K-12 students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) through a focused educational outreach campaign about flight testing, aerospace, and Edwards Air Force Base.

To achieve this goal, the Flight Test Museum Foundation is committed to providing open-access educational resources in STEM subjects for teachers, students, and families. These resources enable them to engage in an exploration and understanding of STEM in aerospace and flight testing, build learning opportunities for Southern California students, and provide an educational center where students can learn and explore.

The mission of the Flight Test Museum Foundation (FTMF) is to raise funds to support the development of the Air Force Flight Test Museum at Edwards AFB. The FTMF's fundraising efforts focus on museum improvements, exhibits, and aircraft acquisition/restoration. They are actively engaged in STEM education and the construction of a new, more accessible museum facility.

The Flight Test Museum Foundation (FTMF) is a private, tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization. Tax ID: 77-0003353. The FTMF is not a part of the Department of Defense or any of its components, and it has no government status.