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**FLIGHT TEST MUSEUM
FOUNDATION (FTMF)**

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**FTMF MOURNS THE LOSS OF FORMER TEST PILOT AND LEGEND, BRIGADIER GENERAL
ROBERT “BOB” CARDENAS AT THE AGE OF 102.**

PALMDALE, CA – MARCH 15, 2022 — The Flight Test Museum Foundation and Aerospace Community is mourning the loss of General Robert Cardenas, who passed away on his 102nd birthday (March 10, 1920 – March 10, 2022).

It is with great sadness that we share the news that Brig. Gen Robert “Bob” Cardenas, USAF (Retired), our dear friend, founding member, and trustee to the Flight Test Museum Foundation, passed away Thursday morning on his 102nd birthday taking his final flight at 12:55 a.m. on March 10, 2022.

We have lost more than a dear friend; we have lost a true inspiration of achievement and proof of what this country stands for. We often referred to Bob not only for his achievements in aerospace as a flight test engineer and Air Force leader but also for who Bob was as a person, friend, father, husband, and inspiration for what you can accomplish if you set your mind to it.

Robert L. Cardenas was born in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico in 1920. At the age of 5, Bob’s family moved to San Diego, California. Bob is the epitome of the American Dream. As an immigrant from Mexico, Bob quickly set his focus and love for the United States on a path that would eventually make him a major contributor to many aerospace developments.

Bob became part of an elite group of flight test engineers at Muroc and later Edwards AFB responsible for breaking barriers in aerospace and paving the way for countless flight test engineers and development programs. As the primary pilot for the B-29 in the quest for Mach one, Bob launched Chuck Yeager in all the flights up to and including the first supersonic flight on October 14, 1947. The major accomplishments we make today are a tribute to the gentle giants whose shoulders we stand on. Those great individuals who functioned flawlessly as a team, a family, and as a community kept their compasses focused on true north despite the barriers they encountered.

The fond memories of our friends and loved ones remain alive in the stories we share with friends, family, those who knew them, and those who just learned about them. That is how we preserve and honor their memories.

The Flight Test Museum Foundation (FTMF) supports the preservation of the rich history of the Aerospace Valley, celebrate the legacy of the people, like Brigadier General Robert Cardenas, who have contributed to this magnificent history, promote the current technological advancements in aerospace, and educate future youth.

This year (2022), the FTMF is celebrating the 75th Anniversary of supersonic flight by one of our founders Chuck Yeager (October 14, 1947) and the 75 years since 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



For more information about the Flight Test Museum Foundation, please visit www.FlightTestMuseum.org or contact Lisa Brown directly at: Lbrown@FlightTestMuseum.org or call 323.630.4789.

More about General Robert L. Cardenas

[\(https://www.af.mil/About-Us/Biographies/Display/Article/107496/brigadier-general-robert-l-cardenas/\)](https://www.af.mil/About-Us/Biographies/Display/Article/107496/brigadier-general-robert-l-cardenas/)

Robert L. Cardenas (March 10, 1920 – March 10, 2022) (Brig. Gen., USAF) - Brig. Gen. Robert L. Cardenas is chief, National Strategic Target List Division, Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff, at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. The mission of this office is to develop and compile a listing of targets that must be struck in a general nuclear war by our retaliatory forces. The NSTL Division also develops estimates of Soviet defenses and offensive capabilities for use in nuclear planning. It also is responsible for all intelligence aspects of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Coordinated Reconnaissance Plan.

Gen. Cardenas was born at Merida, Yucatan, Mexico in 1920. He attended schools in San Diego, California, and graduated from the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque in 1955 with a Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering. His military career began in 1939 when he became a member of the California National Guard. He entered aviation cadet training in September 1940 and received his pilot wings and commission as second lieutenant in July 1941.

Subsequent assignments included duty as flight instructor at Kelly Field, Texas; glider pilot instructor, engineering officer and executive officer at Twentynine Palms, Calif.; and flight test officer, operations officer and then director of Flight Test Unit, Experimental Engineering Laboratory, Wright Field, Ohio, until January 1944.

During World War II, he served as a B-24 aircraft pilot in the European Theater of Operations with the 506th Bombardment Squadron. He was awarded the Air Medal and two oak leaf clusters for bombing missions before being shot down over Germany in March 1944. Despite head wounds from flak, he made his way back to Allied control.

After returning to the United States in November 1944, General Cardenas attended Central Instructors School (B-24) at Smyrna, Tennessee., and was then assigned to Wright Field, Ohio, as a test pilot. While at Wright Field, he also attended Experimental Flight Test School and later became assistant chief, Bomber Section, and chief, Bomber Operations Section, Flight Test Division.

From June 1947 to July 1949, he was an experimental test pilot at Edwards Air Force Base, California, and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. He was twice awarded oak leaf clusters to the Air Medal for experimental flight tests at Edwards AFB.

Gen. Cardenas aided in pioneering jet aircraft development, test flying the P-59 and XB-45, the Air Force's first jet fighter and bomber. He flew the B-29 launch aircraft that released the X-1 experimental rocket plane in which Charles E. Yeager, a captain at the time, became the first man to fly faster than the speed of sound.

He attended Air Command and Staff School at Maxwell AFB, Ala., from August to December 1949. He again was assigned to Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, where from January 1950 to August 1952 he held positions as technical assistant to chief of operations; special assistant to chief, Flight Test Division; chief, B-47 Program; and special project officer Bomber Branch, Weapons Systems Division.

From September to December 1952, he was a student in the Engineering School at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Wright-Patterson AFB. He then entered the University of New Mexico, graduating in February 1955.

In March 1955 Gen. Cardenas was assigned to Naha Air Base, Okinawa, where he served as commander, 51st Maintenance and Supply Group; commander, 51st Fighter Interceptor Group; and commander, 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing. Upon his return to the United States in August 1957, he attended the Air War College at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. He was assigned to Headquarters U.S. Air Force in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs, in August 1958, where he served as chief, Aircraft and Guided Missiles Program Division; and chief, Aerospace Vehicles Division.

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In January 1962 he was assigned as chief, Special Plans Division, U.S. Strike Command at MacDill AFB, Florida, and was awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal for his work with the command. From July 1964 to June 1966, he was again sent to Okinawa and served as commander of the 18th Tactical Fighter Wing at Kadena Air Base, Japan. While under his command, the wing won an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for 10 months of exceptionally meritorious service in the Southeast Asia conflict and was awarded a second Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for Southeast Asia service for the period June 1965 to December 1966. Gen. Cardenas was awarded the Legion of Merit and Distinguished Flying Cross for F-105 aircraft operations in Southeast Asia.

He became commander of the 835th Air Division at McConnell AFB, Kansas, in July 1966, and in June 1968 he was assigned as commander of the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Force, Eglin AFB, Fla., and as commander was awarded the first oak leaf cluster to the Legion of Merit.

In July 1969 General Cardenas became vice commander of the Sixteenth Air Force with headquarters at Torrejon AB, Spain. He was awarded the Spanish Grand Cross; of the Order of Aeronautical Merit by the Spanish Government.

Gen. Cardenas was named U.S. Deputy Chief of Staff, LIVE OAK, in June 1970. LIVE OAK is collocated with Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Belgium. Gen. Cardenas assumed duties as chief, National Strategic Target List Division, Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff, at Offutt AFB, Neb., in July 1971.

He is a command pilot. In addition to military decorations previously mentioned, he has been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster, Purple Heart, and second oak leaf cluster to the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award Ribbon. His hometown is San Diego.

He was promoted to the temporary grade of brigadier general effective March 15, 1968, and to permanent grade on Jan. 24, 1969, with date of rank as permanent brigadier general of March 15, 1968.

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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.