

The original documents are located in Box 42, “12/8/76 - Remarks at the Ceremony to Present the Congressional Silver Medal to Brigadier General Charles E. Yeager, USAF” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN

REMARKS TO AWARD CONGRESSIONAL SILVER MEDAL TO

BRIGADIER GENERAL CHARLES E. YEAGER

DECEMBER 8, 1976

WE ARE HERE TODAY TO HONOR BRIGADIER GENERAL
CHARLES E. YEAGER FOR EXCEPTIONAL GALLANTRY IN THE SERVICE
OF OUR NATION.

THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES, ON DECEMBER 23, 1975,
AUTHORIZED THAT A SPECIAL SILVER MEDAL BE STRUCK AS AN AWARD
FOR GENERAL YEAGER'S ACHIEVEMENTS. THIS AWARD, THE
EQUIVALENT TO A NON-COMBAT MEDAL OF HONOR, IS IN RECOGNITION
OF GENERAL YEAGER'S IMMEASURABLE CONTRIBUTION TO AEROSPACE
SCIENCE BY RISKING HIS LIFE IN PILOTING THE XS-1 RESEARCH
AIRPLANE FASTER THAN THE SPEED OF SOUND ON OCTOBER 14, 1947.

IN THIS FAST MOVING AGE OF MANNED FLIGHTS TO THE MOON
AND COMMERCIAL TRAVEL AT SUPERSONIC SPEEDS, IT IS EASY
TO FORGET THAT PRIOR TO GENERAL YEAGER'S HISTORIC FLIGHT,
THE "SOUND BARRIER" WAS CONSIDERED AN OBSTACLE OF AWESOME
PROPORTIONS. IN FACT, PRIOR TO 1947, MANY NOTED
SCIENTISTS WERE FIRMLY CONVINCED THAT A MANNED AIRCRAFT
WOULD NEVER EXCEED THE SPEED OF SOUND.

THE FAMED BRITISH TEST PILOT, GEOFFREY DE HAVILLAND
WAS KILLED ATTEMPTING TO FLY FASTER THAN THE SPEED OF SOUND
AND IN THE WEEKS PRIOR TO HIS OCTOBER 14TH FLIGHT,
GENERAL (THEN CAPTAIN) YEAGER OVERCAME EXTREME DANGERS
FLYING THE XS-1.

THE PLANE WAS DIFFICULT TO CONTROL AND, ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, IT CAUGHT FIRE WHILE IN FLIGHT.

YET, ON THE MORNING OF OCTOBER 14, THE XS-1 WAS DROPPED FROM A B-29 HIGH ABOVE MUROC ARMY AIR BASE. WITHIN MOMENTS, GENERAL YEAGER BROUGHT THE TEST PLANE TO THE 40 THOUSAND FEET LEVEL, PUSHED ITS SPEED BEYOND MACH 1 AND THEN LANDED SAFELY. DURING THAT SHORT 14 MINUTE FLIGHT, GENERAL YEAGER TOOK AVIATION FAR BEYOND THE FIRST HALF-CENTURY OF POWERED FLIGHT. IN A FEW MOMENTS THE SUBSONIC PERIOD BECAME HISTORY AND THE SUPERSONIC PERIOD WAS BORN.

GENERAL YEAGER, IT IS NOW MY PRIVILEGE TO PRESENT
YOU WITH THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL. THE CITATION WHICH
ACCOMPANIES THE MEDAL READS AS FOLLOWS:

BRIGADIER GENERAL CHARLES E. YEAGER, UNITED STATES
AIR FORCE (RETIRED), DISPLAYED CONSPICUOUS GALLANTRY AND TOTAL
DISREGARD FOR HIS PERSONAL SAFETY ON OCTOBER 14, 1947,
AS PILOT OF THE XS-1 RESEARCH AIRCRAFT. ON THAT DATE,
THE THEN CAPTAIN YEAGER ADVANCED AEROSPACE SCIENCE A QUANTUM
STEP BEYOND THE FIRST HALF-CENTURY OF POWERED FLIGHT BY
PROVING THAT AN AIRCRAFT COULD BE FLOWN AT SUPERSONIC
SPEEDS.

IN THAT BRIEF 14 MINUTE FLIGHT, GENERAL YEAGER DISPELLED
FOR ALL TIME THE MYTHICAL "SOUND BARRIER" AND SET THE STAGE
FOR UNPRECEDENTED AVIATION ADVANCEMENT. THROUGH HIS
SELFLESS DEDICATION TO DUTY AND HIS HEROIC CHALLENGE
OF THE UNKNOWN, GENERAL YEAGER PERFORMED INESTIMABLE
SERVICE TO HIS COUNTRY FAR ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY
AND BROUGHT GREAT CREDIT UPON HIMSELF AND THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA.

END OF TEXT