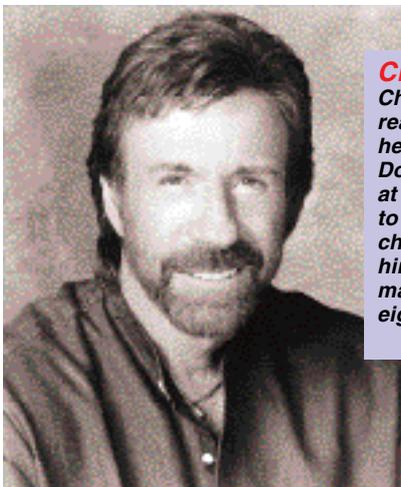


Many enlisted members achieved fame and success in politics, the

FAMOUS *and* Formerly Enlisted

At the Air Force Enlisted Heritage Research Institute, Gunter Annex, Maxwell AFB, Ala., photos of some 100 individuals can be found on a special Wall of Achievers. The wall calls attention not only to USAF “mustangs”—enlisted troops who became officers—who went on to become generals but also some of the many enlisted members who subsequently achieved fame and success in politics, the arts, entertainment, business, and the like. What follows is a sample.

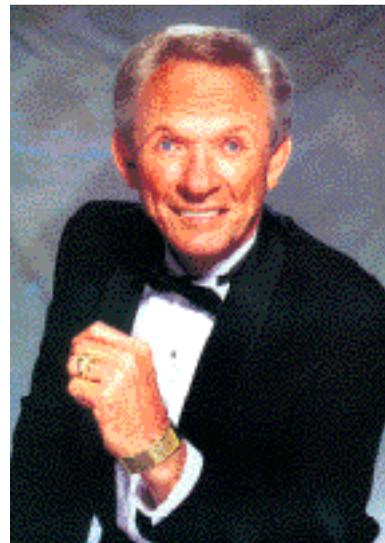


Chuck Norris, Martial Arts Expert and Actor

Chuck Norris, who joined the Air Force after high school, was stationed in Osan, South Korea, which was lucky for him. There he began a “life-changing” study of martial arts. When he returned to the US, he competed for the March AFB, Calif., judo team, studied Tae Kwan Do, and started a Tang Soo Do club. Norris was discharged in 1962, and, by working days at Northrop Aircraft and evenings teaching martial arts, he quickly saved enough money to open his own studio. In 1968, Norris became the professional world middleweight karate champion and held the title until 1974. One of Norris’ students, actor Steve McQueen, urged him to go into movies, and he soon made his first film, “Return of the Dragon,” with another martial arts friend—Bruce Lee. In 1996, Norris became the first Westerner to be awarded an eighth-degree black belt in Tae Kwan Do.

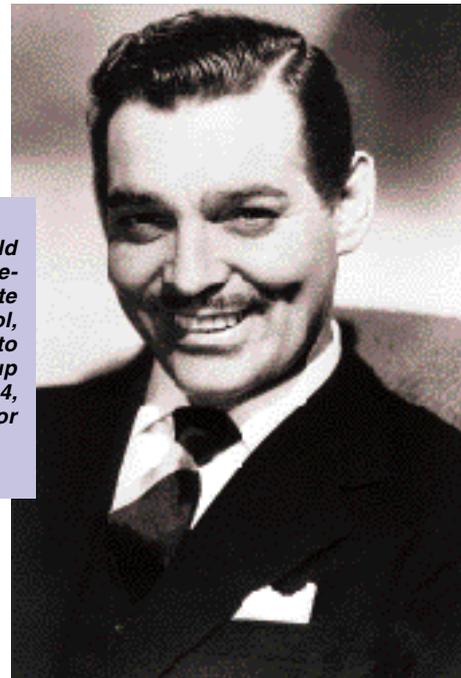
Mel Tillis, Country Music Legend

In the early 1950s, Lonnie “Mel” Tillis was an airman stationed in Okinawa, working as a baker. There, he began a performing career with a musical group called the “Westerners.” Just one year after he was discharged from the service in 1955, Tillis’ song “I’m Tired” was recorded by Webb Pierce, and his professional career as a singer–songwriter was launched. Tillis’ songs over the decades have been recorded by artists such as Brenda Lee, Charley Pride, Ricky Skaggs, George Strait, and Kenny Rogers. In 1976, he was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame. Tillis still performs regularly at his theater in Branson, Mo., where he also works with the Branson Veterans Task Force.



arts, entertainment, and business. Here are some of them.

By Juliett Kelsey, **Staff Editor**



Clark Gable, Hollywood Legend

Well beyond draft age and an established major Hollywood movie star, 41-year-old Clark Gable enlisted as a private in the Army Air Forces on Aug. 12, 1942, in Los Angeles. Gable didn't stay in the enlisted ranks for long. He was sent to Officer Candidate School and was commissioned Oct. 28, 1942. He then attended aerial gunnery school, and in February 1943, at the behest of Gen. H.H. "Hap" Arnold, he went to England to make a motion picture featuring aerial gunners. Assigned to the 351st Bomb Group at Polebrook, UK, Gable flew on several B-17 combat missions over Europe. In 1944, he was relieved of his active duty obligation because he had become overage for combat. He returned to Hollywood where he made 21 more films. He died in 1960.

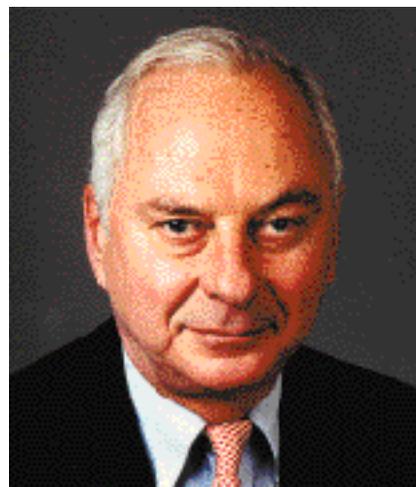


"Box Car Willie," Noted Entertainer

Lecil Travis Martin—the original name of the man who was later to become known to the country music world as "Box Car Willie"—joined the Air Force in 1949 and served for more than 11 years. He became a flight engineer with the rank of master sergeant by the time he was discharged in 1960. Martin adopted the Box Car Willie persona in the mid-70s, and the good-natured singing hobo was a massive hit in England. That popularity carried over to the United States in the early 1980s. In 1981, he gained a spot on the Country Music Hall of Fame's Walkway of the Stars and became a member of the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tenn. He has remained a favorite of country music fans in Europe and the US in the 1990s.

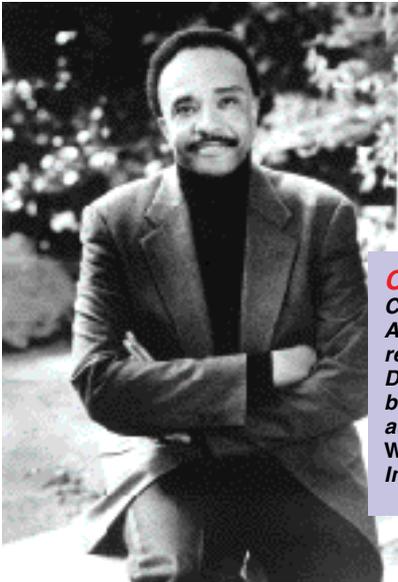
Arthur A. Hartman, Distinguished Diplomat

Eighteen-year-old Arthur A. Hartman enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1944 near the end of World War II. As a radio operator, he flew several missions over "The Hump"—the Himalaya mountains—in the China–Burma–India theater of operations and on new routes between Hawaii and Japan, Canton, Manila, Nanking, and Wake Island. He left the service as a corporal in 1946, graduated from Harvard, and then embarked on what would prove to be a distinguished career as a foreign service officer. The highlight of his decades-long service came in the Reagan Administration, which he served for over five years as the US ambassador to the Soviet Union in Moscow. In 1987, Hartman retired from public service at the level of career ambassador, the highest rank in the US Foreign Service. He now advises corporate executives on foreign business development.



Flip Wilson, Irreverent Comedian

Clerow Wilson was born into an impoverished home in Jersey City, N.J., and quit school in 1950 at age 16 to join the Air Force. He served for four years and was discharged in 1954 but not before he had made a reputation as an entertainer and acquired the nickname "Flip" for his irreverent brand of humor. After his discharge, Wilson spent nearly a decade working at odd jobs and developing a comedy act at various night clubs. It wasn't until Hollywood began to actively seek out black entertainers in the 1960s that he got his first big break. He made his TV debut on "The Tonight Show" in 1965, and that led to many other appearances and, ultimately, his own popular variety series in 1968. He won one Emmy for performance and one for writing in 1971. Wilson died in 1998.

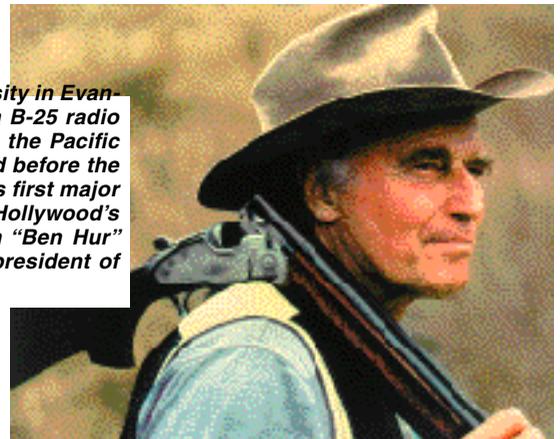


Clifton L. Taulbert, Acclaimed Author

Clifton L. Taulbert began his service in the Air Force in 1964 at the 3320th Technical School in Amarillo, Texas, where he was chosen as squadron leader for his barracks. In 1967, Taulbert received an appointment to the prestigious 89th Presidential Wing, located in Washington, D.C. An account of his service time in the national capital was the starting point for his third book, the memoirs of his early adulthood, Watching Our Crops Come In. Taulbert also is the author of The Last Train North (nominated for a Pulitzer Prize), Once Upon a Time, When We Were Colored, and Eight Habits of the Heart. Taulbert is the 1996 recipient of the NAACP Image Award.

Charlton Heston, Actor and Political Activist

During World War II, Charlton Heston was a student at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., but he left college to join the Army Air Forces in 1943. Heston, a B-25 radio operator and gunner, was part of a unit that was scheduled to transfer to the Pacific as part of Operation Olympic, the invasion of Japan, but Tokyo surrendered before the operation was launched. Heston was discharged in 1946. He appeared in his first major motion picture, "Dark City," just four years later, and he became known as Hollywood's pre-eminent epic actor, culminating in his Oscar-winning performance in "Ben Hur" (1959). A six-time Screen Actor's Guild president, Heston now serves as president of the National Rifle Association.



George C. Wallace, Governor of Alabama

George C. Wallace, a new law school graduate, entered the Army Air Forces in 1942 and served as a B-29 flight engineer in the Pacific. He was discharged in 1945 and immediately jumped into Alabama politics, getting elected to the state House of Representatives the next year. He ran twice for governor, succeeding on his second try and taking office in 1963 with the notorious rallying cry, "Segregation forever." He ran unsuccessfully for President three times; in his 1972 campaign, he was shot and paralyzed in an assassination attempt. However, he was elected to two more terms as governor. In 1982, he declared that he had been wrong to promote segregation. For the next 16 years, he freely apologized and openly repudiated the hard racist line he took early in his career. He died in 1998.

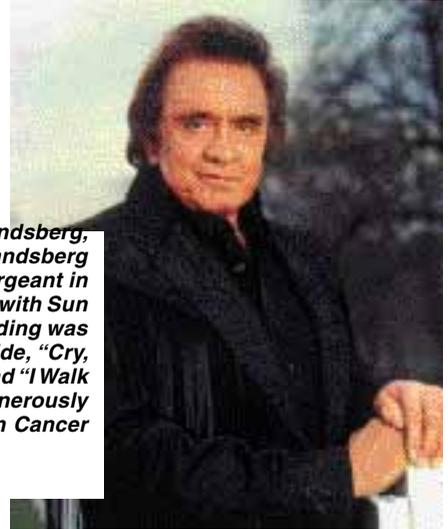


Jack Price, President, Aerospace Education Foundation

Jack Price enlisted in the Air Force in 1947 and was discharged as a sergeant in 1953. His active duty service marked only the beginning of a long association with the Air Force and aerospace issues, however. He worked many years as an Air Force civilian at Ogden Air Logistics Center, Utah, rising to hold key positions such as chief of the Missile and Aircraft Systems Division, chief of the Aircraft Division, and deputy director of distribution. He served as national president of the Air Force Association (1988–90) and AFA chairman of the board (1990–92). He currently is president of AFA's Aerospace Education Foundation.

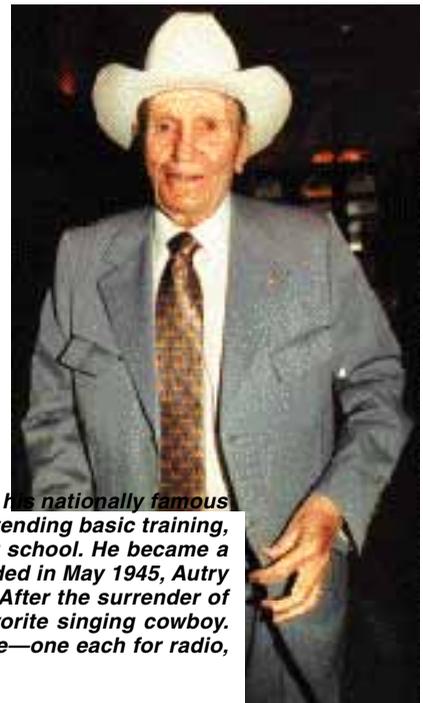
Johnny Cash, Singer–Songwriter

The "Man in Black" bought his very first guitar while stationed with the Air Force in Landsberg, Germany, in the early 1950s. It was there, also, that he formed his first band, "The Landsberg Barbarians," to play in nearby clubs and honky-tonks. Cash was discharged as a sergeant in 1954 and promptly moved to Memphis, where in 1955 he signed a recording contract with Sun Records, joining Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Carl Perkins. His first Sun recording was "Hey Porter," a song Cash wrote on his return home from the Air Force. The flip side, "Cry, Cry, Cry," became a smash hit. By 1956, Cash had recorded "Folsom Prison Blues" and "I Walk the Line," both major hits. During a long and successful music career, Cash has generously supported the prison reform movement, mental health organizations, the American Cancer Society, YWCA, Youth for Christ, Native American causes, and humane societies.



Carroll H. Shelby, Race Car Driver and Designer

Eighteen-year-old Carroll H. Shelby enlisted in the Army Air Forces in November 1941, serving four years as a flight instructor. He was commissioned toward the end of his tour and was discharged as a second lieutenant. In 1952, he entered his first auto competition—a quarter-mile drag race—and within five years was named Sports Illustrated Driver of the Year. He built the CSX, the first Cobra sports car, in 1962; a year later, the Cobra won the US Road Racing Championship. Ford Motor Co., impressed with the maverick race car designer, asked him to develop a high-performance Mustang fastback, which he did. Shelby was elected to the Automotive Hall of Fame in 1992.

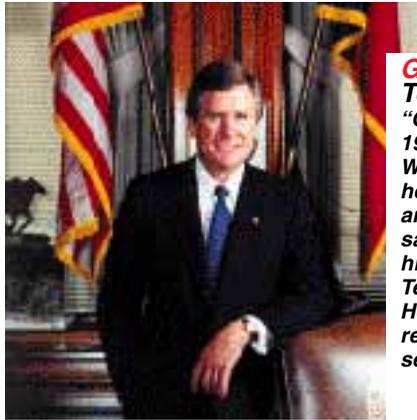


Gene Autry, Film, Recording, and Radio Star

Gene Autry was sworn into the Army Air Corps in Chicago in 1942, during a broadcast of his nationally famous radio show, "Melody Ranch." He entered the service as a technical sergeant and, after attending basic training, he served with a squadron at Luke Field, Ariz. Eventually, Autry was accepted for flight school. He became a flight officer and was transferred to Air Transport Command. When the war in Europe ended in May 1945, Autry was reassigned to Special Services and toured with a USO troupe in the South Pacific. After the surrender of Japan, Autry was discharged and resumed his civilian career in 1946 as America's favorite singing cowboy. Autry is the only entertainer to have five stars on the legendary Hollywood Walk of Fame—one each for radio, records, film, television, and live performance. He died in 1998.

Terry Everett, Member of Congress

The son of a south Alabama sharecropper, Terry Everett entered the Air Force in 1955 and served as an intelligence specialist in Europe, where he also participated in community theater as an actor and publicist. Discharged in 1959, he returned to his home of Dothan, Ala., and began a civilian career as a farm and police beat reporter for the local newspaper. He eventually became the owner of a chain of newspapers throughout the southeastern US. In 1992, he began his first political campaign as a virtual unknown and wound up defeating a man with the most famous name in Alabama politics, George C. Wallace Jr., son of the former governor and Presidential candidate. With that victory, he became representative for Alabama's second district. He is a member of the House Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs Committee.



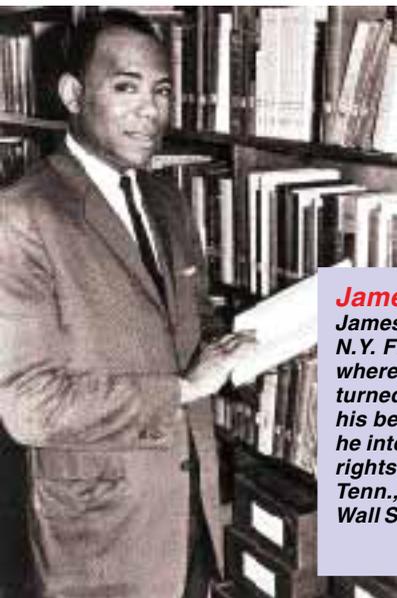
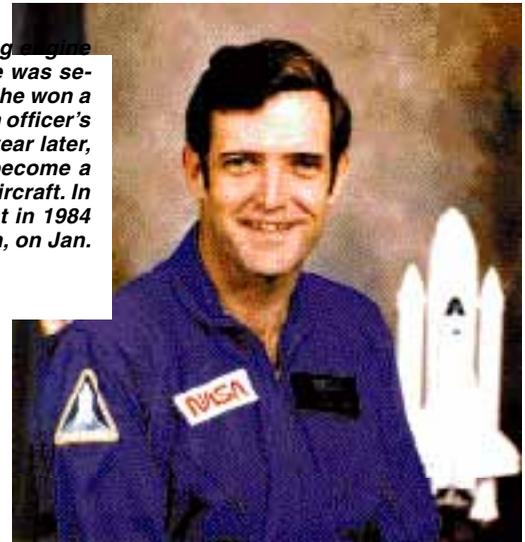
Gibson D. Lewis, Speaker of Texas House

"Gib" Lewis entered the Air Force in 1956 and served as a B-52 aerial gunner. While stationed at Carswell AFB, Texas, he attended Texas Christian University and, after his discharge in 1961, took a sales job for three years, then started his own business. He was elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 1971. He became speaker in 1983 and was re-elected to that post four more times, serving longer than any predecessor.



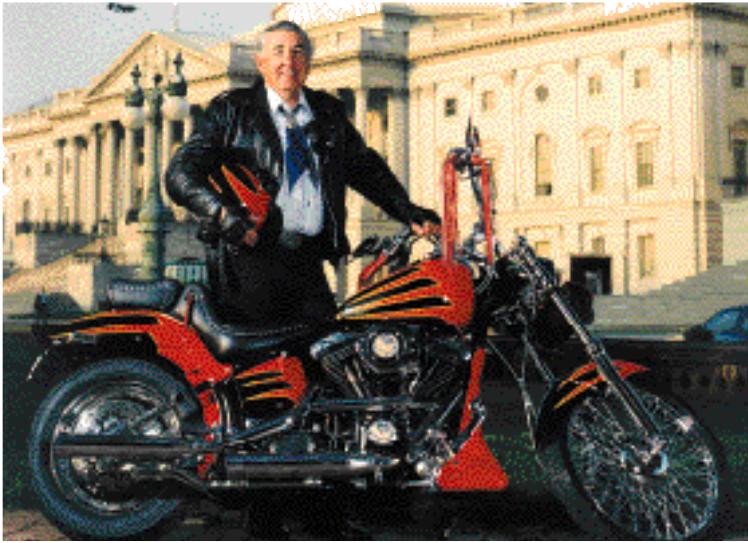
Francis Richard Scobee, Astronaut

Dick Scobee enlisted after high school and received training as a reciprocating engine mechanic, but he was driven by a desire to fly. After attending night school he was selected for the Airman's Education and Commissioning Program, through which he won a degree at the University of Arizona in aerospace engineering in 1965—making an officer's commission and pilot training possible. He was commissioned in 1965 and, a year later, received his wings. He completed a combat tour in Vietnam and went on to become a test pilot for the Air Force, logging more than 6,500 flight hours in 45 types of aircraft. In 1978, Scobee entered the NASA astronaut corps and made his first spaceflight in 1984 as the pilot of the shuttle Challenger. Scobee was the shuttle commander when, on Jan. 28, 1986, Challenger exploded on takeoff, killing all members of the crew.



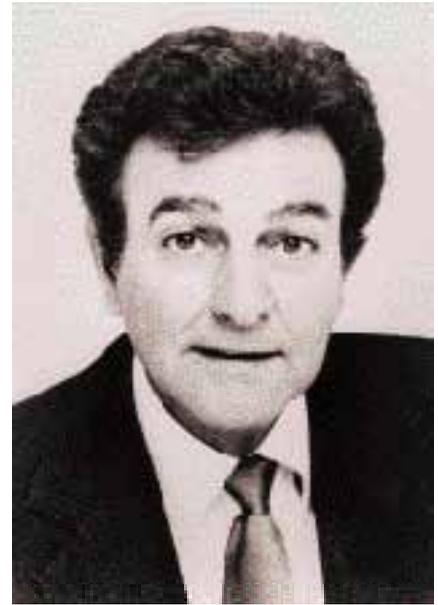
James H. Meredith, Civil Rights Pioneer

James H. Meredith joined the US Air Force in 1951, attending basic training at Sampson AFB, N.Y. From then until his discharge in 1960, he waged a campaign against racial discrimination wherever he encountered it in the armed services. After his stint in the Air Force, Meredith returned to Mississippi to apply for admission to the University of Mississippi, an act that led to his being the first African-American to attend the institution. After two years of legal wrangling, he integrated the "Ole Miss" student body in 1962, graduating a year later. Meredith pursued civil rights causes, and in 1966, he was shot while conducting a voting rights march from Memphis, Tenn., to Jackson, Miss. After getting a law degree from Columbia University in 1968, he worked on Wall Street for several years, then ran several businesses. He has also authored numerous books.



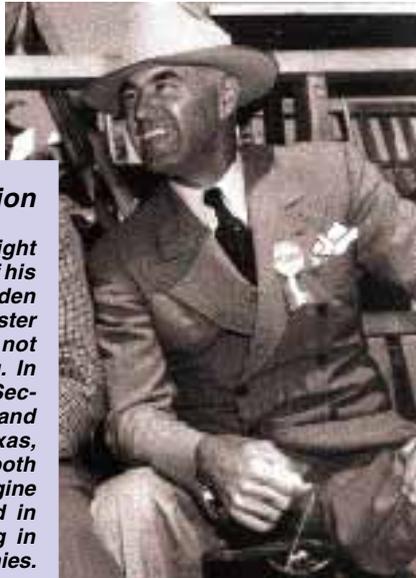
Ben Nighthorse Campbell, US Senator

In 1951, Ben Nighthorse Campbell left high school to join the Air Force. First stationed at Lackland AFB, Texas, as a model maker, he was—at his request—reassigned to Air Police School and then to South Korea, where he served until he was discharged in 1953 as an airman second class. Campbell acquired a GED diploma while in Korea and intensified his training in judo. After he left USAF, he attended San Jose State University, from which he graduated in 1957. He became a college All-American in judo and was captain of the US judo team at the 1964 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo. Campbell, who is a Republican, was elected to the Colorado legislature in 1982, the US House in 1986, 1988, and 1990, and the US Senate in 1992 and 1998. Campbell became the first Native American to serve in the Senate in more than 60 years.



Mike Connors, TV Actor

During the years that he served as an enlisted man in the Army Air Forces of World War II, he was still Krekor Ohanian of Fresno, Calif. Not long after his discharge, though, he became Mike Connors, one of the most recognizable actors in Hollywood. Ohanian, while attending UCLA after the war on a basketball scholarship, was discovered by director William Wellman, who encouraged him to pursue an acting career. He did. In his first movie, he starred opposite Joan Crawford in 1952's "Sudden Fear." Connors starred in three television crime dramas, "Manix," "Tightrope," and "Today's FBI." He has made hundreds of television appearances and was nominated for three Emmys and several Golden Globes—winning one in 1970—as best actor in a drama series.



Walter H. Beech, Aviation Pioneer

Walter H. Beech made his first flight at age 14 in a glider made out of his mother's bed sheets and a wooden frame, a flight that ended in disaster for the aircraft but which did not dim his enthusiasm for flying. In 1917, he joined the Aviation Section of the US Signal Corps and was assigned to Kelly Field, Texas, where he provided services as both a pilot instructor and aircraft engine specialist. He was discharged in 1920 and began barnstorming in war-surplus Standards and Jennies. In 1923 Beech was placed in charge of field work for Swallow Airplane Manufacturing Co., but he left in a dispute over whether a new aircraft should use metal—his choice—or wood. In 1925 he co-founded a new company, Travel Air Manufacturing Co., which merged with Curtiss-Wright Corp. In 1932 he co-founded Beech Aircraft Corp., which supplied 7,400 military aircraft during World War II. He died in 1950.

Mack F. Mattingly, Senator, Diplomat

Mattingly joined the Air Force in 1951 at age 20 and left four years later after attaining the rank of staff sergeant. After discharge, he graduated from Indiana University and moved to Georgia. There, Mattingly entered politics and, in 1980, became the first Georgia Republican since Reconstruction to be elected to the US Senate, where he served one term. In 1987, the Georgian was chosen to serve as NATO assistant secretary general for defense support in Brussels, Belgium, a position he held until 1990. Mattingly later served as US ambassador to the Seychelles, 1992–93. He is active in both the Georgia Republican Party and the national GOP and works as a speaker and author on defense, foreign policy, and economic issues. In 1998, he became chairman of the Southeastern Legal Foundation.

