

## Retired Lt. Gen. “Buck” Pattillo, Original Thunderbirds Left Wing Pilot, Dies May 20



Retired Lt. Gen. Charles C. “Buck” Pattillo, who helped organize the first Thunderbirds air demonstration team and was the original left wing pilot, died May 20, a few weeks shy of his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday.

He received his pilot wings and a commission as second lieutenant in March 1944. He next trained in P-40s and in November 1944 went to the European theater of operations where he flew combat missions with the 352nd Fighter Group, Eighth Air Force. While with the 352nd Group he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with two oak leaf clusters.

General Pattillo was released from active duty in December 1945 and enrolled in the Georgia School of Technology. There he actively participated in the reserve military program flying, P-47s with the 128th Fighter Squadron, 54th Fighter Wing of the Georgia Air National Guard.

Pattillo was recalled to active military duty in February 1948 as a P-51 fighter pilot with the 31st Fighter Group, Turner Air Force Base, Ga. Eleven months later he was assigned to the 22nd Fighter Squadron, 36th Tactical Fighter Wing, Fürstenfeldbruck Air Base, Germany.

While at Fürstenfeldbruck he assisted in organizing the U.S. Air Forces in Europe aerial demonstration team, the Skyblazers. He flew left wing and alternate lead for the Skyblazers as they demonstrated their aerial skills in F-80 and F-84 aircraft in more than 250 air shows throughout Western Europe, North Africa, Greece and Turkey. For exceptionally meritorious performance with the Skyblazers he was awarded the Legion of Merit.

In August 1952 Pattillo was assigned to the Air Training Command's 3600th Combat Crew Training Group at Luke Air Force Base, Ariz. In 1953 he helped organize and then flew left wing for the original U.S. Air Force demonstration team, the Thunderbirds. In February 1954 he returned to the 3600th Combat Crew Training Group to become squadron operations officer, squadron commander and then group operations officer.

After a number of assignments both stateside and overseas he went to Southeast Asia in March 1968. He first served as vice commander of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, Ubon Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, and assumed command of the wing in July 1968. He flew 120 combat missions in F-4 Phantoms.

His last active assignment was deputy commander in chief, U.S. Readiness Command and vice director of the Joint Deployment Agency with headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. He retired June 1, 1981.

Funeral details will be announced when they become available.