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PRESS RELEASE

YEAGER AIRPORT MOURNS PASSING OF GENERAL CHUCK YEAGER

Yeager Airport Staff and the Central West Virginia Regional Airport Board Members are mourning the loss of Brig. Gen. Charles “Chuck” Yeager today. His bravery and dedication will be remembered around the world for generations to come.

“Gen. Yeager is a true pioneer in the world of aviation,” said Yeager Airport Director and CEO Nick Keller. “It is rare to be the first to ever do something, and Gen. Yeager did that by breaking the sound barrier and putting our great country ahead of its time in aviation.”

General Yeager got his start as a pilot in 1941 when he signed for the Army Air Corps, now known as the U.S. Air Force. Yeager’s military career spanned six decades and four wars. During World War II, Gen. Yeager flew 64 missions and shot down 13 German planes. Yeager’s plane was shot down over France in 1944 but he escaped capture.

After the war, in true West Virginia fashion, Yeager continued serving his country as a flight instructor and test pilot at Wright Field in Ohio. It was there that his exceptional skills were quickly recognized, and he was chosen to be the first to fly the rocket-powered Bell X-1.

“General Yeager exemplified everything it means to be a West Virginian”, said Central West Virginia Regional Airport Authority Board Chairman Ed Hill. “Born and raised in Lincoln County, General Yeager’s hard work, dedication, skill, and bravery defined his historic career. Our entire Board is saddened by the loss of a fellow West Virginian, and a leader in aviation.”

Yeager made history in 1947, when his Bell X-1 broke the speed of sound over a lake in Southern California. That feat earned him the distinction of the ‘Fastest Man Alive.’ When asked if he was scared during the flight Yeager said, “No, I was just doing my job.”

Gen. Yeager went on to break his own record in 1953 flying at Mach 2.44. For that flight, Yeager was awarded the Harmon International Trophy by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. In 1985, Yeager was presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, by President Ronald Reagan.

After earning that award in 1985, Yeager earned another honor, this time closer to home. Kanawha Airport officially changed its name to Yeager Airport in October of 1985.

"He redefined the industry," Keller continued. "I am proud a man from West Virginia is such an important figure in aviation."

He will be greatly missed by so many around the world and his legacy will live on in the hearts of Charlestonian's, aviators, and all who pass through Yeager Airport. Our heartfelt condolences go out to Victoria Yeager, their beloved family, and all who mourn the tremendous loss of one of the nations most distinguished aviators.

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PHOTOS AND B-ROLL, PLEASE CONTACT:

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