

Bob Hoover, Legendary Pilot, Dies at 94

October 25, 2016 - Bob Hoover, often called “the pilot’s pilot” and an aviator whose career spanned 70-plus years and nearly every facet of aviation, died on Tuesday at age 94.

Hoover was an annual visitor to EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, including in 2016, where a one-of-a-kind Ford Mustang painted in colors of his iconic P-51 *Ole Yeller* was auctioned at EAA’s Gathering of Eagles fundraiser.

“We lost a true, one-of-a-kind aviation hero today,” said EAA CEO and Chairman Jack Pelton. “We all knew of Bob’s incredible aviation career and witnessed his unmatched flying skills. It was Bob Hoover as a person that also made him legendary. He was a true gentleman and unfailingly gracious and generous, as well as a true friend of EAA through the years. We can only hope to use his lifelong example as a pilot and a person as a standard for all of us to achieve.”

The aviation career of Bob Hoover had a nearly storybook quality to it – a story that was often a mix of thriller and adventure. After working at a Nashville grocery store to pay for flight lessons as a teenager and teaching himself aerobatics, Hoover entered the Tennessee National Guard and eventually was sent to Army Pilot Training School. In World War II, Hoover talked his way out of test pilot duty into combat missions, where he eventually was shot down, captured, and escaped from a German prisoner of war camp.

As a test pilot following the war, he flew a variety of aircraft and was Chuck Yeager’s backup and chase pilot during the eventually successful attempts to fly faster than the speed of sound. He set numerous aviation records and his long association with North American Aviation and Rockwell International allowed him to test many aircraft, ranging from the T-28 trainer to the F-100 jet.

Many EAA members and air show fans knew Hoover from his impeccable air show performances in the P-51 as well as in the Shrike Commander, where he would showcase his energy management sequence without engine power. His flying skills allowed him to pour himself a cup tea while flying a complete roll in that aircraft.

Hoover also won a lengthy battle against the FAA in the 1990s, when he fought against the revocation of his medical certificate. His flying career was documented in the 2014 documentary *Flying the Feathered Edge*, which was first shown to an invitation-only audience at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2014.

A 1988 inductee to the [National Aviation Hall of Fame](#), Hoover also received numerous awards throughout this life. That included the Freedom of Flight Award, EAA’s highest honor, in 2011.

Memorial services are pending and will be announced as they are finalized.

