

X-15 rocket plane pilot Bill Dana dies at 83

May 7 2014

Famed research test pilot Bill Dana, who flew the X-15 rocket plane and other pioneering aircraft, has died at age 83.

Word of Dana's death on Tuesday was announced by NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center in California.

Starting in the 1950s, Dana logged more than 8,000 hours in more than 60 types of aircraft ranging from helicopters and sailplanes to the hypersonic X-15, which he flew to a maximum altitude of nearly 59 miles, reaching a top speed of 3,897 mph.

He also flew NASA's so-called lifting body aircraft that led to the design of the [space shuttle](#).

Born in Pasadena, California, on Nov. 3, 1930, Dana died after a long illness at an assisted living facility in suburban Phoenix, Arizona.

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