

Soaring Success

By Mary Lynn Rose, Associate Editor
WorldWide Drilling Resource[®]

The crowd was clapping as Brian Shul exited the stage to the song *Long Cool Woman* by The Hollies. The upbeat music could not take away the lump in my throat, tears in my eyes, and a profound feeling of pride as an American. The veteran with a 20-year career as an Air Force pilot had just completed a presentation of not only his experiences in the air during wartime, but also as a burn victim, author, and photographer.



*In the SR-71, Brian Shul with friend and co-author of the *Untouchables*, Walter Watson, was able to soar at speeds of Mach 3 plus. WWD[®] photos.*

Shul's story began when he was born in Virginia, in 1941. He majored in history

and graduated from East Carolina University in 1970, then joined the Air Force. He flew an AT-28 aircraft in his early years during Vietnam. His plane was shot down, crashing into the jungle near the border of south-east Asia. Although he was rescued by Special Forces, he was expected to die from the extensive burns covering his entire body. Shul was evacuated to a military hospital in Kadina, Okinawa.



He reminisced about looking out of his hospital room window in those first days of recovery, watching children play, made him determined to not just recover, but to fly again for the United States Air Force.

After 15 major surgeries and months of therapy, Brian was ready to return to flight duty - and he did. He still flew fighter jets and became an instructor at the Air Force fighter pilot school, commonly referred to as the Top Gun School. He is credited with 5000 fighter jet hours.

The last assignment he took was to fly the super spy plane, the SR-71 Blackbird. To do this, he had to pass the same standard physical used for astronauts - and he did despite all odds. This plane has only been flown by 93 pilots. He retired from the Air Force in 1990, and now focuses on his other loves - writing and photography. His tenacious willpower has enabled him to fly in air demonstrations with the Air Force Thunderbirds and the Navy Blue Angels.

Shul has become a motivational speaker sharing his story of determination, pride, fear, humor, and success to various audiences including professional organizations like the Air Force Association, the International Order of Character, and the Northwest Louisiana State Nursing School. He has also completed five books. The latest, published in 2003, *Sled Driver, Flying the World's Fastest Jet* is the most celebrated book on the SR-71 Blackbird.

At his studio, Gallery One, in Marysville, California, Shul continues to serve as a testimony. He shared this testimony in 2011 with drilling professionals (because without them he would have never been able to fly) and the *WorldWide Drilling Resource* Team was privileged to be there. "When you find something you love to do, never stop," his true to heart quote is one we took to heart and will never forget.



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