

Col. (Ret) Richard Graham started his flying career as a teenager, soloing out at age 17. He entered the Air Force in 1964 and flew 210 combat missions in Vietnam flying the F-4 Phantom. He then flew the SR-71 Blackbird for seven years on operational reconnaissance missions. He was Squadron Commander of the SR-71 unit in 1980 and eventually became the Wing Commander at Beale AFB, California, where he flew the SR-71, U-2, KC-135, and T-38 aircraft. Among his awards and decorations includes 3 Legion of Merit Awards, 4 Distinguished Flying Cross Medals and 19 Air Medals. After 25 years in the Air Force, Col. Graham flew 13 years for American Airlines. He retired in August 2002 as a Captain on the MD-80 aircraft. He has accumulated over 14,000 flying hours. He now keeps busy as an author, speaker, aviation consultant and flight instructor at McKinney airport. Col. Graham has written four books on the SR-71 Blackbird. He was the 1999 recipient of the University of Nebraska's William F. Shea Award for his distinguished contribution to aviation. In 2005 he received the Kelly Johnson Award for his lifetime achievements to the Blackbird program. In 2013 he received the Congressional Veterans Commendation Award from Congressman Sam Johnson. He serves on the Leadership Council at the Frontiers of Flight Museum in Dallas and on the International Advisory Board of Directors at the Flight of the Phoenix Aviation Museum in Gilmer, Texas. Col. Graham volunteers as a FAA representative of their safety team in Dallas. He is a member of the Civil Air Patrol squadron in Dallas.