The Power List

Power 15

Aviation & Aeronautics
The courage to reach new heights has a double meaning in Oklahoma.

In early fall, The Journal Record decided to learn more about and honor some of the most influential leaders in aeronautics and aerospace in Oklahoma. By examining the careers of the top executives, we thought, we could learn more about this state’s giant economic engine and, in turn, something about ours as well.

We learned much more by producing our “Power 15 Aviation & Aeronautics” special section. We were impressed with the amazing accomplishments achieved by these men and women and how they brought many decades of military and engineering leadership to their jobs.

That range of diverse disciplines is among the many facts that stood out as we compiled these profiles. We think the special section, coordinated by Journal Record Correspondent Chip Minty, will offer you new insights on some of the people making such a difference in our community. We’re also grateful to Oklahoma’s public relations community who provided us with a wide range of nominations and photos. We appreciate their time and assistance in making this happen.

We’re look forward to producing regular “Power” lists in 2021, profiling Oklahoma leaders in a range of businesses and industries.

Joe Dowd
Interim Editor
The Journal Record
Phil Busey Sr. is the founder, CEO and chairman of Delaware Resource Group (DRG) of Oklahoma LLC, a global flight training and logistics company that provides more than 5 million simulator hours annually.

DRG is a leading global training service contractor employing more than 550 veterans out of a total of more than 750 employees in 130 locations around the world. Under Busey’s leadership, the company has become a total training systems integrator for many U.S. military aircraft, radar surveillance and special operations programs.

The family-owned company provides continual training and support for more than 50,000 pilots and aircrews annually. The company was named 2010 Supplier of the Year by Boeing, and since 2002, DRG has grown by more than 6,000%, diversifying into several commercial areas, such as professional services, purchasing and logistics.

Busey earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Oklahoma City University and his J.D. from Oklahoma City University School of Law. His practice areas include commercial and corporate law, Native American law, regulatory law, government contracting, and financial transactions.

He has served on OCU’s board of trustees for eight years and has served as a Distinguished Professor at OCU law school. He also has served as a lecturer at American University in Washington, D.C., focusing on Native American economic development. In 2013, OCU honored Busey with the Chairman’s Award. He also has been inducted into the Oklahoma Commerce and Industry Hall of Honor.

Born in Oklahoma City, Busey is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and Delaware Tribe. He and his wife, Cathy Callaway Busey, have been married for 43 years.; they have three children and four grandchildren.

Busey is an advocate for minorities, small businesses, and Native American tribal cultural and economic growth. In 2020, the Cherokee Nation honored him with the Community Leadership Individual Award.

DRG’s mantra is, “a profit with a purpose.” He is a member of The Oklahoma City Downtown Rotary Club.
2. RAYMOND H. SIEGFRIED III
OWNER AND CEO
VERTICAL AEROSPACE

Siegfried Brings Decades of Experience to Vertical Aerospace Venture

Raymond H. Siegfried III (Tray) brings 30 years of aerospace industry experience to his role as owner and chief executive officer of Vertical Aerospace, which provides airplane maintenance, repair and overhaul services to global partners in the commercial, military and related aerospace fields.

Prior to starting the Bristow-based company, Siegfried served in numerous aerospace leadership roles where he provided strategic oversight in areas such as operations, governance, sales and marketing. He also has served in various capacities in aerospace industry trade associations, including the General Aviation Manufacturers Association and Aerospace Industries Association.

Siegfried is a brigadier general in the Oklahoma Air National Guard, and he serves as the assistant adjutant general air. He is the principal adviser to the adjutant general of Oklahoma for all Oklahoma Air National Guard matters. Brigadier General Siegfried is also responsible for the combat readiness and operational effectiveness for the state’s two Air National Guard flying wings.

Throughout his career, Siegfried has worked and served multiple aerospace sectors, including commercial airlines, business jet services, general aviation manufacturing operations and military markets. An avid pilot, he holds an Airline Transport Pilot certificate with multiple type ratings. Also, with more than 3,000 hours of flight time and more than 15 years of flying experience, Siegfried has earned the designation of Air Force Command Pilot.

He holds an MBA from the University of Tulsa and an undergraduate degree in business from the University of Notre Dame. He lives in Tulsa with his wife, Jo, a graduate of Dartmouth College and former Wall Street investment banker and financial analyst. They have four children. Tray enjoys hunting, fishing, camping and spending time with his family.

Vertical Aerospace supports many sectors of the maintenance, repair and overhaul industry, including commercial aircraft, air cargo, military and rotorcraft. The company’s expertise in bonded structures provides high quality, quick delivery and low-cost maintenance solutions. Vertical’s flexibility and in-house capabilities provide the foundation to support customer needs.

Vertical’s primary product offering includes structural and interior-related components that include engine nacelle components, fan reversers, flight control surfaces, exhaust components and various interior units.

3. ROBERT MILLER
CO-FOUNDER AND CEO
SKYDWELLER AERO INC.

Norman native bases international startup in home state

Robert Miller is a serial entrepreneur, one of the leading aerospace engineers in the United States, and he is co-founder and chief executive officer of Skydwerler Aero Inc., a multinational aerospace startup that is based in Oklahoma City.

In addition to his role at Skydwerler, Miller is co-founder and managing partner of Parry Labs LLC, a fast-growing defense company devoted to defense engineering with a focus on unmanned aerial vehicles. He also has served as chief technology officer at Chandler May/AME Unmanned Air Systems, and he was Northrop Grumman’s director of future unmanned systems.

Miller holds a Ph.D. in aerospace engineering from the University of Michigan. He has a bachelor’s degree in aerospace engineering and a master’s degree mechanical engineering from Stanford University.

Miller has secured patents in areas, such as flight vehicle systems and aircraft trajectory planning. He also has received awards for his work from NASA and the Department of Energy.

Through his career, he has provided innovative aerospace solutions to the commercial and government sectors, and in his current role as CEO of Skydwerler, he is responsible for investor relations and strategic development.

A Norman native, Miller selected Oklahoma City as Skydwerler’s headquarters because of the state’s strong academic and research institutions as well as its solid federal and state leadership.

Growing up, he was a standout in football and wrestling at Norman High School and received the scholar athlete award in 1984. Miller currently lives in Madrid, Spain with his wife, Caryn, and their two children. Skydwerler is focused on developing solar powered aircraft capable of achieving perpetual flight for use in land and maritime monitoring, environmental monitoring, geospatial mapping, telecommunications, and emergency services.

The company employs more than 100 engineers and business development professionals in Oklahoma, California, Virginia, Alabama, and Spain.
Grayson Ardies became director of the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission in November, promoting the continued development of Oklahoma’s aviation and aerospace industry.

He is responsible for fostering growth and ensuring the state’s 108 public airports are meeting the needs of Oklahoma communities, and he also promotes the aerospace industry’s role among Oklahoma’s largest industries and top employers.

Ardies began working for the commission as an intern in 2009, and he soon became an Aviation Program Manager responsible for conducting airport and pavement inspections at Oklahoma’s general aviation airports.

In 2016, he became manager of the Airport Division and supervised development of the commission’s five-year Airport Construction Program, which directs about $25 million in federal, state, and local funding per year. His other responsibilities included airport inspections and airspace zoning reviews. Ardies later served as deputy director from January 2019 through October 2020, before being appointed to his current position as state director of aeronautics.

He has led many statewide agency initiatives, including a three-year effort to protect military training airspace. He also managed a two-year effort to develop the state’s Aerospace and Aviation Economic Impact Study, which established the industry as Oklahoma’s second-largest economic engine.

Ardies was honored with the 2020 State Aviation Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of State Aviation Officials. The award, which was established in 1989, recognizes state aviation workers’ dedication to aviation progress and development.

Ardies graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a degree in aviation management and double minors in business administration and air traffic control. While at OU, he earned a commercial pilot’s license with single- and multi-engine instrument ratings. Ardies also is a certified flight instructor.

The Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission was created by the Legislature in 1963 as a state agency focused on aviation, aerospace, and airports. The agency was set up to ensure state government could adequately promote the rapid growth of aviation after World War II.

The agency’s core responsibility is to support the needs of communities and commerce through the state’s system of public airports, using government funds to develop and maintain the state’s public airport infrastructure.
6. DONALD WETEKAM
PRESIDENT
AAR AIRCRAFT SERVICES – OKLAHOMA

Donald Wetekam, a former deputy chief of staff for installations and logistics with the U.S. Air Force, is president of AAR Aircraft Services – Oklahoma, managing the company’s 300,000-square-foot maintenance facility at Will Rogers World Airport.

As a lieutenant general, Wetekam directed operations at Warner Robins Air Logistics Center in Georgia and played key leadership roles at the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center at Tinker Air Force Base. As deputy chief of staff for installations and logistics, he was a staunch advocate for the adoption of commercial process improvement techniques, such as Lean and Six Sigma.

Wetekam also serves as the first Brock Executive in Residence for the University of Oklahoma’s Jerry Holmes Leadership Program for Engineers and Scientists. He provides students with a practical, executive-level prospective on leadership and related topics.

He graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy and holds a master’s degree in engineering from the University of Utah and a master’s degree in national resource management from the National Defense University.

Wetekam is a member of the Oklahoma Space Industry Development Authority, a senior fellow emeritus with the Institute for Defense and Business in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and chairman of the National Board of Advisors for the Museum of Aviation in Warner Robins Georgia, the nation’s fourth-largest aviation museum.

AAR provides products and value-added services to the worldwide aerospace and defense industry through a worldwide network of operations facilities. With locations in Oklahoma City, Indianapolis, Hot Springs, Arkansas, and Roswell, New Mexico, AAR provides major maintenance inspections, line maintenance, aircraft modifications and upgrades to the world’s major, regional and cargo airline fleets, as well as U.S military and government agencies.

7. MEREDITH SIEGFRIED MADDEN
CEO
NORDAM

Meredith Siegfried Madden is chief executive officer of NORDAM, a Tulsa-based, family-owned company, providing composite structures and engineered solutions to the aerospace industry.

Madden joined the company in 1999 and has progressed through a series of roles in both operations and sales. Prior to her current role, she served as manager of Strategic Market Planning, vice president of Global Sales and Marketing, vice president of the Repair Group, chief operating officer and president.

Prior to her NORDAM career, Madden was a senior consultant on mergers and acquisitions, corporate recovery services and financial advisor with Arthur Andersen’s Global Corporate Finance Group.

Madden serves on the boards of several industry organizations including SkyWest Inc. and the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum. She is a member of the University of Notre Dame’s advisory council for student athletes.

Madden also is a founding board member of Tulsa Flight Night, a nonprofit created by her father, late NORDAM founder Ray Siegfried. The summertime air show and gala supports STEM education for Oklahoma K-12 students.

She is a graduate of the Aspen Institute’s two-year Henry Crown Fellowship program for accomplished entrepreneurial leaders under 45, and she is a past member of the Young Presidents’ Organization. Madden holds an M.B.A. from the University of Chicago, and a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration and finance from the University of Notre Dame.

Founded in 1969, NORDAM is a leading, independently owned aerospace company. The firm designs, certifies and manufactures integrated propulsion systems, external fuel tanks and thrust reversers for business jets. It also builds composite aircraft structures, interior shells, custom cabinetry, and radar antenna shelters.
8. JON M. DAVIS
PRESIDENT AND CEO
META SPECIAL AEROSPACE

Meta Special Aerospace president makes immediate impact in OKC

John M. Davis, a retired lieutenant general from the U.S. Marine Corps, joined Meta Special Aerospace (MSA) as president and chief executive officer in September 2019, and soon established a new advanced payloads and deliverables company, which reinvigorated MSA’s transportation services.

The new company has been added to other MSA enterprises that provide technical, design, custom manufacturing, and other services to the industry.

Prior to joining MSA, Davis served as an officer and aviator in the U.S. Marine Corps for 37 years. Through his career, Davis commanded Marine fighter squadron VMA-223 and Marine weapons and tactics squadron MAWTS-1, as well as the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing.

He served as the deputy commander of Network Warfare at Fort Meade and as the deputy commander of the United States Cyber Command. He has also been an exchange officer with the U.K. Royal Air Force, serving as a Harrier instructor pilot and weapons school instructor.

Prior to his retirement, he served as deputy commandant for Aviation, Headquarters Marine Corps. in Arlington, Virginia.

In the course of his military career, Davis has flown more than 4,300 mishap-free hours in primarily the AV-8 Harrier fighter jet. He’s also flown the F-5, FA-18 fighters, and many other aircraft in the Marine inventory.

Davis holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Allegheny College in Meadville Pennsylvania and a Master of Science degree from Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia. He also has a Master of International Public Policy from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Baltimore, Maryland.

He currently serves as chairman of the board for Rolls Royce North America, and as a director on the boards of Chemring Group and Viper Technologies.

Meta Special Aerospace provides a full range of aerospace solutions from integrated command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operational services. The company also provides specialized training and exercise support along with maintenance, repair, overhaul and aircraft integration services. MSA has been serving its customers for more than 30 years.

9. KARI PAHNO
PRESIDENT
SPARTAN COLLEGE OF AERONAUTICS AND TECHNOLOGY

Pahno serves as Spartan College’s first female president

Kari Pahno joined Spartan College of Aeronautics and Technology in 2017 as the first female president in the school’s 92-year history in Tulsa.

In addition to her role of overseeing Spartan’s aviation programs in Tulsa, she serves as vice president of Student Experience, collaborating with students to enhance the learning environment across all four Spartan locations.

“I am proud to be a part of an institution with a long and revered history in Tulsa that has trained more than 100,000 students,” Pahno said. “Spartan College plays a critical role in Oklahoma’s valuable aerospace and aviation industry by training a sustainable pipeline of certified maintenance technicians and pilots to meet the demand of employers today and in the future.”

Highlights from Pahno’s career at Spartan include initiation of new training programs that allow for virtual learning, growing the college’s avionics training program, and expanding Spartan’s flight training fleet with 32 new Piper aircraft.

Prior to joining Spartan, Pahno served as dean of Student Affairs at South University in Savannah, Georgia, gaining invaluable higher education experience in developing long-term vision and strategies for student retention and career placement.

Pahno received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Southern Maine and her Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from Argosy University.

Since it was founded, Spartan College has expanded to three additional locations, including Broomfield, Colorado; Inland Empire, California; and Los Angeles.

Spartan has provided training to thousands of students who have come from across the United States and more than 62 other countries.

The Tulsa and Broomfield campuses are nationally accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges. Both California campuses are accredited by the Council on Occupational Education.
Nancy Anderson, Boeing’s vice president of Aircraft Modernization & Modification, leads operations at Boeing in Oklahoma City, where she began her career with the company more than two decades ago. She has risen rapidly through the ranks, from her position as an engineer, working on programming for B-1 bombers to her current role as chief engineer of Boeing operations in Oklahoma City.

Anderson has also led engineering operations involving F/A-18 and F-15 aircraft and she has worked in logistics, managing programs, people and budgets. She has spent time at Boeing facilities in Everett, Washington, where she served as executive program manager, upgrading commercial factories needed to build Boeing’s 777 and 777X air frames.

Then, she became Boeing’s executive program director for the company’s Airborne Surveillance Command and Control program. Prior to moving back to OKC in 2019, Anderson was a deputy program manager for Boeing’s Commercial Crew Program in Florida.

Boeing’s OKC campus, near Tinker Air Force Base, serves the U.S. Air Force as well as other Boeing customers from around the world, and operates as an engineering hub for the company’s defense portfolio.

Boeing believes Oklahoma is a great place to do business because the location helps the company better manage numerous programs needed to support thousands of Boeing aircraft that have been flying for decades. Specifically, Boeing’s engineering operations in Oklahoma City are important for the company’s work with the U.S. military’s E-3 AWACS fleet.

The center also handles sustainment activities, modifications and upgrades for the B-52 and B-1 bombers as well as aspects of Northrup Grumman’s B-2 bombers.
WILLIAM BROWN
SR. VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER
SPIRIT AEROSYSTEMS

Brown lends broad experience to Spirit AeroSystems

William Brown is senior vice president and general manager of Spirit AeroSystems’ Oklahoma operations. He has served in Tulsa since 2014, and he is responsible for Spirit’s Oklahoma operations, where he oversees programs at the company’s Tulsa and McAlester facilities. Spirit’s Tulsa facility is its largest in the state and the location employs about 1,400 people, supporting programs associated with Boeing, Gulfstream and AWACS.

Prior to joining Spirit, Brown served as executive vice president, global operations and president of global customer service and support at Beechcraft. Prior to joining Beechcraft, he was president and general manager of AAR Aircraft Services in Oklahoma City, and held senior-level positions with Independence Air, Avborne Inc. and Midwest Airlines.

In a recent media interview, Brown said he is proud of his Tulsa workforce. They are seasoned, he said. Many of them started at the facility when it was working on NASA programs, such as the Saturn rocket and the space shuttle. They also worked on the B-1 bomber.

Based in Wichita, Kansas, Spirit AeroSystems is one of the world's largest nonoriginal equipment designers and manufacturers of aerostructures for commercial and defense aircraft.

In addition to its facilities in Wichita, Spirit has locations in Tulsa and McAlester, as well as several other locations across the U.S. and around the world. The company's core products include fuselages, pylons, nacelles and wing components. The company also provides maintenance, repair and overhaul services.

Spirit is a $7 billion company with a worldwide workforce of about 13,000, and a Tulsa workforce of about 1,400.

VISIT THE OKLAHOMANS IN SPACE EXHIBIT!
Launch to Landing: Oklahomans and Space
In coordination with the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC and Cosmosphere in Hutchinson, Kansas

This exhibit focuses on the many Oklahomans who have played a part in the U.S. air and space program.

Monday through Saturday | 10:00am to 5:00pm
Please call 405-522-0765 or visit www.okhistory.org/historycenter/visitor for admission costs and group rates.

800 Nazih Zuhdi Dr., Oklahoma City, OK 73105
405-522-0765 | www.okhistory.org
Cory Welscher is president and general manager of Accurus Aerospace in Tulsa and vice president for Accurus Aerospace Corp.

With more than 10 years of aerospace manufacturing industry experience, Welscher has held several leadership positions in engineering, program management, and business operations. Most recently, he served as vice president and general manager of Walden’s Machine and OMADA International, which was formally known as Profab, where he drove rapid improvements in a short time.

Welscher has a reputation for leading organizations to improved financial results through goal setting, teamwork, and accountability from the top down. He received his associate degree in design technology from Rochester Community College and his bachelor’s degree in business management from the University of Phoenix.

Accurus Aerospace specializes in machining aluminum alloys and exotic metals. It also fabricates subassemblies and provides processing services to the aerospace industry, taking pride in making things ready for flight.

Jeff Greer serves as general manager of Wall Colmonoy Aerobraze in Oklahoma City. Aerobraze Engineered Technologies is a division of Wall Colmonoy, which manufactures engineered components, including heat exchangers and exhaust systems for aerospace and industrial applications.

Greer began his career with the Texas Instruments Defense Systems and Electronics Group at an exciting time. Lean Manufacturing was in its infancy, and quality expert Mikel Harry was bringing a new problem-solving methodology to TI called Six Sigma, and TI was being recognized for its innovative approach to benchmarking. Greer led TI’s Supplier Development team, providing training and consulting services to TI’s supply chain in Continuous Flow Manufacturing and Applied Statistics.

While working with TI’s supply chain, Greer became fascinated with the depth and speed of improvement that could be achieved in small and midsize companies when teams were focused on a clearly defined mission and purpose.

Since those early days, Greer has led companies at the highest levels, building strong leadership teams and cultures dedicated to a relentless pursuit of continuous improvement. His management background spans multiple business environments, including aerospace machining and processing, defense electronics, silicon reclamation, mechanical and electrical assembly, and software development.

Greer has served on corporate advisory boards, including service as an executive board member of the Oklahoma Aerospace Alliance. He is a degreed industrial engineer from Oklahoma State University and a member of the OSU Cowboy Academy of Industrial Engineering and Management. Greer recently completed his Master of Business Administration from Oklahoma State University, graduating summa cum laude.

Wall Colmonoy Aerobraze Oklahoma City is a leading manufacturer of heat-transfer-related assemblies and other high-temperature sheet metal components for aerospace, military and energy production customers. These include aircraft cabin and cockpit environmental heat exchangers; light aircraft exhaust systems; fuel cell heat exchangers; combustion heat transfer assemblies; turbine engine related components; and others.
Ron Falk is vice president and general manager of L-3 Communications AMI, leading simulation system manufacturing operations in the Tulsa area, a position he has held since 2012.

L-3 makes various simulators for military and private sector clients, providing machines that help pilots learn how to fly different aircraft, or even help truck drivers brush up on their skills. Prior to taking over at L-3, Falk served as general manager at Ducommun LaBarge Inc., a position he held from 2003 to 2012. Falk is a 2003 graduate of Seton Hill University. Since 1981, L-3 has specialized in the design and production of electro-mechanical simulated instruments and integrated training system hardware. L-3 employs more than 1,000 workers in Oklahoma and more than 40,000 worldwide. The company’s Oklahoma operations make simulators for the U.S. military.
already are doing so. For example, New York is putting up $30 million, the News-Telegram said. Other states have become active partners to develop initiatives. As each state comes into the fold, it's helping to further the participation.

The association said in a fact sheet. The association isn't asking for new regulations, it's about helping people who want to buy our cheese. We thought between the three of us, we could help with that,