

Tribute to Jim Hall

BG R. Steven Ritchie (USAF, Ret.)

During service in Southeast Asia in the Vietnam war, Brig. Gen. Steve Ritchie became the only Air Force jet pilot ace by downing five MIG-21s. After completing 339 combat missions totaling more than 800 flying hours, Ritchie returned as one of the most highly decorated pilots of the war, having received the Air Force Cross, four Silver Stars, 10 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 25 Air Medals.



Steven Ritchie

I have spent a major portion of my life either flying a high performance military jet fighter or sitting in a ready room reading about how to get out of one of these aircraft in case of an emergency. During this time I had never given much thought to the "experts" who write these briefs and manuals until I met "the best of the best" of them at an Air Force reception.

The name, Jim Hall, matched with the master parachutist's badge on the blue Air Force uniform, clicked in my mind that this was the man, a pioneer in the escape field, whose name and picture I had seen on many, many parachuting safety articles.

Over a career that spanned 36 years, Jim was at the forefront of the "experts" who wrote about and demonstrated how to survive an emergency bailout. From his invention and perfecting of the "Buddy System" of free fall parachute training that teaches aircrews and astronauts to successfully freefall from high altitudes to his assistance in designing, jumping and live testing of American's first

zero-zero ejection seat, Jim Hall has helped the United States lead the way in emergency parachuting.

He has been awarded the parachuting industry's highest award, the Leo Stevens Medal, has been inducted into the Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame, retired as a Brigadier General in the Colorado Air National Guard and was honored with the Air Force's Legion of Merit.

I am certain you will enjoy this exciting book about Jim's early parachuting experiences before he devoted his energies to helping save the lives of our aircrews.