

Space Scoreboard



Photo by Paul Kennedy

One of the oldest B-52s still in operation, NB-52B #52-008 has kept track of its milestones with an extensive pictographic history stenciled on its aluminum skin. The giant bomber made its first flight in 1955. It has been at the Dryden Flight Research Center, Edwards AFB, Calif., since 1959 and on loan to NASA since 1976. It has served as an aerial launch platform for the X-15 (right). It has air launched wingless lifting bodies and validated parachute systems as part of the development of the space shuttle. In April 1990, it air launched the Pegasus space booster. As with all aging aircraft, top-notch maintenance keeps it flying. Parts for this one, though, have occasionally had to be scavenged from museums.



USAF photo courtesy Edwards AFB, Calif.