

General Doolittle Awarded AOG Honorary Membership

Gen. (USAF, Retired) James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle, recently became the 10th individual selected by the Association of Graduates (AOG) as an honorary member. The AOG Board of Directors on Dec. 2, 1989 unanimously voted to bestow honorary membership on General Doolittle "in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the evolution of airpower in the United States."

Association board director and AOG past president, James E. Spittler, Jr., '65, journeyed to California on Jan. 23, 1990 to make the formal presentation to General Doolittle in his Carmel home. Accompanying Spittler were Col. (Ret) James E. Wilhelm, '61, AOG vice president, development; and Lt. Gen. (Ret) Winfield W. Scott, Jr., former Academy superintendent. Also present were Maj. Gen. (Ret) William Lyon, Lt. Gen. (Ret) Laurence C. Craigie and General Doolittle's son John. General Lyon graciously provided his private jet to bring the association representatives and General Craigie, a close personal friend of the honoree, from Southern California to Carmel.

General Doolittle was born in Alameda, Calif., on Dec 14, 1896, and was educated in Nome, Alaska, the Los Angeles Junior College, and spent a year at the University of California School of Mines. He enlisted as a flying cadet in the Signal Corps Reserve in October 1917 and trained at the School of Military Aeronautics, University of California and Rockwell Field, Calif. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Signal Corps' Aviation section March 11, 1918, and served successively at Camp Dick, Texas; Wright Field, Ohio, Gortner Field, La.; and returned to Rockwell Field as a flight leader and gunnery instructor. He then was assigned to Kelly Field, Texas, serving with the 104th Aero Squadron and the 90th Squadron on border patrol duty at Eagle Pass, Texas.

On July 1, 1920 Doolittle received his regular commission and promotion to first lieutenant and, in Sept. 1922 he made the first of many pioneering flights which were to earn him most of his major air trophies and international fame. He flew a DH-4, equipped with crude navigational instruments, in the first cross-country flight, from Pablo Beach, Fla. to San Diego, Calif. in 21 hours and 19 minutes. He made only one refueling stop at Kelly Field. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross for this historic feat. In the same year he received his bachelor of arts degree from the University of California.

In July 1923 he entered Massachusetts Institute of Technology for special engineering courses and graduated the following year with a master of science degree. He received his doctor of science degree in aeronautics a year later, one of the first men in the country to earn this degree.

In March 1924 he served at McCook Field, conducting aircraft acceleration tests. In June 1925 Doolittle went to the Naval Air Station in Washington, D.C. for special training in flying high-speed seaplanes. During this period he served with the Naval Test Board at Mitchell, N.Y. and was a familiar figure in airspeed record attempts in the New York area. He won the Schneider Cup Race—the World Series of seaplane racing—in 1925, with an average speed of 232 miles per hour in a Curtiss Navy racer equipped with pontoons. This was the fastest a seaplane had ever flown. Doolittle received the Mackay Trophy for this feat.

In April 1926 he was granted a leave of absence to go to South America on airplane demonstration flights. In Chile he broke both ankles but put his Curtiss P-1 through stirring aerial maneuvers with his ankles in casts.

Returning to Mitchell Field in Sept 1928, he assisted in the development of fog flying equipment. He helped develop the artificial

horizontal and directional gyroscopes and made the first flight completely by instruments. He attracted wide newspaper attention with this feat of "blind" flying and later received the Harmon Trophy for conducting the experiments.

In January 1930 he was adviser for the Army on the building of the Floyd Bennett Airport in New York City. Doolittle resigned his regular commission Feb. 15, 1930 and was commissioned a major in the Specialist Reserve Corps. He was named manager of the Aviation Department of the Shell Oil Company where he conducted numerous aviation tests. He also went on active duty frequently with the Army to conduct tests, and in 1932 set the world's high-speed record for



General "Jimmy" Doolittle accepts his honorary AOG membership plaque from Jim Spittler, '65, AOG board member and past AOG president.

land planes. He won the Bendix Trophy Race from Burbank, Calif. to Cleveland in a Laird Biplane and took the Thompson Trophy Race at Cleveland in a Gee Bee racer in a speed averaging 252 miles per hour. He went back on active duty in July 1940 as a major.

He was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1942 and went to Headquarters Army Air Force to plan the first aerial raid on the Japanese mainland. He volunteered and received General H.H. Arnold's approval to lead the attack of 16 B-25 medium bombers from the aircraft carrier, Hornet, with targets in Tokyo, Kobe, Osaka, and Nagoya. The daring one-way mission on April 18, 1942 electrified the world and gave America's war hopes a terrific lift. As did the others who participated in the mission, Doolittle had to bail out, but fortunately landed in a rice paddy in China near Chu Chow. Some of the other flyers lost their lives on the mission. Doolittle received the Medal of Honor, presented to him by President Roosevelt at the White House, for planning and leading this successful operation. In addition to the nation's top award, Doolittle also received two Distinguished Service Medals, the Silver Star, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, Bronze Star, four Air Medals, and decorations from Great Britain, France, Belgium, Poland, China, and Ecuador.

In July 1942, as a brigadier general—he had been advanced two grades the day after the Tokyo attack—Doolittle was assigned to the 8th Air Force and in September became commanding general of the 12th Air Force in North Africa. He was promoted to major general in November and in March 1943 became commanding general of the North African Strategic Air Forces.

He took command of the 15th Air Force in the Mediterranean Theater in Nov. 1943. From Jan. 1944 to Sept. 1945 he commanded the 8th Air Force in Europe. He was promoted to lieutenant general on March 13, 1944. On May 10, 1946 he reverted to inactive reserve status and returned to Shell Oil as a vice president and later as a director.

In March 1951 he was appointed a special assistant to the Air Force chief of staff, serving as a civilian in scientific matters which led to Air Force ballistic missile and space programs.

He retired from Air Force duty Feb. 28, 1959 but continued to serve his country as chairman of the board of Space Technology Laboratories. He also was the first president of the Air Force Association in 1947, assisting in its organization.

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