

# Courageous feat of Doolittle's Raiders continues to inspire

*This was written by Steve Thompson, a St. Charles resident who visited an anniversary reunion by Doolittle's Raiders.*

With the Dec. 7, 1941, surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese war machine also captured Wake Island, Guam and invaded the Philippines.

They had already captured the Dutch East Indies, Hong Kong, Malaya, Korea, French Indo-China and major portions of China. They now ruled the southern and western Pacific, and in Europe, Germany and Italy dominated the continent in a similar way and were driving into Russia to possibly link up with Japan in the Middle East. This was a desperate time for America and its allies, and the nation's morale was at its lowest of World War II.

In retaliation for Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt and the military immediately began planning a bombing attack against the Japanese homeland, concentrating on Tokyo and other major cities. It was felt this attack would begin to erode the confidence of the Japanese military, demoralize the populace, and at the same time jump-start the mood of the American people.

This would be a very dangerous mission. Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle, an accomplished World War I aviator, was placed in charge of organizing this all-volunteer group. Secrecy was of the utmost importance, and even the crewmen would not be told the objective of their mission until they had set sail for Japan.

The entire effort presented a unique challenge, for heavy Army



The Raiders reunion in Columbia, S.C., this year included the second-largest gathering of vintage B-25 bombers since World War II.

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Air Corps bombers had never before been launched from the deck of a naval carrier. The B-25 bomber was selected, and 24 crews began training in February 1942 at Columbia Air Base in South Carolina. In late March, the final 16 crews and their planes were loaded onto the carrier Hornet in San Francisco, and the entire battle fleet would then have to

proceed undetected to within 400 miles of the coast of Japan to launch the aircraft.

The original plan was for all 16 bombers to proceed to Chuchow (Zhuzhou), China, after their bomb runs for refueling, and then on to the safety of Chungking (Chongqing), China's wartime capital. However, the morning of April 18, the fleet was

detected by a Japanese picket ship. It was more than 600 miles off the Japanese coast at this time, but they had no choice but to immediately launch, for they had lost the element of surprise.

The fleet was caught in the middle of a heavy storm, and the deck of the carrier was pitching wildly, making the launch very difficult. In addition,

it would now be impossible to reach the refueling point at Chuchow, so each crew now realized they would have to either bail out or crash-land in Japanese-occupied China—that is, if they survived their bomb runs in the first place.

All of the planes and crews did survive the raid, and each hit their assigned target. However, for many of the 80 airmen participating, the worst was yet to come. Of the 15 B-25s to reach China (the 16th landed in the Soviet Union), 11 were abandoned in flight with their crews bailing out. Four crash-landed, with two fliers dying while another was killed in bail-out. Most crewmen were picked up by friendly Chinese, who treated them as heroes and led them to safety.

However, eight of the Raiders were captured by the Japanese, and eventually three were executed while a fourth was starved to death. The remaining four spent 40 months as prisoners of war, enduring horrendous torture and deprivation, finally freed in September 1945.

The bravery and patriotic convictions of all 80 of these Doolittle Raiders is best represented in the words of Lt. William Farrow. Farrow was one of the three airmen executed.

The ashes of each of these three were placed in glass jars at the Kiang-wen Military Prison in Shanghai after the war, and with each was a final letter to their families. In Farrow's letter, he states, "Dearest Mother: My time has now come. The sooner the better... I am not afraid. Just remember God will make every-

thing right and that I will see you again in the hereafter. We've had some good times together... you are all splendid Christians and knowing and loving you has meant much in my life. So far me, and for America, be brave and live a rich, full life, pray to God and do your best. I know, Mom, that this is going to hit you hard, try to stand up under this. You are the best mother in the world—be brave and strong."

So wrote Farrow with his last words, at the age of 25. He displayed courage and dignity as he faced his execution. Each of these 80 Doolittle Raiders rose to the challenge at a crisis point in the war, with each ready to give their lives to defend their country and accomplish their mission.

Each year, the Doolittle Raiders hold a reunion, with the first one held in 1945. With the exception of 1946 and 1951, they have met every year and will continue to do so until just two Raiders remain.

At the reunions, the remaining Raiders toast their fallen comrades with brandy in silver goblets, one for each Raider, which are on perpetual display at the Air Force Academy. This year, the goblets were escorted to the 80th reunion in Columbia, S.C., by two academy cadets who are grandsons of two of the Raiders.

Included with the goblets is a bottle of cognac, vintage 1896, the year Jimmy Doolittle was born. When just 20 Raiders remain, the cognac is to be opened, and the other 78 fallen comrades will be toasted for the last time.

Doolittle lived to the age of 95, and today, about 20 Raiders survive.



Tung-Sheng Liu, left; Travis Hoover, a Raiders pilot on plane 2; and Jacob DeShauzer prepare for the "old-time car" parade down Main Street in Columbia, S.C., honoring the Doolittle Raiders. Hoover and his crew crash-landed on the Chinese coast after the raid, where they were picked up by friendly Chinese guerrillas. Liu, an English-speaking Chinese man, found Hoover and the guerrillas and led them to freedom through Japanese-occupied territory. After the war, Liu came to America and earned a master's degree in aeronautical engineering in 1947, and became a citizen in 1954. DeShauzer was a bombardier on plane 16. After he and his fellow airmen bailed out over China, they were captured by the Japanese. DeShauzer spent 40 months as a prisoner of war. After the war he went into missionary training, returning to Japan in 1948, where he spent the next 20 years converting his former enemies to Christianity. One of those included Mitsuo Fuchida, leader of the Japanese air attack on Pearl Harbor.



The Doolittle Raiders held three public autograph sessions, attended by thousands of people, at a reunion in Columbia, S.C., this year. At the last session, an official wanted to close down the final autograph session because CNN wanted to interview the Raiders. However, upon discovering the hundreds still in line for an autograph, retired Maj. Gen. David Jones, a pilot on plane 5, explained that the Raiders were going to continue the session until all had their autographs. "I'll CNN to go to the end of the line!" he said. The session continued, and CNN went to the end of the line.