

MEDALIST FOR 1942

For notable achievements in the advancements of both the art and the science of aeronautics.



JAMES HAROLD DOOLITTLE

The age of flight has produced many remarkable men, but few so protean in abilities and accomplishment as James Harold Doolittle.

Born in Alameda, California, on December 14, 1896, he lived in Alaska until he was eleven. Enlisting in the United States Army Signal Corps in World War I, he quickly won his wings and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant. He left college in his senior year, in 1917, to enlist, and the University of California conferred the degree of Bachelor of Arts on him in 1923. In September of the same year he flew from Pablo Beach, Florida, to San Diego, California, with one stop, becoming the first man to fly across the United States in less than 24 hours.

He was graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1924 with the degree of Master of Science, and in 1925 with the degree of Doctor of Science in aeronautical engineering. In October of that year he won the Schneider Trophy Race. In April 1926 he went to South America on airplane demonstration flights. In an accident in Chile, unconnected with flying, he broke both ankles. Not to be balked in his effort to fly the American military airplane he was demonstrating, he put his plane through its paces with his ankles in casts and his feet fastened to the controls.

In September 1927 he was sent to Mitchell Field, at the request of the Daniel Guggenheim Fund for the Promotion of Aeronautics, to assist in fog flying experiments. During this assignment, flight instruments now in universal use were developed, and Doolittle, in a hooded cockpit, accomplished the first flight ever made completely on instruments.

In 1930 he became manager of the Aviation Department of the Shell Oil Company. In 1940 he was recalled to active duty. Promoted in 1942 to Lieutenant Colonel, he was assigned to Headquarters, Army Air Force, in Washington, whereupon he organized and carried out one of

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the most daring and extraordinary operations of World War II, leading a squadron of Army bombers which on April 18, 1942, bombed the Japanese mainland from the sea, taking off from a carrier, the USS Hornet. On the day after the raid, he was promoted to Brigadier General.

In July 1942 he was assigned to the 8th Air Force in England, later commanded the 12th Air Force in Africa, and in March 1943 became Commanding General, North African Strategic Air Forces. The following November he became Commanding General of the 15th Air Force and on January 1, 1944, was named to command the 8th Air Force in the European Theatre of Operations. In March 1944 he was promoted to Lieutenant General.

On January 5, 1946, he returned to the Shell Oil Company as Vice President. He was appointed by President Truman in 1952 as Chairman of the President's Airport Commission, and in 1958 became Chairman of the Board of Space Technology Laboratories, serving in that capacity until his retirement in 1962.

In 1985, the U.S. Congress promoted Doolittle to the rank of full General on the Air Force retired list. He received many other awards and honors during his career, and is the only person to win both the Medal of Honor and the Medal of Freedom, the nation's two highest honors.

Doolittle died in Pebble Beach, California, on September 27, 1993 and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.