The George W. Jalonick III
and Dorothy Cockrell Jalonick
Memorial Distinguished Lecture Series

The George W. Jalonick III and Dorothy Cockrell Jalonick Memorial Distinguished Lecture Series was established to inform and enlighten the public about the history of flight by bringing aviation notables to the Dallas community.

Dorothy and George Jalonick III were special friends of The University of Texas at Dallas and the History of Aviation Collection. This series was endowed in their memory by George Jalonick IV and friends of the Jalonick family.

The History of Aviation Collection

The University of Texas at Dallas houses a unique resource of aeronautical history known as the History of Aviation Collection (HAC). Located on the third floor of the Eugene McDermott Library in the Special Collections Department, the core of the HAC consists of four collections:

- The CAT/Air America Archive
- George Williams World War I Aviation Library
- Admiral Charles E. Rosendahl Lighter-Than-Air Collection
- General James H. Doolittle Collection

The HAC also holds hundreds of individual collections ranging from aviation pioneer Ormer Locklear to commercial aviation. In addition, the HAC includes more than 50,000 books, magazines and newspapers.
“JAMES H. ‘JIMMY’ DOOLITTLE: HIS LIFE STORY”

By Col. C.V. Glines (USAF, Ret.)

Jalonick Memorial Lecture
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I appreciate very much the honor of being invited by the Jalonick family to talk about the life of a man who, in my opinion, was America’s greatest airman.

His name is James Harold “Jimmy” Doolittle - an American patriot who received the Medal of Honor from one president for valor and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from another for distinguished service. No other person has ever been so honored.

As a youngster, I had read about his flying exploits but I could not imagine I would be invited many years later to help him tell his life story. The title of his autobiography succinctly expresses his character and humility: I Could Never Be So Lucky Again.

When I asked him during one of our many conversations if he would like to live any part of his exciting life over again, he replied, “No, because I could never be so lucky again.”

Jimmy Doolittle was born in Alameda, California on December 14, 1896, the only child of Frank and Rosa Doolittle. His mother was a central figure in his early life. He often said she was a “saint” for her patient and firm guidance during his formative years.

His father was a skilled carpenter. He was also a restless and ambitious man. Jimmy described him as “a carpenter by trade but an adventurer by inclination.”

There was a spectacular gold strike along the Klondike River in Alaska the year Jimmy was born. It attracted world attention when two ships arrived in San Francisco in 1897 with nearly two million dollars in gold.

A stampede from the States began and Frank Doolittle couldn’t resist the temptation. He packed his tools, left his wife and son in California and headed north in the brutal winter of 1897-98. He had no luck finding gold but prospered as a carpenter because of the demand for housing. By 1899, he had worked his way to Nome on the Seward Peninsula.

Frank Doolittle sent for Rosa and Jimmy and they arrived in Nome in May 1900. Nome quickly grew that year to nearly 20,000 people. Gold had been found on the beach and more than a million dollars worth had been extracted from the sand by the end of that summer.

Frank Doolittle built a house for the three of them and helped many others. But the gold rush to Nome ended as rapidly as it had begun. The cold, dark winter nights took their toll and the population was reduced to about 3,500 after the last boat left for the States in the fall of 1903. The Doolittles decided to stay.

Life was difficult for little Jimmy Doolittle when he started the first grade. He was shorter than other boys his age and he was laughed at because of his long curls. After his first day in school, he pleaded with his mother to cut them off and she did.

It was probably inevitable that little Jimmy would be provoked by taller boys. He recalled his first fight was with a tall classmate who pushed him rudely one day and it made him angry. He flailed out wildly, hitting the boy squarely on the nose. Blood gushed down his face and he ran home frightened. Jimmy thought he had killed him. The boy thought he was dying.

The word spread quickly. This little guy might be short but he was tough. Jimmy quickly earned the respect of his peers.

Jimmy’s dad taught him how to handle tools and woodworking became a life-long hobby. His main interest in sports included aerobatics and marathon running, both indoor winter sports in Nome at the time.

He spent quality time with his mother and they often went fishing together. He was given a single-shot .22 rifle which was the start of a lifetime of interest in game hunting.

Frank Doolittle took Jimmy on a trip to Los Angeles in the summer of 1904 where Jimmy saw his first automobile, train and trolley car, and modern houses with paint on them. When they returned to Nome, he yearned to return to the exciting life he had briefly experienced. In 1908, he and his mother boarded a ship for Los Angeles.
Jimmy never knew what happened between his parents but his father remained in Alaska and never returned to California.

Jimmy attended Manual Arts High School in Los Angeles. In 1910, he saw the famous flyers of the day perform at the first air meet ever held in the United States. The excitement encouraged him to construct a bi-wing glider based on plans in a magazine. The first flight from a nearby bluff ended in disaster but he repaired the wreckage and made a monoplane from what was left. A windstorm blew the new model over the back fence and he was out of materials and out of enthusiasm.

At this time, Jimmy became interested in competitive boxing and took some lessons from a teacher who had watched Jimmy in a schoolyard fight. He took Jimmy aside and began teaching him some boxing fundamentals.

At age 15, Jimmy entered three-round amateur boxing matches and won the Pacific Coast championship over the next two years, first as a flyweight, then as a bantamweight. He was undefeated in 28 bouts.

His mother bought him a motorcycle to encourage him to quit boxing. However, this gave him more mobility to travel to boxing bouts. Although only a junior in high school, he began to box professionally on weekends under the name of Jimmy Pierce. Crowds rooted for him as the underdog. He never lost a bout and made as much as $30 a night.

By this time, a pretty schoolmate named Josephine Daniels had entered his life but it wasn’t until the final year of high school that she seemed to reciprocate his interest. However, she was unimpressed with his boxing and his motorcycle. She was known throughout her life as “Joe,” spelled with an “e” because a favorite uncle was named Joe and the family had always called her “Little Joe.”

Joe apparently changed this scrappy, scruffy individual into a well-dressed gentleman but the easiest way he could earn money to date her was to continue to box professionally. During their senior high school year, Jimmy said he was going to marry her but she refused, saying her mother would never approve. Thinking positively, he said he was going to Alaska and would send for her when he had earned enough money.

He briefly joined his father in Seward, Alaska during the summer after graduation. After a few days, Jimmy left and panned for gold alone. He found no gold and when he realized there was no future there, he hiked back to Seward and said goodbye to his father whom he never saw again. He got a job as a deck hand on a Seattle-bound ship but couldn’t afford a ticket from there to Los Angeles. He stowed away on a freighter and arrived home in time to enroll at Los Angeles Junior College.

Jimmy next enrolled in mining engineering at the University of California at Berkeley. He wanted to join the university boxing team but the lower weight slots were filled so he asked to compete for the middleweight or 165-pound class, although he weighed only 135 pounds. In try-outs, he knocked down three other applicants and made the team. Meanwhile, he continued to box professionally. He was undefeated until he was matched with an old pro named “Spider” Reilly. Jimmy lost the bout by a decision and never boxed professionally again. He learned that no matter how good anyone might be in a sport, eventually someone will come along and prove that he is better.

Jimmy joined the university acrobatic team in 1916. During the summer of 1917 after his junior year at Berkeley, Jimmy worked at a mercury mine in Nevada. America had entered World War I by this time and when he returned to begin his final year of college, many of his classmates had already joined one of the services. Jimmy joined the Aviation Section of the Army Signal Corps as a Flying Cadet and began flight training at Rockwell Field, San Diego.

Meanwhile, Joe Daniels was working as a clerk at an insurance company. During the Christmas vacation period, Jimmy persuaded her to marry him. They went to Los Angeles City Hall and were married by the city clerk on Christmas Eve, 1917.

Jimmy completed flying training on March 15, 1918. His pilot log book shows he soloed after seven hours, four minutes of dual time. Incidentally, we have all of his pilot log books here in the Doolittle Collection (History of Aviation Collection at the University of Texas at Dallas).

He was eager to join the war but to his disappointment was assigned to Rockwell Field as a flying instructor. When the war was over, he realized that military flying was very appealing and he decided to stay in.

He developed a reputation for low altitude aerobatics and wing walking and took pride in performing stunts no one else dared to try.
One stunt that got him in trouble was when he sat on the axle of a plane while its pilot made a landing. Cecil B. DeMille, the famous movie director, happened to be filming some scenes on the field that day and turned his camera on the plane. That night DeMille showed the day's filming to the base commander who was embarrassed that such a stunt had been photographed. Knowing Doolittle's penchant for stunts, he said, “That's got to be Doolittle!” and promptly grounded him and confined him to the base for a month.

In 1919, Doolittle was transferred to Eagle Pass, Texas, for border patrol duty. A year later, he was transferred to the Air Service Mechanics' School at Kelly Field, San Antonio. He took a parachute packing course and upon completion was given the option of jumping to test the chute he had packed. He jumped.

During this post-war period, Army Air Service pilots were encouraged to keep aviation in the news to demonstrate the potential of aircraft. As a result, many altitude, distance and endurance records were set. Doolittle requested permission to try to set a coast-to-coast record from Florida to California. He had gas tanks added to a de Havilland DH-4 and invented a device that allowed him to “dehydrate” during long flights. This device became standard equipment on single-engine military aircraft.

All did not go well on the take-off from a Florida beach before a large crowd. One wheel caught a soft place in the sand and the plane swerved into the surf and flipped over. When the plane was repaired, he tried again on the night of September 5, 1922 when there was no crowd and headed for San Diego with a refueling stop at Kelly Field, Texas.

He landed there 22 hours, 30 minutes after leaving Florida. It was the first time anyone had spanned the country in less than a day. He later received the Distinguished Flying Cross for this flight.

In 1923, Doolittle attended the Engineering School at McCook Field in Dayton, Ohio where he tested a number of different aircraft. He flew in many air shows and liked to say that test-flying was his vocation and stunting was his avocation.

At this time, two friends persuaded him to apply for an Army vacancy to pursue a master's degree in aeronautical engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He wasn't qualified since he hadn't completed his senior year at the University of California but the two friends, without telling him, convinced the university to grant him a degree in 1922 because it had been the policy of colleges throughout the country in 1917 to confer Bachelor degrees on seniors who had left to enter the military services. He was accepted at MIT in 1923 and completed the master's degree requirements. His thesis examined the stresses a military aircraft could endure when it was subjected to in-flight maneuvering. He flew over 100 hours of tests in three different aircraft types.

He was then approved for the MIT doctoral program which he completed in 1925 with a dissertation on the effect of wind velocity on aircraft performance. He made 292 test flights to gather the necessary statistical data.

He was disappointed with the final draft because his doctoral committee had required the dissertation to be so abstract and with so many mathematical formulas that he thought the average pilot would not want to read it. His Doctor of Science degree in Aeronautical Engineering is believed to be the first such doctorate ever awarded.

Jimmy said Joe should have been awarded a degree for having to type, re-type and put up with his frustrations as he tried to master the secrets of abstract writing and satisfy the faculty committee.

After graduation in June 1925, Jimmy was chosen to compete in the Schneider Cup Race in a seaplane. He had never flown a seaplane so he borrowed a Curtiss R3C from the Navy to practice. After three British and two Italian pilots were eliminated because of plane malfunctions, Doolittle raced against one Italian and two U.S. Navy pilots and won the trophy with a speed of 232 mph to the annoyance of the Navy pilots.

The next day, he flew the R3C at 245 mph to set a new international mark for seaplanes. He received the Mackay Trophy for setting this record.

When Jimmy returned to McCook Field, he was unwillingly persuaded by his buddies to don an admiral's uniform, sit in a rowboat mounted on a truck, and be paraded through Dayton, Ohio.

Although still a First Lieutenant, Doolittle was made head of McCook's Flight Test Section which he said was the best job in the Air Service because he could then be both pilot and aeronautical engineer.

In 1926, he went on leave from the Army to demonstrate a Curtiss P-1 Hawk fighter plane to foreign governments in South America starting in Santiago, Chile. He would be competing with British,
Italian and German pilots trying to sell their respective planes.

At an evening cocktail party for pilots, Doolittle was introduced to a powerful Chilean drink called a pisco sour. During the evening, the conversation turned to Douglas Fairbanks, the silent movie star who had captured the imaginations of Latin Americans with his swashbuckling roles. Doolittle, encouraged by this new drink, volunteered in his meager Spanish that all American kids could do those things. The Chilean pilots wanted proof so Doolittle did a hand-stand and a few flips. There were congratulatory shouts of “Ole!” and “Bravo!” One of the pilots said he had seen Fairbanks do a handstand on a window ledge. Could Doolittle do that?

It seemed reasonable to Doolittle so he crawled out on the window ledge and did a two-hand stand to great applause. This was very heartening so he decided to do a leverage stunt. Grasping the ledge with one hand, he extended his legs and body out from the ledge parallel to the courtyard below. He held there for a few seconds and suddenly felt the ledge give way. He plunged 15 feet onto the stone walkway below and collapsed. He was taken to a hospital where doctors confirmed he had cracks in both ankles. Long casts were applied and he was told to stay in bed for about six weeks.

Doolittle was very embarrassed about what the Curtiss people, his buddies at McCook and Joe would say about his foolishness. Embarrassment overcame the pain. He could not stand the thought that the foreign pilots would be showing off their planes when there was no one else to fly his. He had his mechanic shorten the casts and attach clips to his flying boots so he could slip off the rudder pedals.

Doolittle returned to the airport and fought a mock air battle against one of their fighters flown by a German ace. However, the German was forced to give up when the fabric on his wings started to tear off. Doolittle then flew a low altitude aerobatic routine to the cheers of the Chileans.

But Doolittle had more demonstrations on his agenda. He flew to Bolivia and then over the Andes to Argentina. He returned to the States and went to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington because his ankles were not healing properly. He spent weeks on crutches, then had to wear corrective shoes and take therapy before being released in April 1927.

Doolittle may have been relatively immobile but was not inactive mentally. Thinking about aerobatics, he wondered if it were possible to fly an outside loop, a maneuver that would probably put a terrific strain on pilot and plane. When he returned to flying duty at McCook Field, he secretly practiced in a Curtiss Hawk and found that, although extremely uncomfortable, he and the plane could tolerate the G-forces when he pushed all the way around. On May 25, 1927, he demonstrated it while his brother pilots watched. It was an aviation “first.” He added the outside loop to his repertoire at air shows until an order from Washington forbid it because most Army planes could not stand such stress. From then on, Doolittle did only half an outside loop with a half roll at the bottom to level flight.

Doolittle was now 31 years old and wondered about his future. Still a First Lieutenant after 11 years’ service, he knew that a Captaincy was still years away. He had two sons and now had to support both his and Joe’s elderly mothers. But at this time he was invited to participate in blind flying experiments at Mitchel Field, Long Island sponsored by the Daniel Guggenheim Fund for the Promotion of Aeronautics.

Jimmy moved to Mitchel Field and made more than 100 flights in a Consolidated NY-2 practicing blind landings with a safety pilot using experimental radio beacons and new gyro instruments he helped to develop. He had the instruments placed in different positions in the cockpit to determine the best locations.

Finally, on the foggy morning of September 24, 1929, Doolittle decided to try a flight without the safety pilot. The radio beacons were turned on and he climbed into the fog, made a 180-degree turn, then came around to a final approach and landed smoothly.

After he landed, the fog began to lift. Mr. Guggenheim arrived and asked to witness an actual flight. Doolittle wanted to fly it alone under the wing but Guggenheim insisted the safety pilot go along. With the hood firmly in place, he made an identical flight while the safety pilot kept his hands outside the cockpit so they could be seen.

Next day, a New York Times headline announced: “Blind Plane Flies 15 Miles and Lands; Fog Peril Overcome.”

As Jimmy said in an interview, he always felt, rightly so, that his blind flying work was his most valuable contribution to aviation. It is hard for us to imagine what commercial aviation would be like today if he had not proved that we could fly safely in weather and at night without reference to the ground. He received the Harmon Trophy for these pioneering flights.
The work at Mitchel Field did not take up all of Jimmy's time and he volunteered to put on an aerobatic demonstration in a Curtiss Hawk at the 1929 Cleveland Air Races. He borrowed one from the National Guard and intended to do the half outside loop as his final stunt.

He took the Hawk out over the countryside to practice and when he nosed down to begin there was a sharp pop as both wings broke loose. He unsnapped his safety belt and was literally thrown out of the plane at about 1,000 feet altitude. In a note of thanks to the Irving Parachute Company that had manufactured the 'chute, he wrote: "AIRPLANE FAILED. PARACHUTE WORKED." He returned to the races, borrowed another Hawk and flew his usual routine.

When the blind flying experiments were over, Doolittle received an offer from Shell Oil Company to join their aeronautical department at three times his military pay. It was an offer he couldn't afford to pass up. He resigned his regular commission in February 1930 and received a reserve commission as a Major, skipping the rank of Captain.

One of his first assignments with Shell was to visit several European countries to advertise Shell products and demonstrate four of the latest Curtiss aircraft. He and two other pilots put on flight demonstrations in 12 countries over a three-month period.

Doolittle wanted to compete in the 1931 Cleveland Air Races and persuaded Shell to buy a Beech Travel Air monoplane. After another company pilot had a crash landing in it Doolittle bought the wreckage with his own money and had it modified to his specifications.

On its first test hop, he did some aerobatics and then put it into a dive. He reached 300 miles an hour but as he started to pull out, he heard the ominous sound of cracking metal. Both ailerons snapped off and he lost control.

Jimmy jumped, the 'chute opened and he hit the ground as the plane crashed a half mile away. He noted in his log book: "Lost ailerons, ship crashed. God passenger."

This incident did not lessen his desire to compete in the 1931 races. He borrowed a plane called the Laird Super Solution and entered the Bendix cross-country race from Burbank to Cleveland against seven competitors.

He landed at Cleveland in nine hours, 10 minutes elapsed time to win the Bendix Trophy and $7,500 prize. He took off quickly and flew through rain and turbulence to Newark, New Jersey reaching there in 11 hours, 11 minutes after leaving Burbank to win an additional $2,500. He was the first to fly coast-to-coast in less than half a day.

After the 1931 races, Doolittle established some city-to-city records, including a flight to link the three capitals of Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. Then, to prove how casual flying could be, he flew Joe and two other passengers from St. Louis to Jacksonville for breakfast; Havana, Cuba for lunch; and Miami for dinner.

Another air adventure was to commemorate the bicentennial year of George Washington's birth in 1932 by flying over all the routes that Washington had covered in his lifetime and drop mail bags on a pre-announced schedule in a single day. Accompanied by two passengers, mail bags were dropped along a 2,600-mile route in 14 states that took an exhausting 15 hours, 40 minutes.

Doolittle wanted to enter both the 1932 Bendix and Thompson races, this time in a modified Super Solution but had to crash-land it when the landing gear failed to come down and could not be repaired in time. The Granville brothers of Springfield, Massachusetts offered him their Gee Bee R-1 for the race.

Doolittle tested the Gee Bee, an airplane with a huge engine, a miniscule set of wings, and a very small rudder. It was so sensitive on the controls that it did two snap rolls before he could get it under control. He decided not to enter the Bendix Race with it.

He flew it to Cleveland and reached 309 mph in the Thompson Trophy pre-race qualifying runs which made it the fastest plane in the world at the time. He won the trophy and quickly returned the Gee Bee to its owners. He said it was the most dangerous airplane he ever flew.

Soon after those 1932 races, Doolittle announced that he was retiring from air racing. He felt they had served a useful purpose because they had inspired new concepts in aircraft design but the price in planes and pilots had been very high. He thought the time had come for industry to give attention to safety and reliability so that commercial aviation could develop for the common good.

Commercial aviation was maturing with larger aircraft and reliable, scheduled operations in the early 1930s, thanks to instrument flying. Engines needed more power and gasoline with higher octane ratings would be required. Doolittle persuaded Shell to begin producing 100-octane fuel for military and airline aircraft. It wasn't an easy "sell." It was the middle of the Great Depression and it would...
be a great financial risk for the company. But he dealt with the Shell scientists as "Doctor" Doolittle, not as a racing pilot, and finally persuaded them to approve production.

He then went to Washington and convinced the Army's general staff but it was also difficult. There was a belief among a few non-flying officers that all engines from motorcycles to bombers should be able to use a single fuel and thus simplify supply problems in wartime.

Shell made the first delivery of 100-octane to the Army Air Corps in 1934. This advance in fuel development, sparked by Doolittle, contributed greatly to Allied success in the air during World War II.

While Shell had been considering the 100-octane question, Jimmy and Joe were invited to make a round-the-world trip in 1933 to the Far East, India, Egypt and Europe where Jimmy demonstrated the latest Curtiss fighter plane. He saw that some of these countries were building air forces with substantial numbers of planes and pilots, much larger than the United States. He began to speak out publicly that the United States was falling dangerously behind in aeronautics.

Doolittle traveled to Germany in 1937 on Shell business. He visited Ernst Udet, a gregarious World War I German ace and stunt pilot whom he had met at the Cleveland air races. Udet took him to the factories where Stuka dive bombers and Messerschmitt fighters were being built. There was no effort to hide anything and it was painfully obvious to Doolittle that the Germans were producing top-notch military aircraft.

He visited Germany again in August 1939 and found that Udet had changed. No longer a fun-loving guy, he did not allow Doolittle to see as many aviation facilities but Jimmy saw enough to know what was happening. The pilots and civilian engineers he did meet talked openly about war. Deeply concerned, Doolittle returned to the States and immediately reported what he had observed to General "Hap" Arnold, head of the Army Air Corps. Doolittle was so convinced war was coming very soon in Europe and that the United States would be involved, he volunteered to give up his job with Shell and return to active duty as a reserve Major at a great reduction in pay.

On September 1, 1939, two weeks after he returned from Germany, Nazi troops invaded Poland. A week later, President Roosevelt declared that the United States would become the "arsenal of democracy" and announced a program to produce an unprecedented 50,000 planes a year.

As he requested, Doolittle was ordered to extended active duty on July 1, 1940 and assigned to the Allison Engine Company in Indianapolis to oversee military production. He was later transferred to the Ford plant in Detroit and found many deficiencies which caused delays in switching the company from automobiles to airplanes. He went to England to observe how the British were producing aircraft and returned with nearly 150 recommendations to improve American production.

On the night of the Pearl Harbor attack, Doolittle wrote a formal request to be transferred to a tactical unit because he felt that his flying experience would be of greater value in operations. Instead, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and ordered to Washington. In late January 1942, he was given an assignment that would put his name in the history books as the leader of a small group of 79 men who would perform a historic air mission in April 1942. It was to be known ever after as the Doolittle Tokyo Raid.

This daring mission can be stated briefly: Sixteen land-based B-25 bombers each with a crew of five took off from a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier and bombed military targets in five major Japanese cities in a surprise attack just as the enemy had done at Pearl Harbor. The planes had to take off earlier than planned because they were detected by an enemy fishing boat and arrived over China in darkness and bad weather. Fifteen crews had to bail out or crash land. The sixteenth crew landed in Russia.

American morale soared after all the bad news that had come from the Pacific during the previous four months. Japanese morale plummeted and provoked their humiliated war lords to mount a huge task force against Midway two months later. In the ensuing battle, they lost four carriers, hundreds of men and scores of planes to U.S. air and naval forces.

Doolittle was devastated when he learned that all the planes were lost to the American cause; three men died, eight were captured, five were interned in Russia and crews were scattered all over eastern China. He felt sure he would be court-martialed for failure to complete the second half of his first combat mission which was to deliver those B-25s to units in China. Instead, he was promoted from Lieutenant Colonel to Brigadier General, skipping the rank of Colonel.

He was ordered home and awarded the Medal of Honor by President Roosevelt. However, he sincerely felt all his life that he
didn’t deserve it and had accepted it on behalf of the other 79 men because they had all shared the same risks that he did.

The next phase of Doolittle’s military life was an assignment to North Africa in command of the 12th Air Force with promotion to Major General but it was not a desk job. He was a flying general who went on many bombing missions. He would arrive on the flying line unannounced and tell a crew he was going to fly with them that day.

He would displace the co-pilot on a plane scheduled to fly in a particular position in a formation so he could observe the unit’s air discipline and the tactics of enemy fighters. The aircraft he flew in were hit several times by flak and fighters but he was not wounded.

Doolittle made it a point to check out in every type of aircraft in his command and flew British Spitfires and P-38 fighters to make inspection tours of his bases. It wasn’t long before his personal brand of leadership was noticed by his superiors.

General Eisenhower, who originally had been opposed to Doolittle being assigned to take over the 12th Air Force, wrote him a note. He said:

“I am not exaggerating in any sense when I tell you that in my opinion you have shown during the past year the greatest degree of improvement of any of the senior United States officers serving in my command. You have become a soldier in every sense of the word and you are, every day, rendering services of inestimable value to our country.”

Doolittle was given command of the 15th Air Force in Italy in mid-1943, then in January 1944, was assigned to head the 8th Air Force in England. He was promoted to Lieutenant General, the only Reserve officer ever to be promoted to three-star rank.

Although he wanted to continue to participate in combat missions, he was forbidden to do so because he had been given access to Ultra, the code-breaking system that permitted the Allies to intercept secret German messages.

At this time, the 8th was having tremendous losses of heavy bombers while being escorted by fighters. The primary mission of the fighters was to stay with the bombers to protect them. Doolittle changed that assignment. He said the first duty of 8th Air Force fighters was to destroy German fighters. This meant they could leave the bomber formations and chase any German interceptors to their bases. This new policy had an immediate effect as Luftwaffe losses increased. Bomber crews were unhappy but Doolittle felt that this was one of the best decisions he made during the war.

As the commander of the 8th he hosted the royal family and briefed Winston Churchill on several occasions. He flew a P-38 over the beaches on D-Day and gave General Eisenhower the first eyewitness report of the invasion.

By the spring of 1945, it was obvious that Germany was near collapse and finally surrendered in May. Eighth Air Force units were scheduled to transfer to the Pacific.

Doolittle was ordered back to the States and sent on a speaking tour with General George Patton. They gave speeches to several large audiences and reminded them that the war was not over yet.

Doolittle then went to the Boeing factory and checked out in the B-29 Superfortress.

He then proceeded to Okinawa to prepare for the arrival of his 8th Air Force units to participate in the final drive of the war. There were delays as bomber crews had to transfer from Europe and transition to the new B-29s.

The Japanese did not surrender after the first atomic bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945. As the second bomb was being prepared and victory seemed imminent, General Carl Spaatz radioed Doolittle that if he wanted 8th Air Force bombers to get into combat with the Japanese, he had better expedite his preparations.

Doolittle refused. He replied, “If the war’s over, I will not risk one airplane or a single bomber crew just to be able to say that the 8th Air Force had operated in the Pacific.”

The war was officially over when the Japanese signed surrender documents on the battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay and Doolittle was there.

Returning home, he turned down a regular commission and went back to Shell with a promotion to vice president. Doolittle flew a company-owned B-25 to make cross-country trips. But after 30 years and 10,000 hours in 265 different types of aircraft, he decided to quit flying as pilot because he knew that he could not stay proficient. His last flight as pilot-in-command was on September 21, 1947.

Doolittle’s agreement with Shell was that if he were called by the government for short-term assignments, he would be allowed to accept them. The requests from Washington for his service were quick in coming. He was asked to serve on a Board on
Officer/Enlisted Men Relationships and head President Truman’s Airport Commission studying the safety conditions at the nation's airports. And he was a leader in the campaign to establish the Air Force as a separate service which took place in September 1947.

The list of his subsequent governmental appointments during the following years is very long and includes the chairmanship of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, the Joint Congressional Aviation Policy Board, the Committee on National Security Organization, and the Air Force Scientific Advisory Board.

He also served on the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, the Defense Science Board, the President’s Science Advisory Board, the National Aeronautics and Space Council, the Plowshare Committee of the Atomic Energy Commission, and the Air Force Space Systems Advisory Group.

Doolittle was a director on the boards of Space Technology Laboratories and TRW Systems. He was also a Trustee for the Aerospace Corporation.

He gradually resigned from the various corporate boards but continued to make speeches in which he expressed a recurrent theme whenever he had the opportunity. It was that if the experience of four major wars during his adult lifetime had given him any license to dispense advice, it was to remember how unprepared America was before each of those conflicts and that we should never allow this to happen again. Not only must we always have a strong national defense, but we must diligently conserve our natural resources.

In 1985, Senator Barry Goldwater led his Senate colleagues to pass legislation authorizing promotion of Lieutenant General Ira Eaker and Jimmy to the four-star rank of General. Plans were made for both of them to receive their fourth stars at the same time. However, Jimmy respectfully requested that Eaker have his ceremony first. “Ira outranks me,” he said. “I was a reserve officer and had a break in my service which he never did. He should get his first.”

And that’s the way it was. President Reagan and Senator Goldwater pinned the stars on a smiling Doolittle in the White House.

In July 1989, President George H. W. Bush awarded Doolittle the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his extraordinary contributions to aerospace progress and his extensive non-military service in the nation’s interest.

The years had been kind to Jimmy Doolittle and he had wisely taken good care of himself. He had lived a fruitful life and died on September 27, 1993 at the age of 96.

Joe Doolittle, the love of Jimmy’s life, had died on December 24, 1988, their 71st wedding anniversary and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Jimmy was buried with her. A “missing man” formation of jet fighters, a B-52 bomber and a lone B-25 flew over during his burial ceremony.

Jimmy Doolittle followed a simple philosophy during his adult lifetime. He said:

“I believe we were all put here on this earth with just one purpose — to serve our fellow man. It doesn’t matter what form this service takes. You can build a bridge or write a poem or paint a picture or have a house by the side of the road for the weary traveler. The criterion is this: if a person leaves the earth a better place than he found it, then his life has been worthwhile.”

Jimmy Doolittle’s life had spanned the history of heavier-than-air flight and our ventures into space and contributed immeasurably to both. We are all beneficiaries of his dedicated service to our nation.

There will never be another like him.

Message from Erik D. Carlson, Ph.D.
Head of UTD Special Collections

As Coordinator of the History of Aviation Collection based in the McDermott Library at the University of Texas at Dallas, I want to express my gratitude to the Jalonick family for their support of this important lecture series. Appreciation also goes to Dr. Larry Salz, Director of UTD Libraries, for his pioneering work in the History of Aviation Collection and continued support of its programs.

The 2004 lecture was aided tremendously by the work and dedication of the Special Collections staff - Carole Thomas, Paul Oelkrug, Toni Huckaby, Thomas Allen and Patrizia Nava. Support from friends of the History of Aviation Collection is also appreciated.
Distinguished speaker C.V. Glines, second from right, presents two of his books about Jimmy Doolittle to George Jalonic IV, center left, and his wife, Mary, right. At left is Dr. Larry Sall, Dean of UTD Libraries.

Col. C.V. Glines (USAF, Ret.)

C. V. Glines is a regular figure around the HAC. Every Tuesday he joins a group of volunteers who organize thousands of old aviation photographs and documents. He wrote two books about the historic 1942 raid on Japan and assisted the late World War II hero and aviation pioneer in preparing his autobiography I Could Never Be So Lucky Again. Glines is the official historian for the Doolittle Raiders and is archivist for their records at HAC. His relationship with them enabled him to write Four Came Home: The Gripping Story of the Survivors of Jimmy Doolittle's Two Lost Crews.

Also among his 35 books is a pictorial biography of Doolittle, Master of the Calculated Risk. Other books by Glines include biographies of Roscoe Turner and Bernt Balchen. He assisted one of America's first military flyers, General Benjamin D. Foulois, in writing his autobiography. Glines served in the U.S. Air Force as a pilot for a full career and retired in 1968. He is co-holder of three national and international aviation speed records.

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