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Hattie Meyers Junkin Papers - Newspaper and Journal Articles: General

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6-C The Atlanta Journal and CONSTITUTION SUNDAY APRIL 23, 1978

Friend of George E. "Buck" [Reaver - Fouiedu??] a Waco-Weaver Aircraft Company 1919 - Civilian Flying Instructor Rich Field Waco, Texas- special solo field.]

RAIDERS TO HOLD ANNUAL REUNION

[[image - photograph]]
[[caption]] JIMMY DOOLITTLE [[/caption]]

Fabled Flier Doolittle Is Fit as a Fiddle at 81

LOS ANGELES (UPI) - The directory in the lobby of the Wilshire Boulevard office building reads:

"Doolittle, J.H. 702"

That's Gen. James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle, the fabled flier, who led America's first air strike against Japan April 18, 1942, less than six months after Pearl Harbor attack shattered the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet.

At the age of 81, Jimmy Doolittle looks fit enough to go back on active duty. He keeps regular office hours as a consultant to an insurance company.

He's fit and ready for the annual reunion of the Doolittle Raiders at Rapid City, S.D., April 27-30, when he and "the boys," as he calls them, get together to renew old friendships and shoot the breeze.

Of the 80 fliers who volunteered for the mission from the carrier Hornet about 600 miles from Japan on that gray day in April 36 years ago, 53 are still alive.

"We usually get about 35 to 40 at the reunion," said Doolittle. "Many of them bring their families, their children, and some even have grandchildren.

"We have one formal meeting. The boys pick a local student and give him a scholarship and decide where they'll hold next year's meeting. We've already been invited to Charleston, S.C., for 1979."

Doolittle, a much-honored flier who held many air speed records and was trained as an engineer at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, looks back on the Tokyo raid without apparent emotion.

He flew the first of the 16 B-25 Mitchell bombers, loaded with a ton of bombs each and extra gas tanks, in the precarious take-off from the Hornet, evaded Japanese anti-aircraft guns, bombed military targets in Tokyo, and bailed out over China.

Three of the fliers died bailing out or in crash-landings. Eight were captured by the Japanese who executed three of them as "war



criminals."

What were Jimmy Doolittle's thoughts as the strike started?

"We had a job to do and we did it. We knew it was a dangerous mission but we felt it was an important mission and we were all dedicated to do our best.

"It was the first good news for the American people. The raid had very little damaging effect. Sixteen tons of bomb...a puny effort."

However, he pointed out, "It caused the Japanese people to question their war lords who said that Japan would never be bombed. There was also a tactical advantage - it caused the Japanese to retain on the home islands aircraft for protection in case of another raid, which we had no intention of making. Those airplanes would have been much more effective down where the war was going on in the South Pacific."

Doolittle rarely expresses an opinion on politics, saying, "My interest always has been technical rather than political. I know nothing about politics."

But he does have a historical viewpoint on society.

"It seems to me our society has gone to the team rather than the individual effort," he said. "It is very difficult today for an individual to stand out the way it was possible in the simpler world of yesterday. Not that we don't have leaders - good leaders. But the technology has become so complex that an assessment of new developments has to be taken that requires far more than one mind."

Musing, he said, "I have lived in an extremely interesting period. I was born in 1906 and saw the automobile come into being, the airplane. I saw radio and television and computers come into being. I have always been interested in tools. My father was a carpenter and taught me to use tools when I was young. I saw the era where a man worked with his hands change to machines.

"I grew up in Nome, Alaska, and I was the smallest kid in school, "he smiled. (He is 5-feet, 6 inches today.) Each youngster that came to town had to whip me before he could whip a bigger kid. I learned early how to take care of myself and learned the importance of keeping yourself in shape.

"So there's an advantage in being small. It's an incentive to tiny excellence."

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