

DOOLITTLE

L.I. - Sunoco. Tuesday, May 19, 1942.


Today at the White House, President Roosevelt pinned a medal on a Brigadier-General. A small Brigadier-General -- short of stature, prematurely baldheaded and much given to smiling. Sharp mirthful eyes - to accompany a ready grin of impish humor. If anyone of a few thousand

aviators in this country had happened to look in at that White House ceremony, they would have gaped and yelled, "Hey, Jimmy!"

For today the secret ^{was} disclosed. The American bombing raid that hit Tokyo was led by Brigadier-General James H. Doolittle, better known to fame as the irrepressible daredevil Jimmy Doolittle of a thousand hair-raising exploits in the sky.

Immediately after the decoration, Brigadier-General Doolittle made a formal statement -- the first detailed account we have had of the bombing of Japan.

He gives us the following formal report:- "The success of the recent air raid on Japan," he relates, "exceeded our most optimistic expectation. Apparently there was no advance warning of the raid, and not more than thirty Japanese pursuit planes were observed during the flight --



and these were completely ineffective.

"We approached our objectives just over the housetops, but bombed at fifteen hundred feet." Meaning, they came in low, and ^{then} zoomed high enough to bomb without being smashed by the explosions.

"The target for ~~one~~ plane," says Jimmy Doolittle, "was a portion of the Navy Yard south of Tokyo. One salvo" ~~xxxx~~ he goes on, "made a direct hit on a cruiser or battleship under construction. They left it in flames. One of our bombardiers strewed incendiary bombs along a quarter of a mile of aircraft factory. Another illuminated a tank ~~xxxx~~ farm."

It was incendiaries like these that set fires ~~thx~~ that burned for two days.

Jimmy relates an odd detail. "One of our party discovered a ball game in progress. The players and spectators did not start their run for cover until just

as the field passed out of our sight." The Japs have long gone in for our American baseball. And they didn't bomb the game.

"After releasing our bombs," he concludes, "we dived again to the treetops and went to the coast of Japan at that altitude to avoid anti-aircraft fire. We would like to have tarried and watched the later developments of fire and explosion. But even so, we were fortunate to receive a fairly detailed report from the excited Japanese radio broadcasts. It took them several hours to calm down to deception."

Jimmy's men didn't know where they were going when they took off. In the air he told them not to bomb the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.

There is one thing that Jimmy Doolittle does not tell -- the bases from which the American bombers operated. That secret which has puzzled the Jap enemy so much, is still concealed. There is one possible hint in the official citation awarding the

Congressional Medal. It uses these words:- "With the apparent certainty of being forced to land in enemy territory or perish at sea." And that would indicate that the bombers made a long and hazardous flight before they got to their objectives. Jimmy announces that not a single American bomber was shot down or lost -- although one was forced down in Soviet territory, the crew interned. In addition to the Congressional Medal awarded to the Commander of the raid, all the others who took part in the exploit were decorated today. They number seventy-nine -- plus General Hames H. Doolittle -- better known as Jimmy.

For a dozen years after the previous war, Jimmy Doolittle was the Army's Number One pilot. He was also the nation's ace of speed and acrobatics. They called him - "the flier's flier."

He made a specialty of doing stunts of speed and acrobatics that aviators, themselves, knew to be prodigious exploits -- "the flier's flier." For

example, he was the first to do the outside loop. In Nineteen Twenty-Five, he won the Schneider Cup for speed -- beating out the greatest pilots of England, Italy and the United States Navy. Jimmy, though an Army flier, did it in a sea plane -- which he borrowed from the Navy. Then there was the time when the fabric ripped off his wings at the air races -- and he was only a hundred feet from the ground. Somehow, it seemed like a miracle, he managed to get his disintegrated plane to climb. He got it up to three hundred feet. Then he jumped, and his parachute opened -- just in time.

Jimmy Doolittle was reared in Alaska, where his parents had gone during the adventures of the gold rush. Later, in California, he became a prizefighter. He was an amateur bantamweight champion, and fought professionally. His parents didn't like it -- and neither did Jo. She was the girl he met in school, and she persuaded him to go in for something more lofty

than punching and getting punched. So Jimmy went in for an engineering education, and eventually became at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the first American pilot to receive the degree of Doctor of Aeronautical Engineering.

In his career of stunt flying he was not only the daredevil, but also the technologist, One of his ace exploits was in the conquest of fog -- pioneering in blind flying. He created aviation history by taking off blind -- flying and landing that way, an historic demonstration in a highly scientific business of instrument flying.

But Jimmy Doolittle never lost his love for fistifcuffs. Among his friends he was known for the way he would stand around -- a mild looking little fellow, an unimpressive shorty. And he would only wait for some big bully to give him an argument and start pushing him around. And then - wham! Or sometimes, when the ~~spirit~~ spirit moved him, he would just announce -- "come on, let's fight."

Jimmy also was keen about athletic stunts, an acrobat. And in this lies the secret of the flying exploit that gave him the greatest fame of all -- when, with both ankles broken, he flew across the Andes. How did he happen to get the broken ankles? Jimmy himself told me the story -- of a gay party with some South American military officers, in which Jimmy undertook to show them some acrobatics. He went to a window ledge and hoisted himself up -- standing on his hands. He had a grip on a wooden window ledge, and this broke. Which precipitated Jimmy out of the window. It was a couple of stories high, and he landed feet first -- and crack went the two ankles! This was on the west coast of South America and Jimmy was scheduled to fly across the Andes to the east coast. And he did, broken ankles and all.

Jimmy often talked about quitting the dangerous side of aviation. In Nineteen Thirteen-One

he made a public announcement: "Because of my advanced age," he explained, patting his prematurely bald head, "my wife has made up my mind that I will do no more flying." His wife was Jo, the girl who had persuaded him to quit prizefighting, but she couldn't make Jimmy quit flying. Two months after announcing his retirement, he set a transcontinental speed record to win the Bendix Trophy in the national air races. Jimmy had set a previous record years before, when he was the first pilot to fly across this continent in less than twenty-four hours.

Later on, Jimmy again retired from danger-flying. At that time he told me that he taken enough risks for one man's lifetime, and if he ever got into a plane again it would be as a passenger in an airliner, taking a humdrum ride.

Then the war situation came, and Jimmy Doolittle couldn't stay out of it. He had enlisted as a flier in the Army back in Nineteen Seventeen,

but never did get near the scene of military action. His talent for aviation was so manifest, that the Army kept him over here to teach pilots. But now, the next was was at hand, and this time the story was to be different. And now Jimmy Doolittle has seen military action -- and how! Flying as Commander of the American bombers that raided Japan.

I suppose that when the war is over, he will retire again. But you can't tell. He never was consistent. For example, in crossing city streets he was always exceedingly careful about the traffic lights. He never crossed except with a green light. In driving, it was different. He always wanted to go through the red lights. I remember driving him through New York in my car one day, and he said if I didn't quit stopping at red lights -- he would get out and take the subway.

CHINA

China today appealed for aid - as the Japs were launching what looks like a kind of pincer's move.

They are driving north from Burma into the Province of Yunnan and at the same time they are starting a push in eastern China - the Chekiang Province, south of Hankow. There they have captured two important cities. In other words, they are striking at the Chinese from both the south and the east, and may plan to drive far enough to link the two drives. There is some belief that the major enemy intention now is to knock China out of the war. (A spokesman for Chiang Kai-shek described the

Chinese prospects in these two words:- "very grave." Hence, China's urgent appeal for quick aid.

In Burma, the British forces under General Alexander are said to be - "still intact". They are now near the frontier of India, and have taken up defensive positions along the Chindwin River. R.A.F. planes are

blasting Japanese positions in Burma, while the Japs
claim to have launched destructive air raids against
nearby points in India.

RUSSIA

From Soviet Russia comes the word -- grandiose. That adjective is used to describe the military operations the Soviet forces are now beginning -- battles to smash the German war machine ~~xx~~ completely. The Moscow radio makes the following statement: "The Red Army will conduct battles on such a grandiose scale that the German Army will not be able to withstand them and will burst under pressure. The Red Army," it adds, "has everything necessary for the complete destruction of the German Army in Nineteen Forty-Two."

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On the Kharkov front the Red Army is described as driving along a hundred miles front and thrusting a deep wedge into the German defenses. Moscow tells of new successes today -- the capture of what is called -- "a large populated place." And the forces of Marshal Timoshenko are reported to be battling for the possession of a vital highway--

center -- a hub from which main roads fan out. The battle continues^e fiercely -- with increasing German resistance announced by the Soviets.

The Nazis, ~~on their side~~ claim that Timoshenko's Kharkov^{v offensive} defenses^λ has resulted in what they called -- "complete failure." They say that the defenses of the city are in their words -- "again in German hands." And that is an admission that defense points were captured. Also Berlin states that the Russian Air Force holds -- "numerical superiority." The Russians have more planes than on the Kharkov front, say the Germans.

The Nazis claim the completion of a huge victory in the Crimea. They say they have occupied the entire Kerch Peninsula^λ ^{- capturing 149,000 prisoners.} The general situation would seem to be -- in the extreme south the Germans have had success in driving through the Kerch Peninsula, -- which faces the Caucasus. Further north -- the

Soviet offensive against Kharkov may have forestalled and frustrated Nazi plans for a main drive in that area.

BRITAIN

The British Parliament today opened its two-day war debate in the House of Commons. And the immediate key note was -- a second front. Ministers of the government stated that there most certainly would be an invasion of Nazi-controlled Europe. One expressed it in these words:- "a great attack on the enemy in the West."

This accords with speculations ^{based} ~~passed~~ on the arrival of fresh American troops in North Ireland -- the biggest of the A.E.F. contingents that have been sent thus far. However, in parliament today, the government ministers gave no guess concerning the date or the place of the promised invasion.

Prime Minister Churchill was absent as the great debate opened. And that causes a bit of w~~i~~nder. The last time Churchill was missing on a similar important occasion in Commons was when he was

secretly meeting President Roosevelt for their conference on the Atlantic.

Today Churchill was represented in Parliament by Deputy Prime Minister Atlee, who undertook to defend his chief against charges of dictatorial methods, denying that Churchill and the British military chiefs are frequently at odds, with the Prime Minister imposing his own decisions on the military men. "This simply is not true." he said.

SINKING

Canada today announced the sinking of the EMPRESS OF ASIA, one of the Dominions's best known liners. Thousands of passengers traveling to and from the East knew the ship well in the days when the EMPRESS OF ASIA was the number one luxury liner in the service between Vancouver and the Orient.

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The destruction of the vessel was part of the Singapore disaster. The EMPRESS OF ASIA, turned into a troop transport, was jammed with soldiers leaving Singapore. Japanese bombers attacked, and started fires. The EMPRESS OF ASIA really did not sink, she burned -- and was left a charred hulk. The circumstances of the event might seem to indicate a tragic loss of life. But happily that is not true. There were only nineteen fatalities. All the others aboard the crowded troop ship were saved, and that seeming miracle is attributed to -- perfect discipline.

GASOLINE

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There is to be nationwide rationing of gasoline. News from Washington states that the Office of Defense Transportation has been directed to draw up plans to that effect. Of course, there are many areas of the country where there is no shortage of motor fuel, and we are told that the nation wide rationing of gasoline is to be undertaken as a measure to conserve rubber. Less gas -- less usage of tires.

This news comes along with a statement by President Roosevelt that the motor fuel rationing should be treated as a national problem, instead of a sectional ~~ma~~ matter.

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And now — Hugh.