



Upside down Pangborn



Wrong way Corrigan



Jimmy Doolittle

Long Island Early Fliers Club, Inc.

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Editor's Note:

There are many aviation pioneers who are invisible; their achievements lost or forgotten to the passage of time. Sometimes that invisibility occurs as the result of one achievement that may seem so big, so noteworthy, it overshadows all the other activities that prove to have a longer lasting influence in the advancement of aviation safety. The life of James Doolittle is one of the examples that we will review in this issue. Much has been said about the Doolittle raid on Tokyo; I do not intend to rehash that particular heroic achievement that meant so much in our history, because there is so much more that he has done that is still important to aviators throughout the world.

More obscure is the name Douglas "Wrong Way" Corrigan and the comical, but shrewd way in which he earned that name. It is indeed, a true story! Finally, there was Clyde "Upside down" Pangborn. I have never heard his name brought up during the "hangar flying" I have been pleased to participate in. Perhaps he is better known in the Pacific Northwest, where he spent most of his life and aviation career.

Each of these aviation pioneers dedicated his life to the advancement of aircraft performance, aviation safety, and the day to day procedural operation of aircraft that we all take for granted. I hope you enjoy and never forget the character, creativity, perseverance and impact of these individuals on the aviation industry.

The first trans-Pacific Flight

"Upside-Down" Pangborn made crowds gasp when he performed his daring aerial stunts during the Roaring Twenties. He was among the period's finest aerial showmen. As his nickname suggests, he was anything but a conventional pilot, and people loved him for it. However, Pangborn was much more than an entertainer. In 1931, he and a fellow aviator set a world record when they became the first people to fly nonstop from Japan to the United States. Pangborn also served as a test pilot in his later years. During his career, Pangborn not only knew the thrill of entertaining crowds and establishing records, but also the painstaking process of thoroughly testing a plane and making it safe for other pilots to fly.



Clyde Pangborn (1894-1958)

Pangborn was born on October 28, 1894, in Bridgeport, Washington. At age two, he and his family moved to Idaho. After graduating from high school, Pangborn took classes in civil engineering for about two years at the University of Idaho before enlisting in the army.

During World War I, Pangborn served as a flight instructor for the U.S. Army at Ellington Field in Houston. There he taught cadets how to fly the Curtiss JN-4 "Jenny" biplane. Although Pangborn had a relatively uneventful military career, he did acquire a rather unique talent. Pangborn learned to slow-roll his plane onto its back and fly upside down. His fellow pilots subsequently began calling him "Upside-Down Pang," a name that would stick with him for life, although most people would shorten the nickname to either "Upside-Down" or "Pang."

After the war, many military aviators, like Pangborn, wanted to use their new skills as pilots to earn a living. The U.S. military had a surplus of Jenny biplanes, and many of them bought Jennys and set out across the country performing aerial shows.

Pangborn became a professional barnstormer, thriving as an aerial stuntman and performing all sorts of tricks. One of the first stunts he attempted was an automobile-to-airplane transfer at Coronado Beach, California, in 1920. During the stunt, Pang was supposed to hop off the back of a speeding car onto a rope ladder

that was hanging from a cruising airplane, and then climb up into the aircraft. Although Pang got hold of the



View of Clyde Pangborn caught mid-air, falling, during his unsuccessful attempt to make an airplane-to-automobile transfer at Coronado Tent City, Coronado Beach, California, on May 16, 1920.

ladder, he lost his grip and plunged to the ground. Remarkably, he only sustained a slight back injury and some muscle strains and bruises. This would be the only serious accident of his career.

In 1921, Pangborn joined Ivan Gates and formed the Gates Flying Circus. Pang was part owner of the show and the chief pilot and operating manager. The troupe toured internationally and became famous. One of the key stunts Pangborn performed was to change planes while in flight. He held the world record for the feat. In 1924, he also made news when he rescued a stuntwoman in midair whose parachute had gotten tangled in his plane's landing gear. Pangborn flew countless miles during his barnstorming days without sustaining any serious injuries or inflicting any on his passengers.

Like most barnstormers, Pangborn's stunting days were limited because of a series of new federal safety laws. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, barnstormers found it increasingly difficult to meet the new standards and many aerial shows went out of business. The Gates Flying Circus dissolved in 1928. Although Pang would work with other shows, each of them would fold within a few years. In 1931, Pangborn's barnstorming career ended. Pang began looking for a new challenge almost immediately and decided to attempt a new around-the-world speed record. He believed he could easily better the previous mark of 20 days, 4 hours, established by the German Graf Zeppelin in 1929.

Photo: Courtesy National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution



Hugh Herndon (I) and Clyde Pangborn (1894-1958), Wenatchee, October 5, 1931

Pang chose Hugh Herndon, Jr., a friend and former barnstormer, as his navigator. Herndon, an easterner from a wealthy family, was only an average pilot, but more importantly, he had the money to sponsor the venture. With Herndon's capital, the two men purchased a Bellanca "Skyrocket" monoplane.



*Pang's Bellanca Skyrocket he named:
"Miss Veedol"*

Pangborn next attempted to launch the New Standard Aircraft Corporation of Paterson, New Jersey, but the Depression also ended that effort.



1929 New Standard Airplane

He then went to work for the Bergen County, New Jersey police department as a pilot. That lasted only a short time,

however, and in 1930 he tried barnstorming again.

Everything seemed to be proceeding according to plan, but then Wiley Post and Harold Gatty established a new around-the-world record in June, about a month before Pangborn and Herndon's scheduled take off.

Discouraged at first, Pangborn and Herndon still believed they could better Post and Gatty's record of 8 days, 15 hours, and 51 minutes. On July 28, they took off from Roosevelt Field, Long Island, heading northeast.

For a while, Pangborn and Herndon looked as if they might catch up to Post and Gatty's record. When they left Moscow, they were only ten hours behind the previous record setters' time, but then Herndon made a serious mistake. While Pangborn was sleeping, Herndon got lost over Mongolia. Although Pangborn corrected the problem, another major mishap occurred. In Siberia, a driving rainstorm turned a dirt runway into a quagmire, and when the two men could not take off in enough time to better Post and Gatty's mark, they decided to abandon their attempt at the record.

As Pangborn and Herndon were waiting out the bad weather, they came up with another record setting option. At that time, a Japanese newspaper was offering a \$25,000 prize to whomever made the first non-stop flight between Japan and the United States (Post and

Gatty had stopped off in Alaska during their flight). Focusing on their new plan, Pangborn and Herndon set out for Japan.

Once again, the former barnstormers ran into trouble. Because of a miscommunication between American and Japanese officials, Pangborn and Herndon did not have permission to fly over Japan. This caused serious problems, especially when coupled with the fact that Herndon had taken some photographs of the Japanese countryside, including, unintentionally, some military installations. When the two men landed, Japanese authorities arrested them on charges of espionage. Although the Japanese government detained them for several weeks, the U.S. Embassy successfully intervened on their behalf, and Pangborn and Herndon stood ready to attempt the record.

A few days before takeoff, Pangborn, who had grown concerned about the plane's limited fuel supply, developed a plan to reduce the aircraft's weight and thereby increase its range. He rigged a device so that he could jettison the plane's landing gear shortly after lift-off. He calculated that the aircraft would travel approximately 600 miles farther without the gear. While many feared that Pangborn would be unable to land safely without wheels, he felt confident that he could "belly land" the plane intact.

On the morning of October 4 (Japanese time), Pangborn and Herndon took off from Samishiro Beach, Japan, in route to Washington state. Like on some of their other flights, the two men ran into trouble quickly. Although Pang jettisoned the landing gear, two of the gear's struts remained behind. Pangborn, realizing that they could not land safely with the struts still attached, performed one of his old barnstorming feats to remedy the situation. Approximately 14,000 feet above the Pacific, Pangborn climbed out onto his plane's wing, and in freezing weather and 100-mile per hour winds, loosened the remaining struts. Despite their in-flight challenge, Pangborn and Herndon persevered and brought their plane in for a successful belly landing at Wenatchee, Washington, on October 5, after a journey of some 4,500 miles. They had made their record setting trip in 41 hours, 13 minutes.

After his trans-Pacific flight, Pangborn took on a variety of challenges but few could compare with his record setting journey. In 1932 Pangborn went to work for Clarence D. Chamberlin in New York City, but in less than a year he had left that venture and was selling Fairchild Aircraft Company airplanes in South America. In 1934, he and Roscoe Turner, a famous air racer and aviation advocate, flew a modified Boeing 247D--a revolutionary, twin-engine, all-metal monoplane that helped bring about the

airline revolution of the 1930s--from London to Australia in the MacRobertson Race. They left on October 20, and landed only 92 hours, 55 minutes, and 38 seconds later in Melbourne after flying 11,325 miles. Even so, they finished second in the race, following closely behind the record-setting De Havilland "Comet." Beginning in 1935, Pangborn became a test pilot and worked for several aircraft companies. Among other ventures, he recruited American fliers for the Royal Air Force (RAF), helping them violate the Neutrality Laws by getting them into Canada where they could legally enlist to fight the Nazis alongside the British. Several members of the RAF's Eagle Squadron, the unit made up of Americans that fought in the Battle of Britain, were recruited by Pangborn. He also joined the RAF Ferry Command and was instrumental in helping organize the effort to ferry aircraft and air weapons across the Atlantic to Britain in 1940 and 1941. During the conflict, he delivered more than 170 airplanes to the Allies and also served with the U.S. military when it entered the war. After the war, Pangborn returned to his life as a test pilot. On March 29, 1958, Pangborn died. He received a burial in Arlington National Cemetery with military honors. Pangborn amassed an impressive set of aviation credentials and accomplishments during his life. In addition to all of his barnstorming feats, and his trans-Pacific flight,

Pangborn was licensed to fly a wide variety of planes, including most single- and multiengine aircraft, and even seaplanes. He also compiled more than 24,000 hours of flight time during his career and never lost a plane or injured a passenger.

Pangborn's career was similar to that of many other second-tier fliers of his generation. He was able to make a life flying but never on the scale of a Charles A. Lindbergh or an Eddie Rickenbacker. He was a capable airman, recognized as such both by the public and his fellow aviators. The record-setting flights he made between 1931 and 1934 were highlights of his career, but his service in 1940 and 1941 on behalf of the British opposing Nazi Germany may have been his greatest contribution.

Author: -- David H. Onkst

Douglas "Wrong-way" Corrigan

Story from the May 2001 issue of Aviation History and was written by Chris Fasolino.



Wrong way Corrigan and his Curtiss Robin

Douglas Corrigan, the last of the early glory-seeking fliers, takes off from Floyd Bennett field in Brooklyn, New York, on a flight that would finally win him a place in aviation history. Eleven years earlier, Charles Lindbergh had become an international celebrity with his solo nonstop flight across the Atlantic. Corrigan was among the mechanics who had worked on Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis aircraft, but that mere footnote in the history of flight was not enough for the Texas-born aviator. In 1938, he bought a 1929 Curtiss Robin aircraft off a trash heap, rebuilt it, and modified it for long-distance flight. In July 1938, Corrigan piloted the single-engine plane nonstop from California to New York. Although the transcontinental flight was far from unprecedented, Corrigan received national attention simply because the press was amazed that his rattletrap aircraft had survived the journey. Almost immediately after arriving in New York, he filed plans for a transatlantic flight, but aviation authorities deemed it a suicide flight, and he was promptly denied. Instead, they would allow Corrigan to fly back to the West Coast, and on July 17 he took off from Floyd Bennett field, ostentatiously pointed west. However, a few minutes later, he made a 180-degree turn and vanished into a cloudbank to the puzzlement of a few onlookers.

Twenty-eight hours later, Corrigan landed his plane in Dublin, Ireland, stepped out of his plane, and

exclaimed, "Just got in from New York. Where am I?" He claimed that he lost his direction in the clouds and that his compass had malfunctioned. The authorities didn't buy the story and suspended his license, but Corrigan stuck to it to the amusement of the public on both sides of the Atlantic. By the time "Wrong Way" Corrigan and his crated plane returned to New York by ship, his license suspension had been lifted, he was a national celebrity, and a mob of autograph seekers met him on the gangway.

Texas-born Douglas Corrigan had flown for the first time when he was 18, taking a 10-minute sightseeing ride in a Curtiss JN-4D Jenny at a Los Angeles airfield operated by B.F. Mahoney and Claude Ryan. The ride, which cost him \$2.50, changed his life, setting him on a course that would lead to disappointment, danger, excitement, fame and even a movie deal. Although he had hoped to become an architect, after that 1925 flight his dreams changed.

He went back to the airfield a week later and took a flying lesson. After that, he started going to the field every Sunday, taking a lesson and then hanging around for the rest of the day, helping the mechanics.

Corrigan first soloed on Sunday, March 25, 1926. He later said that he looked back on that Sunday as the most important day of his life.

Ryan and Mahoney soon closed down their operation in Los Angeles and

opened Ryan Aeronautical Company in San Diego, where they offered young Corrigan a job. When he arrived, it seemed as though the factory's future was pretty shaky. The building contained half a dozen unfinished airplanes—unfinished because the orders for them had been canceled. Then a telegram arrived from Charles A. Lindbergh, who wanted to know if Ryan Aeronautical could build a plane capable of transatlantic flight. Ryan and Mahoney responded that they could have such an aircraft ready within two months, and it would cost about \$10,000. Lindbergh liked the price as well as the time frame. He headed for San Diego to check out the Ryan factory.

In February 1927 Corrigan saw Mahoney talking to a tall young man. Corrigan, along with a mechanic, was sent out to the field to get one of the aircraft started so that the lanky youngster could test-fly it.



As they were walking out to the plane, the mechanic explained, 'This is that fellow from St. Louis that wants to fly from New York to Paris.' Corrigan

glanced back at Charles Lindbergh and said: 'Gosh, he looks like a farmer. Do you suppose he can fly?'

They started up a Ryan M-1, but Corrigan didn't think the engine sounded very good. 'That's all right,' said Lindbergh, and he promptly climbed into the plane. He took off, flew around the field for a few minutes, headed upwind and did nine consecutive loops, finishing up with a wingover. Watching him, Corrigan and the mechanic agreed that Charles Lindbergh could, in fact, fly. And Lindbergh decided to have Ryan build Spirit of St. Louis.

During the two months it took to construct the aircraft, designated the NYP by Ryan, Corrigan and the rest of the crew often worked well past midnight. Corrigan himself assembled the wing and installed the gas tanks and the instrument panel. Lindbergh also spent a considerable amount of time at the factory, supervising the construction.

Corrigan later recalled that everyone at Ryan Aeronautical seemed motivated by Lindbergh and his goal. Apparently, Lindbergh was equally impressed with his new associates, writing of the Ryan crew, 'They're as anxious to build a plane that will fly to Paris as I am to fly it there.'

Ryan managed to meet Lindbergh's deadline, completing the aircraft in time for him to fly Spirit of St. Louis from San Diego to St. Louis in May

1927, and then to New York City. From there, of course, he set off for Paris. Corrigan and his co-workers went wild when the news reached San Diego that Lindbergh had made it to Paris. The workmen jumped into their cars and drove through the streets of the city, shouting like madmen. But Douglas Corrigan was more than ecstatic—he was inspired. He decided then and there that he wanted to fly across the ocean.

Ryan Aeronautical had built what was now the most famous plane in the world, and all of a sudden business was booming. The factory moved to St. Louis in October 1928, but Corrigan stayed in California and got a job as a mechanic for a new flying operation called the Airtech School, run by the San Diego Air Service. Once it got started, the Airtech School was busy with more than 50 students in training each day. The only chance Corrigan got to fly was on his lunch hour. He loved doing stunts, especially chandelles—steep, climbing turns—that he would start as soon as the plane was off the ground. Corrigan would often do 10 or 11 chandelles in a row. The company pilot thought he was crazy; when Corrigan stepped out of the plane, the other flier would read him the riot act. Corrigan would just look surprised. ‘I didn’t think it was dangerous,’ he would say, smiling innocently.

But the company pilot won out, and Corrigan was forbidden to do stunts in

the company planes. Corrigan subsequently stopped stunting near the airfield. Instead, he flew down to a small field near the Mexican border and did stunts there.

Corrigan went to New York with a friend in 1930, working at Roosevelt Field for a while and barnstorming along the East Coast. He and his partner would land near a small town and talk people into buying airplane rides. Business was pretty good—they sometimes took in as much as \$140 a week.

When Corrigan decided to go back to California in 1933, he started looking for a plane in which to make the trip—a cheap one, since he didn’t even own a car. He soon found a Curtiss Robin priced at \$325. ‘It looked pretty good, and flew all right,’ he said. He started out for the West Coast a few days after buying the plane. He would stop every 100 miles or so and pick up passengers when he could find them, in order to make a little money while he was traveling.

Once, when he was running low on gas, he passed over several towns without finding a field that looked good enough for a landing. He finally came down in a field that was overgrown with brush. It was a rough landing—one of the wheels hit a tree stump, damaging the landing gear.

Luckily, there was a farmyard nearby. Corrigan walked over, found a few

pieces of wood and cut some wire off a fence—all he needed for some quick repairs. He borrowed some gasoline from a farmer's tractor and flew on after his repair work was completed. Corrigan returned to San Diego and worked in an aircraft factory for a while, but that did not satisfy his zest for adventure. He decided to refurbish his Curtiss Robin and pursue his dream of flying across the Atlantic. He knew that attempting such a flight might kill him—but he was sure it certainly would not be boring. Since he was Irish American, Corrigan naturally chose Dublin as his destination.

He bought a new engine for his plane—a Wright J6-5 with 165 horsepower and five cylinders. He also built and installed the extra gas tanks that he would need if he were to attempt a transatlantic flight. As far as he was concerned, Douglas Corrigan was all set to be the first man to fly nonstop from New York to Dublin. But it was not to be that simple. When a federal inspector checked out the plane, he licensed it for cross-country flights only. But Corrigan refused to give up. In 1936, he flew to New York, stopping over at St. Louis on the way. Then he wrote to the Federal Bureau of Air Commerce, asking for permission to go ahead with the flight. For no apparent reason he was told to wait until the following year. Then he was told that he would need a radio operator's license to make the flight—even though his plane had no radio.

He went back to California, got the license and installed two more gas tanks for good measure. The next year, 1937, he reapplied for permission to make the flight, but Amelia Earhart had disappeared over the Pacific just a few months earlier, and nobody in Washington wanted to give the go-ahead for another solo ocean flight at that juncture. Worse yet, the government even refused to renew the license for Corrigan's plane, which meant that he would not be able to fly anywhere. "It looked like I was stopped now for sure," he later wrote.

However, this pilot was not completely out of options. Although he had been denied permission to fly, he still had his plane. "They can't hang you for flying a plane without a license," he figured. "Columbus took a chance, so why not me?" He flew toward New York, planning to head for Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn. He thought perhaps he could land by night, after the officials had gone home. Then he could fill his gas tanks and fly across the ocean—damn the torpedoes!

In preparation for his great adventure, Corrigan gave his plane a name. "I had always considered my plane as a little ray of sunshine," he said, "so now I put the name Sunshine on the cowling." The flight to New York did not go well, however. Bad weather forced Corrigan to land in Arizona the first day. More bad weather forced him to land in New Mexico the next day. The pattern continued throughout the trip. It took

him two days just to get across Texas. Corrigan was forced to land in open fields, near various towns that nobody flies to on purpose, including Arkadelphia, Arkansas, Ezel, Kentucky, and Buckhannon, West Virginia. It took him nine days to make it from California to New York.

By then it was the end of October and getting cold. Corrigan decided not to risk an ocean flight. Offending bureaucrats was one thing, but facing the cold skies of the North Atlantic could be quite a bit more dangerous. And the trip Corrigan planned would be dangerous enough in good weather.

He decided instead to try flying nonstop back to California. Corrigan landed at Floyd Bennett Field one afternoon, filled his gas tanks and took off again. No one stopped him, and no one said anything about the plane being unlicensed. He soon had reason to be thankful he had not tried an Atlantic crossing. Over Mississippi, he experienced problems with carburetor icing, causing the engine to slow down. Corrigan had to keep moving the throttle back and forth to cause it to backfire in order to break the ice loose and keep the engine running.

The winds were against him, too, which meant he did not have enough gas to make it nonstop to Los Angeles. He did reach California, though, landing at Adams Airport, in the San Fernando Valley. That's where the feds caught up with him. An inspector saw the plane

and told the airport officials not to let Corrigan fly it. Sunshine stayed in the Adams hangar for the next six months. Corrigan, however, had no intention of staying on the ground that long. He visited most of the airfields around Los Angeles and managed to get in some flight time in other aircraft. But since he also wanted to fly his own plane again, he overhauled the engine and had the plane inspected.

The federal inspector who came to examine Sunshine after that said it was good enough for an experimental license. Corrigan received permission to make a nonstop flight to New York, and then—if he made it—a nonstop flight back to Los Angeles.

To prepare for the trip, Corrigan ran some tests on gasoline consumption at various speeds, eventually deciding that 85 mph was the best speed for his Curtiss Robin. Then he watched the weather.

Corrigan took off from Long Beach on July 7, 1938. He hit turbulence while crossing the desert and flew over a dust storm in New Mexico. Next came rain squalls with enormous lightning bolts. Since he did not want to use up extra gasoline flying around the storm, he flew straight into it. Fortunately, the gamble paid off. He reached clear air an hour later.

The main gas tank developed a leak toward the end of the trip, and Corrigan wasn't sure if he would be

able to make it nonstop after all. But he was determined to keep flying until the gas ran out. He opened the cabin windows and stuck his head out—partly to keep awake and partly to avoid the fumes.

By that time he was down to the last tank of fuel, and he could only guess how much was left in it. But he kept going. He was able to catch a tailwind near Philadelphia, and by sundown, he made it to New York and landed at Roosevelt Field. He had only four gallons of fuel left when he touched down.

After Corrigan looked over the plane, he decided not to do anything about the gas leak, since it would have taken him more than a week's work to remove the tank and make the repairs. He was eager to get going on his dream flight. His flight plan was filed—New York to California, just as his license said. And the only map he had was of the United States. On July 16 he flew to Floyd Bennett Field and filled his tanks with gasoline. At 4 o'clock the next morning, he was ready to go. Corrigan started the plane himself on July 17 and then took out a flashlight to look at the engine and make sure it was running OK. It looked and sounded good, so he climbed into Sunshine and took off, heading east on an east-west runway.

The plane was so weighed down with fuel that it traveled 3,200 feet down the runway before leaving the ground.

When it passed the eastern edge of the airfield, it was only 50 feet above the ground. Not long after that, it disappeared into the fog, heading east. Corrigan had been flying east for 10 hours when his feet suddenly felt cold. The leak in the main gas tank had gotten worse, and gasoline was running all over his shoes and onto the floor of the cockpit. He was somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean at that point—and he was losing fuel by the minute.

He flew on through the darkness. Time was not on his side, and the leak was getting worse. Before long, there was gasoline an inch deep on the cockpit floor. Just losing the gas was bad enough, but Corrigan was worried that it would leak out near the exhaust pipe—and he was well aware that he had no chance of surviving if that happened.

He knew he had to do something about the leak, but he did not have much to work with. He had only brought a screwdriver with him. With it, he punched a hole in the floor. The gasoline trickled out—on the side opposite the exhaust pipe. He was still losing fuel, but at least the plane was not likely to explode.

Although it was impossible for him to fix the leak, Corrigan kept trying to think of some way to compensate for it. The problem had not been nearly this bad on his cross-country flight, and he had just barely made it to New York.

However, on this trip there was no place to land if his gas ran out.

He had planned to conserve fuel by running the engine slowly, but now he realized that that would only give the fuel more time to leak out. He decided to run the engine fast instead, using the precious gasoline while he had it. He boosted his rpms from 1,600 to 1,900, then maintained that speed for the rest of the trip.

Corrigan flew straight ahead, hoping he would have enough fuel to reach land. When he saw a fishing boat, he went down close to the water and flew past it. Corrigan realized it was unlikely that such a small boat would be very far from shore. It looked like he was going to make it, and he opened a package of fig bars to celebrate.

He had finished the cookies and started on a chocolate bar when land came into sight. Sometime later, he recalled, "I noticed some nice green hills." It was not long before he reached Baldonnell Airport, in Dublin, landing on July 18. Corrigan had achieved his dream, but he was not sure how much it was going to cost him. He had broken the rules, after all—and he realized that how he played things from here on out would probably determine how he was going to spend the next few years.

The first person Corrigan met was an army officer. Corrigan introduced himself saying, "I left New York yesterday morning headed for

California." He added, "I got mixed up in the clouds, and I must have flown the wrong way." The officer responded, "Yes, we know." Corrigan was surprised, "Really?" he said. "How did you find out?" The officer replied: "Oh, there was a small piece in the paper saying someone might be flying over this way. Then we got a phone call from Belfast saying a plane with American markings had passed over, headed down the coast." A customs official in a blue uniform came up and asked Corrigan if he had landed anywhere else. "I did pass over a city—I guess it must have been Belfast," explained Corrigan. "But I didn't see an airport there. This is the first place I've landed since leaving New York."

"That makes it easier for us, then," said the customs agent amiably. They led Corrigan into the field office, where he signed the airport register. Then they showed him the newspaper article, which talked about an unknown pilot who had disappeared over the Atlantic. Corrigan not only did not have permission to make the flight, he had neither a passport nor entry papers. The officials were not surprised. The officer said he would call the American minister, Stephen Cudahy. "Why don't you come down to the barracks and have a spot of tea while we're waiting?" suggested the officer.

Corrigan gladly accepted the invitation. When Cudahy was ready to see him, the customs man was reluctant to let Corrigan go. "I haven't heard from my

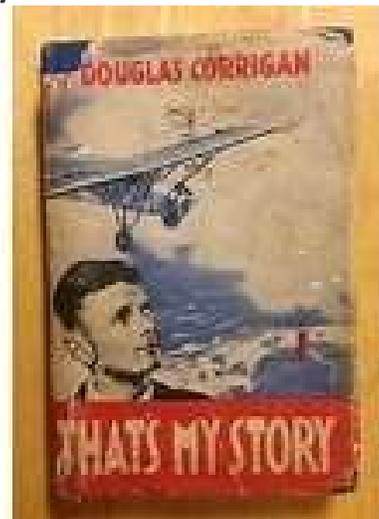
superiors yet," he objected. "Why don't you wait around awhile longer?" The officer spoke up: "What's the matter? You're not putting him under arrest, are you?" The customs man seemed confused. "No, but this never happened before," came the response. "I don't know what to do." The officer just laughed, and he and Corrigan left. When they met with Cudahy, the American minister wanted an explanation as to how Corrigan ended up in Ireland. Corrigan knew this was a key moment. He smiled and explained that he had taken off from Floyd Bennett Field—heading east. "It was a very foggy morning," he pointed out. "I see," said Cudahy dryly.

Corrigan went on to tell the same story he later told in his autobiography. He explained that the plane was so weighed down with fuel that it would not climb fast enough, so he had decided to fly east for a few miles and burn off some fuel before he turned around. He also said his main compass was broken—the liquid had somehow leaked out, and he had had to use a backup compass.

"Couldn't you see anything below you?" asked Cudahy. "It was just too foggy," responded Corrigan. "At one point there was a break, and I could see a city. I figured it was Baltimore—which would have meant I was on course for California." The city had actually been Boston.

That was the only break in the clouds he had seen, Corrigan said. He spent the rest of the flight navigating by compass alone. When he finally emerged from the clouds 26 hours later, he saw only ocean. "That was strange, as I had only been flying 26 hours and shouldn't have come to the Pacific yet," he said. "I looked down at the compass, and now that there was more light I noticed I had been following the wrong end of the magnetic needle on the whole flight. As the opposite of west is east, I realized that I was over the Atlantic Ocean somewhere!" So he just flew on from there. Finally, he saw a city below him, and he noticed that the airport was marked Baldonnel. "Having studied the map of Ireland two years before, I knew this was Dublin."

Cudahy was skeptical. "It was hazy when you took off, was it?" he said. "Well, your story seems a little hazy, too—now come on and tell me the real story."



“I’ve just told you the real story,” replied Corrigan. “I don’t know any other one.”

“So you’re sticking to that story, are you?”

“That’s my story,” said the pilot, “but I sure am ashamed of that navigation.” Word of Corrigan’s daring flight quickly spread. The area around the American legation was swarming with reporters, photographers and newsreel cameramen by that evening.

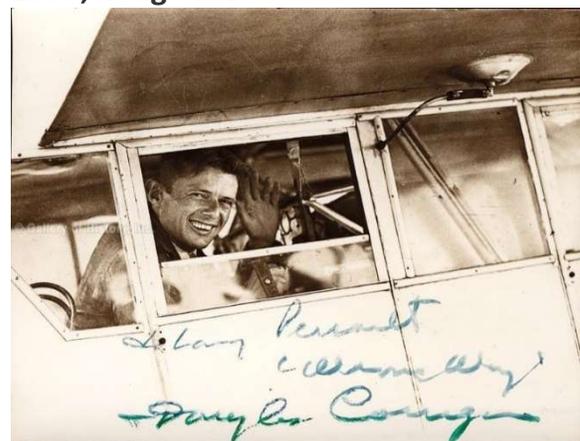
Congratulatory phone calls, telegrams and cablegrams started pouring in for the pilot—many from friends, but others from famous folk such as Henry Ford and Howard Hughes.

Corrigan met Eamon De Valera, Ireland’s Prime Minister, the next morning and told his story once again. When he got to the part about misreading the compass, everyone started laughing. “From then on everything was in my favor,” Corrigan later wrote. “He came into this country without papers of any kind, why, we’ll just let him go back without any papers,” said De Valera. Corrigan said, “Gee, Mr. De Valera, thanks a lot, and I’m sorry to have caused you so much bother.” De Valera responded, “That’s all right, we’re glad to help you because the flight put Ireland on the map again. While he was waiting for officials to decide what to do next, Corrigan visited London, where he met American Ambassador Joseph Kennedy. Corrigan

and Sunshine were later sent back to the United States on the liner Manhattan.



Although he could have faced any number of serious charges related to his flight, Corrigan’s great luck, his good nature and his implausible story carried the day. His pilot’s license was suspended until August 4—the day the ship arrived in New York. But that was the only action taken against him. After all, no matter how many rules he had broken, ‘Wrong-Way’ Corrigan was a hero—and in America he was accorded a hero’s welcome. Corrigan grew reclusive as the years went by, but there were several reports in the late 1980s that he finally admitted to making his famous mistake intentionally. He died on December 9, 1995, at age 88.



James H. Doolittle



James H. ("Jimmy") Doolittle

"Jimmy was a short, muscular fireplug of a man with a confident grin above his cleft chin. His nose was a little crooked from having been broken on his road to becoming a boxing champion. He was just five feet four inches tall and never weighed more than 145 pounds, but he was a giant who reached the clouds, a king of the sky." - *From the novel, Fly Boys, by James Bradley.*

The man famous for his daredevil B-25 bombing raid on Tokyo was none other than the "Babe Ruth of Flyboys," the boisterous "Jimmy" Doolittle. However, General Doolittle's aviation legacy is just a fraction of what he ultimately achieved in his near-century-long life.

Born in Alameda, California, on December 14th, 1896, James Harold Doolittle spent the first three years of his life in California with his mother. His father, inspired by a touch of "gold fever," left the carpenter trade for Alaska when Jimmy was an infant. At three and a half years of age, Doolittle's mother brought him with her to join his father in Nome, Alaska. When he was 11, he moved with his mother to Los Angeles, where he developed an interest in flying. He became a professional boxer and entered the University of California's School of Mines, in 1915.

Doolittle was a junior at the University of California when the United States entered World War I. He enlisted as a flying cadet in the Army Signal Enlisted Reserve Corps to train as a pilot, where he first earned his wings — quickly making second lieutenant in 1918. Doolittle served in the United States Army Air Corps from 1917 until 1930, eventually becoming promoted to major.

After he learned to fly, Doolittle served as an instructor pilot and began to engage in aerobatics, always with dreams of breaking aviation records. In 1922 he made the first cross-continental crossing in less than a day, taking 21 hours and 19 minutes to fly his De Havilland DH-4 from Pablo Beach, Florida, to San Diego, stopping only once to refuel.

Jimmy Doolittle enrolled in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1923. He obtained a master's degree and then a Ph.D. in aeronautical engineering. After receiving his degrees in June of 1925, fewer than 100 people in the world held comparable credentials. In his doctoral dissertation, "Wind Velocity Gradient and Its Effect on Flying Characteristics," he combined laboratory data with test flight data to determine that a pilot needed visual aids or instruments to know the direction and speed of the wind and the direction in which the plane was flying. His dissertation collided with the assumption of many other contemporary pilots that they could "know" that information instinctively.

In 1927, Doolittle was the first person to successfully execute an outside loop — previously thought to be a fatal maneuver. Carried out in a Curtiss fighter at Wright Field in Ohio, Doolittle executed the dive from 10,000 feet, reached 280 miles per hour, bottomed out upside down, then climbed and completed the loop.



February 1928 in his Curtiss Racer, the plane in which he won the 1925 Schneider Trophy Race.

As the first person to win all major aviation racing trophies, Doolittle also won the Schneider Trophy in 1925, for flying a Curtiss Navy racer seaplane the fastest it had ever been flown, averaging 232 miles per hour. In April 1926, Doolittle got a leave of absence to go to South America to do airplane demonstration flights. At a party in Argentina, after a few too many drinks, he demonstrated handstands on a high balcony when the balcony gave way, and he broke both of his ankles. Despite the accident, Doolittle put his Curtiss P-1 through stirring aerial maneuvers the next day, with his casted ankles strapped to the rudders. Doolittle looked at the practical side: He could leave his bulky parachute behind since his feet were strapped in and he could not get out in an emergency, anyway.

Doolittle returned to the United States, and was admitted to Walter Reed Hospital for his injuries until April 1927. He was then assigned to McCook Field for experimental work, and additional duty as instructor with the Organized Reserves of the Fifth Corps Area's 385th Bomb Squadron.

In 1931, after leaving the Army Air Corps and going to work for Shell Oil Corporation, he won the Bendix Trophy by flying from Burbank, California, to Cleveland, Ohio, establishing a new speed record. He crossed the country in 11 hours, 16 minutes and 10 seconds,

beating the record set earlier that year by one hour and eight minutes. In 1932, he won the Thompson Trophy race at Cleveland in a Granville Gee Bee R-1 racer, averaging 252 miles per hour (reaching a top speed of 406 mph), and established the world landplane speed record of 296 mph.



The Gee Bee R-1 successfully flown by Doolittle to win the 1932 Thompson Trophy

Editor's note: While he traveled the world of air racing, Doolittle noticed that Germany was doing a great deal of research in higher octane aviation fuels. He alone convinced executives at Shell Oil to work in the same direction, first developing 100 octane. Had it not been for his input, the U.S. would not have had higher performance fuels when we entered WWII.

On September 25, 1929, Doolittle demonstrated that instrument flying – or - "flying blind" – is possible from takeoff to landing, by flying a plane with a canopy over the cockpit he was in, using his rudimentary instruments and his watch. A safety pilot was in the other cockpit and was only allowed to

take the controls if the attempt looked like it was going to be unsuccessful. He flew a perfect takeoff, traffic pattern and landing.

The impact on commercial aviation was immediate and far-reaching, making all-weather flying safe and practical.

Prior to his flight, Doolittle helped develop the artificial horizon, forerunner to the attitude indicator, which uses a gyroscope for determining an aircraft's relative orientation to the ground. It proved to be the key instrument in making blind flying possible.

Doolittle was already one of America's most famous aviators at the time of his "blind flight."

Jimmy Doolittle became a national hero and received the Congressional Medal of Honor for leading an aircraft carrier-based bombing raid on Tokyo, Japan, on April 18th, 1942. The "Doolittle Raid" was the first attack on Japan by the U.S. in World War II, and occurred just four months after the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor.

After his heroic displays of courage over Tokyo, President Franklin D. Roosevelt promoted Doolittle from lieutenant colonel to brigadier general — skipping the rank of colonel. He was then assigned as the commanding general of the 12th Air Force in North Africa, the 15th Air Force in Italy, the

Eighth Air Force in England and then on Okinawa during the Island hopping campaign. While in command, Doolittle was promoted to major general, then lieutenant general.



Brigadier General James H. Doolittle, USAA poses beside an Army Air Forces recruiting poster alluding to his April 1942 bombing raid on Japan.

At the start of the Korean War in March 1951, Doolittle was appointed as special assistant to the Air Force chief of staff, in which he served as a civilian in scientific matters that led to Air Force ballistic missile and space programs.

Doolittle entered his postwar service as an advisor to the Air Force, the Central Intelligence Agency, and several presidents. From 1955 until 1958 he served as chairman of the Air Force

Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), advising the U.S. Air Force on future aviation and space technologies.

From 1955 until 1965, Doolittle also was a member of the President`s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, which evaluated intelligence operations. In 1958, he was offered the position of first administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), which he declined.

Doolittle retired from Air Force duty February 28, 1959, then went on to become the chairman of the board of Space Technology Laboratories.

In 1985, although long retired from active duty, retired Lieutenant General James H. Doolittle became General James H. Doolittle, when President Reagan and Senator Barry Goldwater pinned on the same four-star insignia that General George Patton had been given on the occasion of receiving his fourth star, more than 40 years earlier.

In addition to the nation`s top award, Doolittle also received two Distinguished Service Medals, the Silver Star, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Bronze Star, four Air Medals, and decorations from Great Britain, France, Belgium, Poland, China, and Ecuador. James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle passed away at the age of 97 on September 27th, 1993.

*******LIEFC News*******

L.I.E.F.C. Third Annual Holiday Party a great success!



We had great fun and great food at our annual Holiday Party on December 9th in our hangar. The catering was again ordered from Trio's Restaurant (located at Holbrook Country Club), in Holbrook.



L.I.E.F.C. Dues for 2019 are due!

Dues bills have started going out to our membership list of almost 150.

We have several lifetime members who have indicated their willingness to make a dues payment to help support the Club, so if you are a Lifetime member and you receive a dues invoice, please don't be upset. We are simply following through on the request of several lifetime members who have indicated that for \$35.00 a year, they would like to continue their

support and receive an invoice as a reminder.

For everyone else, please renew at your earliest convenience to keep our newsletter, meeting notices, and announcement of our activities coming to your computer. Realizing that there are some members who do not have email capability, we do send a handful of items out through the U.S. Postal Service.

If you do not have email, you need to let us know! Please complete the card you receive in the mail and send it back with your dues payment in the envelope provided.

Our next meeting will be on the second Sunday in April (April 14th – yes, I know it's Palm Sunday) at 1:30 in our hangar at Bayport.

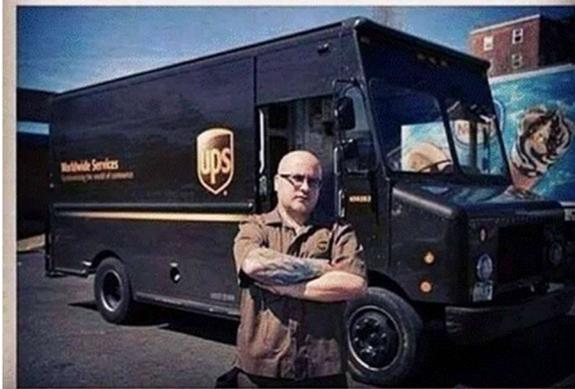
The Wednesday work crew still meets every Wednesday, so I'm sure there will be plenty of new things to see when we come back from our winter break!

Time to smile.....

I ordered a chicken and an egg from Amazon.... I'll let you know.

**I'm proud of myself.
I finished a jigsaw
puzzle in 6 months,
and the box said 2-4
years!**

As a kid, did you ever knock on people's doors and run away before they could answer? Well, guess what...we are hiring



I was walking home last night and decided to take a short cut through the cemetery...3 girls walked up to me and explained that they were scared to walk past the cemetery at night,so I agreed to let them walk along with me.I told them "I understand...I used to get freaked out too when I was alive."

Never seen anyone run so fast

I TOLD MYSELF THAT
— I SHOULD STOP —
DRINKING

But I'm Not About To Listen To
A DRUNK That Talks To Himself.

Technically, Moses



was the first person
with a tablet
downloading data
from the cloud

*Noah's Ark
Complaints
Department*



*YOU ONLY
BROUGHT
TWO ANTS?*

The doctor asked me to
spend at least one hour
per day on the treadmill.



Life is short.
Smile while
you still
have teeth.

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The **LONG ISLAND**
Early Fliers Club

Long Island Early Fliers Club, Inc. is a non-profit organization founded in 1956 and Chartered by the New York State Education Department. We are dedicated to aviation education and preserving Long Island's aviation heritage. Volunteers who want to help educate and preserve our history are always welcome. Annual Membership in our organization is \$35.00 for individuals; \$50.00 for families.

Donations of aviation memorabilia, aircraft and aircraft parts, aviation clothing, display quality models and items of historic significance are always welcome and greatly appreciated. Cash donations, as well as artifact donations are tax deductible. You may visit our facility at Bayport Aerodrome, Vitamin Drive, Bayport New York most Wednesdays between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Appointments are necessary as airports are secure locations and can also be arranged at other times for your convenience. Contact us at: L.I.E.F.C., P.O. Box 43, Holbrook, NY, 11741 or call (631)-523-5407 (Fred Coste) or fax: 631-588-2147

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