

Major General Gordon Lewis Doolittle

March 29, 1921 - April 11, 2008

The Oregon National Guard Community is saddened at the passing of Major General Gordon L. Doolittle. He died peacefully in his sleep of a stroke on April 11, 2008, at age 87.

Former Chief of Staff, Oregon Air National Guard Founder, and WWII Fighter Pilot Major General Gordon Doolittle -- affectionately known as the Big Red Rooster owing to his thick red hair -- left an indelible mark on the Oregon Air National Guard (ORANG) and the National Guard Bureau.

Enlisting in the Army Air Corps in June 1942, Doolittle received combat training in P-38 and P-39 aircraft. Receiving his wings and commission in April 1944, Lieutenant Doolittle joined the 435th Squadron of the 479th Fighter Group in Wattisham, England. He went on to become an accomplished fighter pilot with 70 WWII combat missions over Europe and three German combat kills: two on December 5, 1944 and one on February 9, 1945. Captain Doolittle joined the ORANG as Squadron Operations Officer, 123rd Fighter Interceptor Squadron in August 1946. He assumed the duties of Fighter Squadron Commander in August 1947, was promoted to Major the next month and to Lieutenant Colonel in December 1949. After the activation of the ORANG 142nd Fighter Group during the Korean Conflict, Doolittle became Deputy Group Commander at McChord Air Force Base, Washington. He assumed command of the 142nd Fighter Group upon the unit's reallocation to Oregon and became Deputy Chief of Staff, Headquarters, ORANG in 1953. Colonel Doolittle helped develop Air Force plans to use Air National Guard units called to active duty during the Berlin Crisis of 1961. Assuming command of the ORANG in June 1962, Brigadier General Doolittle became a Major General in April 1973, retiring four years later. His service as Commander of the ORANG and his work with the USAF at the Pentagon formulating plans and logistics forever changed the face of the United States Air National Guard. His 26-year legacy remains with the Guard and the Air Force today.

Doolittle is survived by his wife, Ione Doolittle of Portland, Ore., and his son (Ret.) Oregon Air National Guard, Colonel Mark Doolittle and his wife Kay of Klamath Falls, Ore., Niece and nephew Leslie and Robert Kollman, of Elk Grove Calif.

A private family internment will be held next week and a Military Memorial Service will be held in early summer at the Portland Air National Guard Base. Details will be released as they become available.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested donations be made in Major General Doolittle's name to the charity of your choice.

