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Exclusive: Columbia to welcome Raiders back again

By JEFF WILKINSON

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The Doolittle Raiders will return to Columbia next April for their 67th reunion.

The World War II fliers — who bombed Tokyo and other Japanese cities in retaliation for the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor — celebrated their 50th and 60th reunions in Columbia as well.

The 60th, in 2002, drew tens of thousands of people and attracted national and world media. They also drew more people than any of the Raiders' other reunions, which have been held since 1945 and been public events since the 1950s.

Columbia is important to the men. It was here they met Jimmy Doolittle and began training for their mission.

Eleven of the Raiders, all in their late 80s or 90s, survive. As many as seven hope to attend April's reunion.

"We like Columbia," Richard Cole, 92, — Doolittle's co-pilot on Plane No. 1 in the raid — said from his home in Comfort, Texas. "It's a good military town. People are friendly. And we have a tie with Columbia."

The 16 five-member crews met Doolittle, even then a world-famous aviator, for the first time at Columbia Air Base, now Columbia Metropolitan Airport. There, they volunteered for an unknown mission many people later would consider suicidal.

The Raiders flew 16 Army B-25 heavy bombers from the pitching deck of a Navy aircraft carrier — a first in military history — and bombed the Japanese military targets before crash-landing in China. One landed in the former Soviet Union.

While only a modest military success, the raid came just four months after Pearl Harbor and was a tonic to the nation when U.S. morale was at its lowest.

The mission became the most famous air raid in American military history.

"It was a great morale booster for all of us at the time," said historian C.V. Glines, 87, an honorary Raider who has written three books on the fliers as well as a Doolittle biography.

"It was just the opposite for the Japanese," Glines said from his home in Dallas. "They were humiliated for having an attack on their homeland."

Three airmen were killed in the raid, and eight were captured in Japanese-occupied China. Three of the captives, including William G. Farrow of Darlington, were executed. One died in prison.

Sixty of the 80 men continued to fight in various WWII theaters.

The reunion, to be held April 17-18, is being organized by the Celebrate Freedom Foundation, which sponsors the annual Celebrate Freedom Festival at Fort Jackson to honor veterans.

“Their reunion here in 2002 was an exciting international event, and the 2009 event will again give us the opportunity to thank these brave heroes,” said foundation chairman John Lenti.

The 60th reunion in Columbia was the first time in the Raiders’ history that the media were allowed to witness the Goblet Ceremony. During the ceremony, the surviving Raiders toast with special silver goblets their fellow fliers who were lost during the raid and who have died since.

The 2002 event drew national media coverage including all the television network news broadcasts. Fourteen of 23 surviving Raiders attended that year.

There were three South Carolinians among the Raiders.

Darlington’s Farrow, pilot of Crew No. 16, was captured and executed.

Nolan Herndon of Edgefield, navigator of Crew No. 8, died last October.

Horace “Sally” Crouch of Columbia, navigator of Crew No. 10, survived the war and taught math at Columbia High School. He died in December 2005.

On Columbia’s Gervais Street, in front of the State Museum, 80 palmetto trees — one for each flier — and a historical marker pay permanent tribute to the men.

Mayor Bob Coble said the city will be ready once again to welcome the surviving Raiders.

“They are American heroes, and we’re delighted to have them back. It’s an honor to host them.”



FILE PHOTOGRAPH/THE STATE

American Legion members honor the Doolittle Raiders during an April 2002 parade in Columbia marking the fliers’ 60th reunion.



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The surviving raiders

Eighty men flew on 16 planes to bomb Tokyo and other Japanese cities in April 1942. Eleven of the men survive.:

Col. William M. Bower, pilot, Crew No. 12. Born 1917. Lives in Boulder, Colo.

Lt. Col. Richard E. Cole, co-pilot to raid leader, pilot Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle, Crew No. 1. Born 1915. Lives in Comfort, Texas.

Maj. Thomas C. Griffin, navigator, Crew No. 9. Born July 1916. Lives in Cincinnati.

Lt. Col. Robert L. Hite, co-pilot, Crew No. 16. Born in 1920. Lives in Nashville, Tenn.

Master Sgt. Edwin W. Horton Jr., gunner, Crew No. 10. Born 1916. Lives in Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

Maj. Gen. David M. Jones, pilot, Crew No. 5. Born December 1913. Lives in Tucson, Ariz., and San Antonio.

Lt. Col. Frank A. Kappeler, navigator, Crew No. 11. Born in 1914. Lives in Santa Rosa, Calif.

Col. James H. Macia Jr., navigator/bombardier, Crew No. 14. Born in 1916. Lives in Lewes, Del.

Capt. Charles J. Ozuk Jr., navigator, Crew No. 3. Born in 1916. Lives in San Antonio.

Lt. Col. Edward J. Saylor, flight engineer, Crew No. 15. Born in 1920. Lives in Puyallup, Wash.

Staff Sgt. David J. Thatcher, flight engineer/gunner, Crew No. 7. Born in 1921. Lives in Missoula, Mont.

NOTE: Ranks are the last ones reached in the Army Air Corps or the Air Force.

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A Sacred Token

C. Raymond Herndon

From C. Raymond
U.S.S. Herndon
Pacific Ocean
Lat. 1
Long.

Apr 16, 1942
Date

NOLAN A. HERNDON
SERIAL NO. 222
U.S. ARMY
2520 HERNDON
FORT SHERB, TEX.