

## Benny Lee "Flaps" Berry

Born: February 17, 1925 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas  
Died: September 30, 2013 in Portland, Oregon

**Tuskegee Airman Cadet US Army Air Corps  
Recipient of unit citation for Tuskegee Airmen  
Congressional Gold Medal, highest civilian  
award in the United States bestowed by  
Congress and presented by President  
George W. Bush on March 29, 2007**

Airman Ben "Flaps" Berry was a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, the first African-American pilots in the US Army Air Corps. Flaps flew a B-25 bomber in World War II. Officially, the Tuskegee Airmen were part of the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment Group.

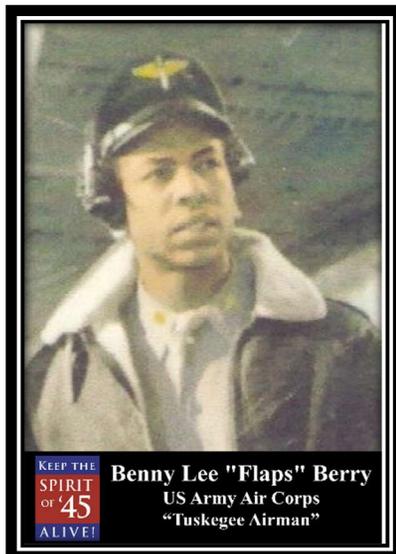
As a young man, Flaps loved to dabble in technical drawings, sketching out his ideas for aircraft and monorail systems that he pictured as a wave of the future. He was a natural for the all black airmen who formed the Tuskegee Airmen. During WWII, the Tuskegee Airmen performed with distinction and were regarded among the best pilots in the air corps.

After being discharged from the service, Benny, his wife and son settled in Kansas, but later moved to LA. An acquaintance familiar with his technical drawings suggested he show them to a local entrepreneur who was making a name for himself in the airplane industry at the time — Howard Hughes.

When Hughes learned that Flaps had no formal training or college-level education, he suggested Flaps show his drawings to the dean of the school of engineering at the University of Southern California. Immediately impressed, the dean admitted Flaps into the school, where he graduated with a degree in aeronautical engineering, the first African American to do so at USC.

Benny had a distinguished career, working on the technical staffs for the Apollo, Space Shuttle and Space Station programs. He was a designer of the first computerized "Fly-by-Wire" Flight Control System which now is standard for military and commercial aircraft worldwide. He was a proponent for the use of satellites to transmit radio signals which evolved into the Satellite Communications Industry. Flaps was an International Consulting Engineer and worked in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. He authored three books and two screenplays including *Tuskegee Airmen: To the Moon, Mars and Beyond!* which highlights his amazing life.

Before his death at the age of 88, Benny Lee Flaps Berry was on the national speaking circuit, telling stories about his days as an Army veteran and a Tuskegee Airman. As a member of America's first group of pilots made up entirely of African Americans, he was a trailblazer.



## James Harold "Jimmy" Doolittle

Born: December 14, 1896 in Alameda, California  
Died: September 27, 1993 in Pebble Beach, California

**Recipient Medal of Honor and Silver Star  
Army Distinguished Service Medal-2  
Distinguished Flying Cross-3  
Bronze Star Medal  
Air Medal-4  
Presidential Medal of Freedom**

Jimmy was a pioneer 'daredevil' pilot, aeronautical engineer, combat leader and military strategist whose career stretched from WWI through WWII to the height of the Cold War. He is most famous for leading a daring bombing raid over Tokyo in 1942, the 1<sup>st</sup> American attack on the Japanese mainland.

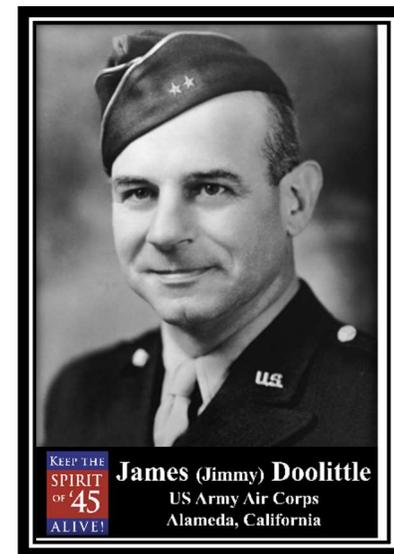
Doolittle chose the 17<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group from Pendleton, Oregon, to provide the aircraft and crews. Sixteen bombers were rigged with double fuel capacity and loaded on the *USS Hornet*. With Doolittle in the lead, the planes survived storms and anti-aircraft fire to drop bombs on Tokyo, striking industrial facilities.

The Doolittle Raiders flew on toward China. They had planned to land in areas controlled by Chinese Nationalists, but ran out of fuel and crashed. Most of the crews parachuted to the ground, where they were able to reach the Nationalist lines. One crew landed in Vladivostok and was interned by the Soviets. Three died in the crashes, and eight were captured by the Japanese.

The attack was a psychological blow for the Japanese. The raid cracked the sense of invulnerability that Japanese leaders had encouraged among the Japanese people since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Their military felt compelled to withdraw fighter squadrons to the home islands for defense.

In America, the raid was cause for celebration and provided a tremendous boost to morale. There had been four months of American defeats since Pearl Harbor. The raid gave the country the hope of eventual victory. Doolittle, worried he would be court-martialed for missing his primary targets and losing sixteen planes, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and promoted two ranks to brigadier general. Doolittle was eventually promoted to lieutenant general and commanded the 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force over North Africa, the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force over the Mediterranean, and the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Europe with its 42,000-combat aircraft. He modified U.S. bomber escort tactics, freeing fighters to pursue their German counterparts.

Doolittle continued to serve the Air Force and the nation and to participate in aerospace developments. For his achievements, he received almost every major aviation honor. In 1985 Ronald Reagan promoted Doolittle to a full four-star general. He claimed the luckiest thing that ever happened to him was the day his wife, Joe ("Duchess") said, "I do."



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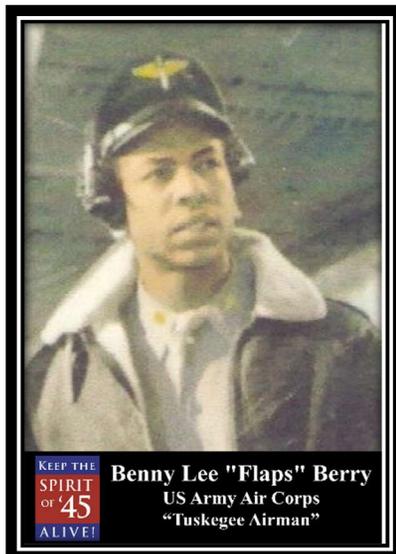
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