



When someone says the word “hero,” what do you think of? Do you imagine some muscle-laden dragon-slayer with a magical sword? Or perhaps a gun-toting, leather-wearing action star, complete with signature sunglasses? These are what heroes tend to look like in the movies, after all.

In real life, heroes come in all shapes and sizes, from all walks of life. Perhaps it’s a tall, gawky young man with enormous ears. Or a balding, middle-aged man with two bum ankles. Or an old man with glasses and a hearing aid, leaning wearily on a cane.

That’s exactly what one legendary group of heroes looked like. We’re referring, of course, to the Doolittle Raiders.

The year was 1942. With the United States still reeling from the attack on Pearl Harbor, a group of officers decided something had to be done.

“The Japanese people had been told they were invulnerable ... [but] an attack on the Japanese homeland would cause confusion and sow doubt about the reliability of their leaders.”

So said Lieutenant Colonel James “Jimmy” Doolittle, describing the impetus behind one of the most notable feats of bravery ever performed when eighty members of the United States Air Force launched a daring air raid on Tokyo despite the overwhelming odds against them.

The need to take the fight to Japan was undeniable. But according to Doolittle, there was another, more important reason for the raid:

There was a second and equally important psychological reason for the attack. Americans badly needed a morale boost.

In February of that year, members of the United States 17th Bomb Group were given the opportunity to volunteer for a secret mission. They were not told what the mission was about or what its objective would be—only that it was both important and “extremely hazardous.”

Eighty men volunteered. Eighty men raised their hands. Despite the danger, despite not knowing what they were signing up for, eighty men said, “I’ll go. Send me.”

In that moment, they became heroes.

Take a good look at them. Some were young men barely out of their teens; others were decades older, with wives and children. Some were tall and some were short. They came from places like Fresno, California, and New Haven, Kentucky. Each and every one a hero.

These were the Doolittle Raiders.

Fast forward to April 18, 1942. The Raiders were still on their ships, almost 800 miles from Japan, when they were spotted by a Japanese boat. The boat was quickly sunk, but not before it was able to radio a warning to the mainland. The Raiders’ commander, Doolittle, was a 44-year old former air racer, who was already something of a legend in aeronautics for being the first pilot to ever take off, fly, and land using instruments alone (meaning he was essentially “flying blind”). Now, he had to make a choice. Continue as planned—or abort the mission?

Even though their secret was out, and even though they were 200 miles further out than they had planned, Doolittle decided to launch the attack.

Immediately, 16 planes took flight. Each carried a pilot, co-pilot, navigator, bombardier, and a gunner. Normally, such bombing raids had fighter escorts, but in this situation, the bombers were all alone. They didn't even have the kind of defenses most bombers normally had, because they had to remove as much weight from their planes as possible. It was the only way they would make it all the way to Japan and back.

The Raiders reached Tokyo about six hours later. Despite Tokyo's defenses, not a single bomber was shot down. They dropped their bombs and strafed their targets, giving Tokyo a taste of what Pearl Harbor had received. More importantly, they had done what no one thought was possible: taken the war straight to the heart of Japan.

Then, things took a turn for the worse.

With night falling and the weather growing bleaker, the Raiders realized they did not have the fuel to reach their base in China. Fifteen of the sixteen planes managed to reach the Chinese coast after 13 hours in the air. Some of them crash-landed, others bailed out. One plane was forced to fly all the way to the Soviet Union. The crew was interned, and while they were treated well, it would be years before they made it home.

Many of the other Raiders were given help from the Chinese, but some weren't so lucky. Three airmen died while crash-landing. Another eight were captured by the Japanese. Three of these men were executed. A fourth died in captivity. They had given their lives so that their country would feel hope again.

The others were kept under confinement for four years, where they were starved, beaten, and sentenced to hard labor. It wasn't until 1945 that they were finally freed.

When Doolittle finally made it home, he expected to be court-martialed, as every single plane had been lost. Instead, he returned to a hero's welcome. American morale had risen dramatically, just as Doolittle hoped it would. Most of the surviving Raiders went on to serve in the rest of the war; some even served in Korea years later.

Ever since the war, the Doolittle Raiders held annual reunions. Lt. Col. Richard E. Cole was the last of the Doolittle Raiders. He passed away in 2019 at the age of 103. When you look at their pictures, you no longer see the same youth and vitality they once had. But what you do see is far more important.

You still see heroes.

Every Memorial Day, we pay tribute to the thousands of heroes who died serving our country. Some of these heroes died before the invention of photography. Many of them are lost to history, their names unknown, their deeds unrecorded.

But we still know what they look like. In fact, we know what *all* heroes look like.

Just imagine someone, *anyone*, young or old, short or tall, man or woman, raising a hand and saying, "I'll go. Send me."

That's what a hero looks like.

On behalf of everyone here at Hudock Capital Group, we wish to say "Thank you" to our nation's heroes. Thank you for your service. Thank you for your sacrifice. Thank you for saying, "Send me."

Thank you for being heroes.

Sincerely,



Barbara B. Hudock, CIMA®, CPM®
Chief Executive Officer
Founding Partner



Michael J. Hudock, Jr., CPM®
President and Founding Partner
Wealth Consultant

400 Market Street ● Suite 200 ● Williamsport PA 17701

570.326.9500 ● 866.855.0569 ● fax: 570.326.9577 ● www.hudockcapital.com

Hudock Capital Group, LLC, is a Registered Investment Advisor. Certain representatives of Hudock Capital Group, LLC, are also Registered Representatives offering securities through APW Capital, Inc., Member FINRA/SIPC, 100 Enterprise Drive, Suite 504, Rockaway, NJ 07866 (800) 637-3211. (5/22).