



SCHOLARSHIP IN HONOR OF

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**MAJOR GENERAL  
BENJAMIN D. FOULOIS**

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U.S. ARMY AIR CORPS

# Major General Benjamin D. Foulois

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**M**aj. Gen. Benjamin D. (Benny) Foulois who obtained his flying instructions from the Wright Brothers by correspondence, was Chief of the Air Services of the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I and Chief of the Air Corps from 1931 to 1935.

His pioneering career spanned the birth, development, and employment of military planes from the outset until his retirement in 1935. He lived to the age of 87 and remained close to the Nation's air arm as an officer of the Air Force Historical Foundation.

Foulois frequently demonstrated his courage and fortitude in testimony before Congressional committees and in counsel with his military superiors, arguing the cause of first-rate air power for his country, with autonomy a prime recommendation. He fought hard as an individual, but he also was a strong team man. He was a soldier devoted to a lifetime of taking orders, once his position had been heard and decisions announced.

Born in Washington, Connecticut, Foulois was 18 when he enlisted in the Army engineers in 1898. He served in Puerto Rico and earned a commission in the Infantry in 1906 for combat service in the Philippine Islands. He found his proper home in the Signal Corps two years later and this paved the way for his inspiring and unparalleled career. Foulois became one of the earliest members of the Aeronautical Division of the Chief Signal Office, genesis of today's United States Air Force.

Lieutenant Foulois operated the first dirigible balloon purchased by the War Department and redesigned the Army's first test hangar so it could accommodate the airplanes then being promised by the Wrights, Glen Curtiss and other pioneers.

Foulois flew as a passenger with Orville Wright on the final acceptance test over Fort Myer to Alexandria, Virginia this short hop becoming the world's first cross-country flight which set records for speed, altitude, and distance. Later in the year he took some flying instructions at College Park, Maryland, the country's first military airfield, but did not solo. In 1910, Foulois was at Fort Sam Houston teaching himself to fly. He crashed frequently and after each mishap, he fired off a letter to the Wrights, asking, "What do I do next.?"

In 1911 and 1912, Foulois was with Hap Arnold, Tom Mil ling, Roy Kirtland and Charles deF. Chandler at College Park. There, Foulois designed the first radio receiving set ever used in the U.S. on an airplane and planned the first air reconnaissance in association with Army troop maneuvers, this being a forerunner to tactical air support used later to great advantage in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

As a captain in 1916, Foulois was commander of the 1st Aero Squadron, consisting of less than 100 people and eight of the 13 military planes then in commission. He directed his force from their base at Columbus, N.M., in support of Gen. John J. Pershing's expedition into Mexico. Flying without instruments in trial planes; some with defective engines, this effort was not successful, but it had a beneficial effect. It proved the need for better aircraft. They were soon provided in a new appropriation of about \$13 million which led to formation of 20 squadrons of 12 planes each, on the eve of America's entry into World War I.

Jumped from major to temporary brigadier general in 1917, Foulois spent most of the war in Europe in a series of key air assignments including Chief of Air Service for both the First

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U.S. Army and the American Expeditionary Forces. After the Armistice he served as an attaché for four years in Germany, adding international stature to his reputation as an aviator. He then followed the usual post-war assignments and attendance at Service schools at home.

Foulois earned the Mackay Trophy in 1930 for conceiving and commanding the largest massed flight of aircraft up to that time in exercises originating in the Dayton area. A public prediction of “massed murder” was over-optimistic: there were no fatalities or major accidents. In the next year Foulois was named Chief of the Air Corps and promoted to major general.

In that capacity he was in position to generate another significant move forward. In 1933 he proposed the development of a new, large, general-purpose bomber, capable of highspeed, long-range and high-altitude operations. This became the B-17 Flying Fortress, with first deliveries made to Langley Field, Virginia in 1936.

When President Roosevelt ordered the Air Corps to fly the mail in 1934, General Foulois divided the country into Eastern, Central and Western zones, and established the routes to carry out the assignment. Ill-equipped for the new mission, airplanes began missing schedules, and there were many accidents. The operation “as tragic in lives lost; but led to better planes, flight instruments, and landing aids.

The next year Foulois decided a dramatic flight would provide vigorous training and testing of equipment and focus public attention on airpower. He assigned Lt. Col. Hap Arnold, then commander at March Field, to lead a night of ten B-10

Martin bombers from Dayton to Alaska and return. The 18,000 mile round-trip demonstrated the feasibility of extended flight and provided detailed information for use in mapping airways in and out of Alaska.

Retiring in 1935 after 37 years of service, General Foulois maintained close contact with the Air Force, attending many public and private gatherings and addressing numerous Air Force groups. He was a priceless source of information about the Air Force’s early history. He was President of the Air Force Historical Foundation from 1955 to 1965. From 1960 to 1967 he traveled more than 500,000 miles by air, “preaching the gospel of airpower” to officers and airmen throughout the world.

In November 1963, less than three months before his tragic death, President Kennedy recommended and Congress provided a special Congressional Medal for General Foulois in recognition of his “more than 50 years of dedication and service to the development of aviation.”

Perhaps General Foulois’ greatest recognition lies however in the fact that he is generally accorded the unique distinction of having had the greatest influence upon the development of U.S. aviation over the longest period of time. Many like the Wright Brothers, General William Mitchell, General Arnold and Lindbergh made unparalleled and inimitable contributions, but none exercised such a decisive influence for more than half a century.

General Foulois died April 25, 1967 at Andrews Air Force Hospital. With him went the last of “the originals” whose example and inspiration will live so long as U.S. air power survives.

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*Dear General Smith:*

*United Aircraft is pleased to sponsor a scholarship as a memorial to Major General Benjamin D. Foulois.*

*General Foulois was truly one of the great pioneers of aviation. His devotion and dedication to the cause of flight have been duly recorded in our history and we are delighted to offer this added recognition in his name.*

*We hope the young man who is awarded this scholarship displays the same sense of duty and responsibility to his profession and his nation as General Foulois.*

*Sincerely,*



*W. P. Swinn*

*Chairman*

UNITED AIRCRAFT CORPORATION

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The Falcon Foundation is a 501(c)(3), non-profit foundation. Its purpose is to provide scholarships to College or Preparatory Schools for motivated young people seeking admission to USAFA and a career in the Air Force.

Although it is a separate organization, the Falcon Foundation works closely with USAFA.