



FALCON
FOUNDATION



SCHOLARSHIP IN HONOR OF

COLONEL
FRANCIS S. GABRESKI

U.S. AIR FORCE

Colonel Francis S. Gabreski

Colonel Francis S. “Gabby” Gabreski, USAF Retired is America’s top living Air Ace with a total of 37.5 victories in aerial combat. He was the number three Ace in WWII (following Dick Bong and Tommy McGuire) in the European theatre of operations with 31 enemy fighters destroyed in aerial combat plus 3 on the ground and was an Ace in the Korean war with 6.5 fighters shot down.

He was born in Oil City, Pennsylvania on January 28, 1919. His Notre Dame pre-med studies were cut short when he decided to enter military service in 1940. His twenty-seven year Air Force fighter pilot career was filled with adventure, challenge and survival.

After completing pilot training in March 1941, he was assigned to the 45th Fighter Squadron at Wheeler Field in Hawaii... would survive through the Pearl Harbor attack and in October 1942, he moved on to Europe. A month later, Gabby was assigned as Liaison Officer to the Polish Air Force flying British Spitfires in 20 combat missions. In February 1943, he was assigned to the 56th Fighter Group based in England. In July 1944, Colonel Gabreski was on furlough awaiting transportation back to the States when he volunteered to lead his squadron into Germany. Returning, he elected to hit a German airfield loaded with parked aircraft. On his second pass, his prop hit a small rise in the runway and forced him to make a crash landing. He fled and eluded the Germans for five days. After his capture, he was a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft I for ten months and was liberated by the Russian Army in April 1945.

During his tour in the European Theater of Operations, he flew 166 combat missions in the Spitfires and American P-47 airplanes.

After his liberation from the POW camp, he returned to the United States and was assigned to Wright-Patterson Air Force base in Ohio, as Chief of the Engineering Flight Test School. He attended the Engineering Flight Test School qualifying him as a test pilot. A year later, he left the Air Force to accept a position with the Douglas Aircraft Corporation in California.

In April 1947, Colonel Gabreski was recalled to active duty and assigned as Commander of the 55th Fighter Squadron at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina. In September 1947, he entered Columbia University under the Air Force Educational Program where he studied the Russian language and received a BS Degree in Political Science from its Russian Institute.

In 1951, after a three year tour as Commander of the 56th Fighter Group at Selfridge Air Force Base, Michigan, Colonel Gabreski was assigned to Korea. On April 1, 1952, he became history’s eighth “Jet Ace”.

Assignments followed taking him into F-100 fighters in Okinawa for two years; to Hickham Air Force Base, Hawaii and in the summer of 1963, he assumed the post of Inspector General for the Pacific Air Forces.

He has accumulated over 5,000 hours total flying time, with 4,000 hours logged in jet aircraft and is current in modern jet fighters.

Among his decorations are the Distinguished Service Medal, Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster, Distinguished Flying Cross with 12 Oak Leaf Clusters, the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal and Air Medal with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters. His foreign decorations are the

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British Distinguished Flying Cross, Polish Cross of Valor, French Croix de Guerre with Palm, French Legion of Honor, Belgium Croix de Guerre and the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation.

Since his Air Force retirement, Gabby has been with the Grumman Corporation. There was a three year leave of absence (1978-1981) when Governor Carey asked him to become President of the Long Island Railroad.

There have been many honors bestowed through the years. Gabby was elected to the Eagles Hall of

Fame in 1955 and was enshrined in the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 1978. He served as President of the American Fighter Aces Association in 1968. He was President of the Iron Gate Chapter in 1979 and 1980.

In 1945, Gabby married his beautiful Catherine Cochran, whom we all know as Kay and together they have raised nine wonderful children - four sons and five daughters.

Dear General Bellis:

The great leaders, for whom the Falcon Scholarships are named, have set outstanding examples of leadership and service and built a solid foundation for others to follow and build on.

We hope this scholarship will inspire and encourage the recipient to achieve his or her goals.

We are privileged to provide this opportunity for the development of future leaders.

Iron Gate Chapter

Air Force Association



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.