

MAJOR GENERAL BENJAMIN D. FOULOIS

Retired Dec. 31, 1935. Died April 25, 1967.

Benjamin Delahauf Foulois was born in Washington, Conn., in 1879. Enlisting as a private in the First United States Volunteer Engineers July 7, 1898, he served in Puerto Rico until January 1899, when he was mustered out as a sergeant. On June 17, 1899, he enlisted as a private in the Regular Army and served with the 19th Infantry, rising to the grade of first sergeant. Going to the Philippine Islands in August 1899, he participated in campaigns on Luzon, Panay and Cebu. He was commissioned a second lieutenant of Infantry February 2, 1901.

Shortly thereafter he joined the 17th Infantry in the Philippines, serving in Manila on the island of Luzon, at Cottabota and Malabang on the island of Mindanao, and participating in engagements against the Lake Lanao Moros in Mindanao during April, May and June 1902. He returned to the United States with the 17th, and was stationed at Vancouver Barracks, Washington, until July 1903, when the 17th was ordered back to the Philippines. During this tour in the Philippines General Foulois worked on mapping and exploring various parts of the island of Mindanao, as well as participating in engagements against the Moros on the islands of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago.

Entering the Infantry-Cavalry School at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., in August 1905, General Foulois graduated a year later and was assigned to the Signal School there. He was then ordered to Cuba where he joined the Army of Cuban Pacification with headquarters at Ciego de Avila, and assisted in developing a military map of Cuba. He returned to the United States and Fort Leavenworth in 1907 to complete the Signal School, graduating in July 1908.

Upon graduation he was assigned to the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, Washington, D.C. During this tour General Foulois operated the first dirigible balloon purchased by the U.S. Government. He was also one of the first three officers in the Army to operate the first military airplane purchased by the Government from the Wright Brothers in 1909. He accompanied Orville Wright on the final trial flight from Fort Myer to Alexandria, Va., breaking three world's records - speed, altitude and duration cross-country. During September and October 1909, he was the American Delegate to the International Congress of Aeronautics held in France.

Transferring to Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, in January 1910, General Foulois was in charge of the first airplane owned and used in the service of the U.S. Army. He was the only pilot, navigator, instructor, observer and commander in the heavier-than-air division of the U.S. Army from November 1909 to April 1911, and made many mechanical improvements, later incorporated in subsequent models of airplanes. From May to July 1911 he was detailed with the Maneuver Division at San Antonio, and while there he designed and used the first radio receiving set ever used in an airplane in the U.S. Army. During this period he also broke the world cross-country record with a passenger, and carried out the first radio/air reconnaissance problems ever conducted with troops.

Transferred to the Militia Bureau, Washington, D.C., in July 1911, General Foulois was in charge of all Signal Corps and engineering units of the National Guard. In October 1912 he was assigned to the 7th Infantry, Fort Leavenworth, Kan., and in February 1913 was transferred to Galveston, Texas. In December 1913 he was assigned to the Signal Corps Aviation School at San Diego, Calif., with aviation duty at Galveston, Texas, from April to July 1914. He then returned to San Diego to organize and assume command of the First Aero Squadron at the Signal Corps Aviation School in 1914. The squadron moved by rail to Fort Sill, Okla., in the fall of 1915. The First Aero Squadron then moved to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, by air, marking the first unit cross-country

flight.

Under the command of General Foulois, the squadron then participated in the Mexican Punitive Expedition (March to August 1916) with General John J. Pershing, the supreme command of the expedition. In September 1916 he was named Department Aeronautical Officer, Southern Department Fort Sam Houston, Texas. During this assignment he initiated steps for the establishment of the present day Kelly Air Force Base.

In March 1917 he was assigned to the Aviation Section, Signal Corps, Washington, D.C., with duty as chairman of the Joint Army and Navy Technical Aircraft Committee of the War and Navy Departments. This committee had sole responsibility for implementing the Army War Plans in World War I (1917), incident to the initial phases of our air requirements at home and overseas. This required the drafting of adequate legislation to meet our initial financial needs in the amount of \$640,000,000, a sum which received the approval of Congress and became law on July 24, 1917.

During the period from March to September 1917, General Foulois was charged with the responsibility for the production, maintenance, organization and operations of all American aeronautical materiel and personnel in the United States. Embarking for France in October 1917, he was charged with the same responsibilities in France, the British Isles and Italy.

In November 1917 he was named chief of air service, American Expeditionary Forces, and assumed additional duties as a member of the Joint Army and Navy Aircraft Committee in France; representative of the commander in chief, American Expeditionary Forces on the Inter-Allied Expert Committee on Aviation of the Supreme War Council, and commandant of the Army Aeronautical Schools.

In May 1918 he was appointed chief of air service, First Army. In August 1918, when our European "pipe lines" began to "leak badly," he was designated assistant chief of the air service, zone of the advance, and two months later he became assistant chief of air service, Services of Supply. After the Armistice, Nov. 11, 1918, he attended the Center of Artillery Studies at Treves, Germany from February to March 1919. He then served with the chief of the air service on the Supreme War Council, drafting the air clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. Upon his return to the U.S. in July 1919, he was assigned to the Office of the Director of Air Service at Washington, D.C., in charge of the Air Service Liquidation Division, responsible for the settlement of war claims against the United States.

In April 1920 he was assigned as assistant military attache, The Hague, Netherlands, and Berlin, Germany. Entering the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., in April 1924, he graduated the following year and was assigned to command Mitchel Field, N.Y.

Appointed assistant chief of the air corps in December 1927, General Foulois became chief of the Materiel Division at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio, in June 1929. He was then reassigned to the Office of the Chief of Air Corps, Washington, D.C., in July 1930. In May 1931 he commanded the Air Corps exercises, leadership of which earned him the Mackey Trophy for that year. On Dec. 19, 1931 he was designated chief of the Air Corps.

General Foulois retired from active duty Dec. 31, 1935, after 37 years of service.

He has been president of the Air Force Historical Foundation since 1955. During the period 1960-1964, as president of the foundation, he traveled approximately 500,000 miles by air, emphasizing national security to the men and women of the U.S. Air Force at home and overseas.

In addition to his five campaign badges for field service in the Spanish-American War, the Philippines Insurrection, the Army of Cuban Pacification, the Mexican Punitive Expedition, and

World War I. his decorations also include the U.S. Army Distinguished Service Medal, the French Legion of Honor (Commander), the Crown of Italy (Grand Officer), and more recently (1963) the Congressional Air Force Medal of Recognition.

During his 56 years of active and retired military aviation service, he has accumulated a number of firsts such as

1908 First flight as a dirigible pilot
1909 First observer on an aircraft cross-country
1910 First military man to teach himself to fly
First and only military test pilot flying Old No. 1
1911 First to fly more than 100 miles non-stop
First on an operational reconnaissance flight
First to test use of radio in flight
1914 First commander of a tactical air unit (1st Aero Squadron)
First commander of the first mechanized tactical unit in the U.S. Army (1st Aero Squadron)
1916 First to use an aircraft in a combat operation (Mexico)
1918 First chief of Air Service, AEF, 1st Army
1931 First chief of Air Corps to be a military aviator
1933 First Air Corps chief to be awarded Mackay Trophy
1962 First Honorary Staff Member of Air Force Systems Command
1964 First honorary member of the Aerospace Primus Club

In addition to the above list of firsts, the following honorary titles and awards have been made to General Foulois

Honorary Fellow, Society of Experimental Test Pilots
Honorary Senior Communicator of the U.S. Air Force
Honorary Member, Institute of Navigation
Air Force Association Citation of Honor in the 50th Anniversary Year of the Silver Wings (1963)
Member, National Aviation Hall of Fame, 1963

He was promoted to first lieutenant Oct. 16, 1906; to captain July 23, 1914; to major June 27, 1917; to brigadier general (temporary) July 24, 1917; reverted to the grade of major July 21, 1919; was promoted to lieutenant colonel Feb. 1, 1923; to brigadier general Dec. 20, 1927; and to major general Dec. 20, 1931.