



FALCON
FOUNDATION



SCHOLARSHIP IN HONOR OF

CAPTAIN
EDWARD B. RICKENBACKER

U.S. SIGNAL CORP

Captain Edward B. Rickenbacker

Edward Vernon Rickenbacker was nationally known as a winning race-car driver even before he became the leading United States Air Force Ace in World War I. He came home from the war to eventually head up a leading airline with notable success. But he will be remembered in the history of the Nation's air arm as one of its great military pilots, an American "Ace of Aces."

Every American pilot today has inherited a little of "Captain Eddie's" professional attitude and standards of excellence.

In May 1917 Rickenbacker enlisted with a group of other race drivers as a sergeant and was soon headed for France with the American Expeditionary Force, commanded by General John J. Pershing. While he was a staff driver for Colonel Billy Mitchell, then a colonel in the AEF, he was given permission to learn flying at the Primary Flying Schooling in Tours.

In March 1918 Lieutenant Rickenbacker was assigned to the First Pursuit Group's 94th Aero Squadron. This was the famous "Hat-in-the-Ring Squadron," the first American air unit to participate actively on the Western front.

Flying his Nieuport over the lines against the enemy in April 1918, Rickenbacker scored his first victory of the war: He shot down a German Pfalz. By 1 June 1918 Rickenbacker had become an ace, with five German aircraft to his credit. He was flying with Maj. Raoul Lufbery, Capt. James Hall and others who first saw combat with the Lafayette Escadrille.

A few months later he was put in command of the 94th, and in October was promoted to cap-

tain. That was the month he shot down 14 enemy aircraft. On the 30th he got his twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth victories, more than any other American pilot, and his last of the war.

By November his "Hat-in-the-Ring Squadron" had chalked up 69 German aircraft, more than any other American unit. Rickenbacker was a daring flyer, but an officer who knew engines and aircraft intimately and who practiced and polished his aerial maneuvers and gunnery constantly. He made it a point never to assign his men a target that he wouldn't attack.

He continued as commander of the "Hat-in-the-Ring Squadron" until his discharge from active military duty in January 1919.

Rickenbacker was awarded major French and United States decorations, including our Nation's highest, the Congressional Medal of Honor. The citation read: "for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy near Billy, France, 25 September 1918. While on a voluntary patrol over the lines, Lieutenant Rickenbacker attacked seven enemy planes (five type-Fokker, protecting two type-Halberstadt photographic planes). Disregarding the odds against him, he dived on them and shot down one of the Fokkers out of control. He then attacked one of the Halverstadt and sent it down also."

In the years following the war, Rickenbacker was active in the automobile and aviation industries. He was Vice President and Director of Sales of Rickenbacker Motor Company, with some 1,500 dealers selling the cars. He took over operation of the Indianapolis Speedway, which over the years tested and proved numerous automotive advanc-

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es. He headed a group that bought Eastern Air Lines in April 1938 and became its president and general manager.

Always an articulate advocate of airpower - of improved commercial aviation and military preparedness to preserve peace - Rickenbacker testified before Congressional committees on the potential of airpower and appeared as General Billy Mitchell's final witness at the court martial of the great champion of a unified air service.

In early 1942, Rickenbacker was requested by Lt. Gen. H.H. "Hap" Arnold, Commanding General of the AAF, to visit training bases and evaluate training and morale, talk to the troops and to report on his findings. Later in the year, he was sent on a special mission by Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson "to evaluate the aviation progress of the enemy, our Allies and ourselves." The assignment took him first to Great Britain and to the South Pacific. On a flight between Hawaii and Canton Island, the B-17 in which he was a passenger went down in the Pacific, with eight aboard. Rickenbacker and six others survived 24 days on rafts in the open sea.

A book, *Seven Came Through*, which Rickenbacker wrote about the ordeal, has had continued

popularity. All proceeds from the book have gone to the Air Force Aid Society.

"Captain Eddie" traveled about the country for months addressing factory workers; then he again resumed his trips to U.S. and allied bases throughout the world to observe and report to the Secretary Stimson, General Marshall and General Arnold.

When in 1963 he retired from active management of Eastern Airlines and from the board of directors he was able to point to the fact that during his 25 years of stewardship the company always showed a profit and never accepted a Government subsidy.

In 1967, when he was 77, Rickenbacker published a widely popular 458-page autobiography that bears out General Hap Arnold's evaluation of his life. Arnold had written in 1942 that "no one man has contributed more to air-mindedness in America than Captain Rickenbacker. His brilliant record in the last war, coupled with his civilian attainments, has stood as a glorious example for thousands of young Americans who are now proving their worth in aerial combat."

Dear General Bellis:

Captain Eddie's career, filled with achievement in many different fields, inspired three generations of young Americans to toss their hat in the ring and meet life's challenges head on.

The Captain Eddie scholarship is endowed in perpetuity thanks to the generosity of lifelong friends of his such as the Wolfe family of Columbus, Ohio (Captain Eddie's home town) and the Rockefeller family of New York (Laurance Rockefeller was associated with Captain Eddie ever since the public founding of Eastern Air Lines in 1938). Major funds also derived from the sale of some of Captain Eddie's personal memorabilia – a use that he would have wholeheartedly welcomed.

*Wm F. Rickenbacher
William F. Rickenbacher
1st. Lt., USAF (1952-1955)*



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.