

NEWS

Col. William Marsh "Bill" Bower



By **DAILY CAMERA** |

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Col. William Marsh "Bill" Bower, 93, the last surviving pilot from the famous "Doolittle's Tokyo Raiders" who bombed Japan in 1942, died Monday, January 10, 2011 at his home in south Boulder, surrounded by friends and family.

Hailed as a hero for his role in the United States' first air attack on Japan following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, Bill always said that the true heroes are the men who stick by and raise their families.

Bill was born February 13, 1917 in Ravenna, Ohio, the son of Harold Friend Bower and Kathryn Marsh Bower. He attended Chestnut Street School and Highland Avenue School and graduated from Ravenna High School in 1934.

He attended Hiram College and Kent State University from 1934 to 1936.

He married Lorraine Amman Bower in the lobby of the Lady Lafayette Hotel, Walterboro, S.C. on August 18, 1942. They raised four children: Bill, Jim, Mary and Mindy. Lorraine died in 2004.

Bill served with the Ohio National Guard 107th Cavalry from 1934 to 1938 and graduated from the Army Air Force Flying School in 1940. He received a commission as a 2nd lieutenant, USAF on October 4, 1940, with a rating of Army Aviator. He joined the 37th Bombardment Squadron at Lowry Field in Denver, Colo. in October 1940 and joined the 17th Bombardment Group in June 1941 at McChord Field in Washington.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Bill volunteered and was chosen for the mission planned and led by Lt. James "Jimmy" Doolittle to bomb military targets on the home islands of Japan, an effort to demonstrate that the Japanese Empire was not invulnerable to attack.

On April 18, 1942, 16 B25B Mitchell medium bombers took off from the decks of the U.S.S. Hornet in the western Pacific Ocean. Because landing planes of that size on the Hornet was impossible, the pilots continued toward China after bombing their targets. All but one aircraft, which landed in the Soviet Union,



After his return, Bill assumed command of the 428th Bombardment Squadron and joined Allied invasion forces in Africa. He remained there and in Italy until September 1945. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his role in the raids.

After the war, Bill worked as a planner and accident investigator for the U.S. Air Force and served in the Arctic as commander of a USAF transport organization. He also served as commander at Dobbins Air Force Base, Marietta, Georgia.

In 1966, he retired and moved with his family to Boulder, where he built and lived in the same house on Dennison Lane.

Bill was deeply involved in his community, and was recognized by the BDC in the "Monday Morning Rose." He volunteered with Second Harvest Community Food Shares and Meals on Wheels. He organized state and local chapters of Trout Unlimited and founded the Central Optimist Club, of which he was the chapter president. He was a Flight Captain with the Order of Daedalians and organized the local chapter of the Air Force Association. Bill was a member of the board of directors of Crime Stoppers, 1982-83 and the board of Retired Seniors Volunteer Program. He also served on city of Boulder committees overseeing aviation noise and operations and Boulder Creek Flood Control. Finally, he worked for ten years on Colorado Congressman Tom Wirth's screening committee for applicants to the nation's service academies.

He continues to be remembered fondly by his neighbors, past and present. One described Bill as a "surrogate grandfather, handyman, and caretaker" to adults and children alike. He did everything from shoveling his neighbors' sidewalks (without being asked) to building model rockets for kids. "Mr. Bower" or "the Colonel" always had a Jolly Rancher candy for neighborhood children who stopped by. Bill was a consummate outdoorsman. He enjoyed fishing on the Rio Grande – including, on occasion, with Doolittle and his fellow raiders – bird hunting and guiding hunters in the Colorado mountains. An accomplished equestrian as a young man, he introduced his daughters to riding when they were young; both continue to work with horses today.

He also greatly enjoyed the annual Raider reunions, held every year since 1947 except 1955 and 1966. Five Raider crew members, including two co-pilots, survive him, but Bill was the last living pilot. He was asked to play "Taps" at Doolittle's memorial service in 1993.



In 2008, he was recognized for his distinguished service to his country at the Boulder Memorial Day race.

He is survived by Bill and Janet Bower, Jim and Susan Bower, Mary and Buck Brannaman, and Mindy Bower and Kevin Hall; his grandchildren Tyler and Amy Bower, Lauren and Kristin Swenson, Daniel Bower, Andrew Bower and Reata Brannaman; great-granddaughter Ashley Bower; and an amazing group of caregivers.

Services will be held at St. Martin de Pourres, 3300 Table Mesa Dr, Boulder, at 11AM on Thursday, January 13th.

Donations may be made in lieu of flowers to the Family Hospice Foundation, 1790 30th St, #308, Boulder, CO, or the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders' Scholarship Fund, c/o Richard Cole, 48 Blaschke Rd, Comfort, TX, 78013.

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