CADET HERITAGE

Priceless documents from aerospace pioneers who support CAP cadets
INTRODUCTION

Since 1942, young people have been serving their communities and developing into responsible citizens through Civil Air Patrol.

In 1963, CAP leaders decided it was time to reorganize the Cadet Program and begin a new curriculum. To add credibility to their important work and help inspire America’s next generation of pilots, engineers, mechanics, and aviation enthusiasts, CAP asked aerospace pioneers for permission to name cadet awards in their honor. The “modern” Cadet Program launched in 1964.

The cherished documents reproduced here are proudly displayed at CAP National Headquarters, Gill Robb Wilson Hall, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
CAP’s canon of aerospace pioneers was born in 1964 when CAP converted from its original WWII-era Cadet Program to its “modern” configuration. Originally, eleven pioneers were to inspire the cadets, but CAP has amended the canon over the years. The first alteration came in 1979 when the Frank Borman Falcon Award, perched above the Spaatz, was phased-out. In 1998, Neil Armstrong and Ira Eaker were added. In 2003, Mary Feik joined the ranks. The Willa Brown, George Boyd, and Sally Ride Achievements commenced in 2019.
JOHN CURRY
Major General, USAF
First CAP national commander

“I was always very proud that I was with CAP in the beginning.”

In his letter authorizing CAP to use his name in the new Cadet Program, Maj Gen Curry gives a glimpse of CAP’s early days and the fight to allow volunteer aviators to support the war effort by performing missions that only they could accomplish.
HAP ARNOLD

General of the Air Force, USAF
WWII commander of Army Air Forces

“The boys and I . . . feel it is a great honor.”

Here, the widow of airpower legend Hap Arnold expresses her support for the CAP Cadet Program.

Gen. Arnold, as Chief of the U.S. Army Air Forces during WWII, provided vital support to Maj Gen Curry in his efforts to establish a Civil Air Patrol.
America’s first female aviation engineer taught mechanics for the US Army Air Corps and logged thousands of hours as a pilot and engineering observer in fighter, attack, bomber, cargo, and training aircraft. Twelve years from the award’s inception until her passing, Col Feik traveled the nation, speaking to thousands of cadets and inspiring female cadets in particular to become the leaders America needs.
This letter shows that leaders of The Smithsonian knew well that CAP planned to modernize its Cadet Program.

CAP’s Charles Webb may have written to The Smithsonian because the Wright Brothers died bachelors. Without any widows or children to turn to, whose permission should CAP seek to name a cadet award in the Wrights’ honor?
Here, the famous WWI Ace of Aces, now chairman of one of America’s biggest airlines, explains that he wants succeeding generations of cadets to know him simply as Eddie, not by his formal name, Edward V.
How would an engineer grant permission to CAP to name a cadet award in his honor? Succinctly.

One of aviation’s true giants, Gen Doolittle is famous for being one of the first men to earn a doctorate in aeronautics from MIT, being the first pilot to fly “blind,” relying entirely on instruments, and commanding the almost suicidal bombing raid on Tokyo in the early days of WWII, for which he was awarded the Medal of Honor.
"I am deeply moved . . ."

Aerospace enthusiasts know of Dr. Goddard’s legacy. But how many young people appreciate him as "the world’s first space pioneer?" In this letter, Dr. Goddard’s widow thanks CAP for honoring her late husband and perpetuating his memory through the new Cadet Program.
This document was returned to CAP unsigned, with only a brief explanation provided by Mr. Armstrong’s secretary:

“Mr. Armstrong has no objection to the use of his name as requested [but] has concluded he will not provide the signed authorization.”

Mr. Armstrong was famously reclusive and suspicious of people who might try to make money off of his autograph.
“This seems like a very nice thing to do – the kind of award Amelia would choose herself. Thank you!”

Ms. Earhart’s sister grants CAP permission to create the Amelia Earhart Award for cadets. In this handwritten note, Muriel Earhart Morrissey compliment’s the award certificate’s artwork, which is believed to be identical to the artwork still in use today.
A pioneering aviator, Lt Brown earned her pilot's license in 1937, making her the first African American woman to be licensed in the United States. In 1941, she became the first African American officer in the CAP. In 1943, she became the first woman in the United States who possessed both a mechanic's license and a commercial license in aviation. Her aviation school paved the way for the Tuskegee Airmen.
Dr. Ride is best known as the first female American astronaut, but more than that, she was a scientist and engineer who was deeply concerned about science literacy in America. Her Sally Ride Science Festivals inspired thousands of middle school girls to get excited about STEM subjects and related careers.
Col Boyd was a recipient of two Congressional Gold Medals, one for his service as a CAP cadet from the WWII era, and another as a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, the WWII combat unit famous for overcoming the indignities of segregation while simultaneously amassing an incredible combat record. In his later life, Col Boyd served as commander of CAP’s Kansas Wing.
Gen Spaatz, “Master of Airpower,” commanded US bomber forces during WWII. After the war, he served as the newly-formed U.S. Air Force’s first chief of staff. In later life, Gen Spaatz served as CAP’s first chairman of its National Board. The general’s grandchildren proudly keep “Tooey’s” legacy alive today through The Spaatz Association, the honor society of CAP Spaatz Award recipients.
Astronaut Frank Borman, who orbited the Moon with Apollo 8, gave his support to CAP’s Cadet Program just three weeks before man’s first lunar landing.

The Frank Borman Falcon Award recognized CAP members who continued their study of aerospace after earning the Spaatz Award. The Falcon Award was discontinued in 1979.