

Lieutenant William Glover Farrow

24 Sep 1918 – 15 Oct 1942

William Glover Farrow was born in Darlington, South Carolina. He was the pilot of one of sixteen B-25s under the command of James H. Doolittle, whose mission was to bomb Tokyo and other industrial cities in Japan. It is known today simply as the Doolittle Raid, which is well-recorded in history books, but sometimes people forget.

Farrow's life story is told in a book written by his aunt Margaret Meadows Stem, *Tall and Free as Meant by God*. He attended the University of South Carolina (USC), and while at USC he wrote what he called his creed, which set forth his view of how to live the proper life. It received national attention when it was published in newspapers and magazines across the country after his capture by the Japanese.

Farrow graduated with honors from St. John's High School in 1935, and enrolled at USC in August 1938. In 1939 he was one of three USC students selected by the Civil Aeronautics Authority to attend pilot training at the government's expense at the Hawthorne Aviation School. Upon receiving his pilot's license in March 1940, Farrow was ordered to report to Love Field in Dallas, TX to be inducted into the US Army Air Corps (USAAC). In February 1941, he was transferred to the San Angelo Air Corps Basic Flying School as a part of Class 41-E. He graduated two months later and headed to Kelly Field in San Antonio, TX for advanced pilot training. On 11 July 1941, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant into USAAC.

In April 1942, Lt Farrow, along with 80 other men, embarked on a mission that had never been done before. They would fly 25,000-pound, land-based bombers, each with a crew of five, from the deck of an aircraft carrier off the coast of Japan. This was being done only four months after the Japanese had sabotaged Pearl Harbor.



Lt Farrow's B-25 ran out of fuel after the raid near Nanchang, China, and he and the crew bailed into the dark shortly after midnight. They were captured by the Japanese shortly after the sun came up. A mock trial was held, and the men later found out they had been sentenced to death for "war crimes."

In the early hours of 15 October 1942, white blindfolds were placed over their heads with black targets marked on them for the executioners. The men were transported by truck to a public cemetery outside of Shanghai, and executed around 1630 that afternoon. Their bodies were cremated, but their remains were not discovered until after the war was over. In 1949, the remains were returned to the United States and buried in the Arlington National Cemetery, Lt Farrow's ashes being placed in Section 12.

One day prior to his known date of execution, young Lt Farrow, unseduced, unshaken, unmoved, and unnerved, was

sitting in his cell writing his last letter to his mother. He wasn't thinking of himself, or of the cruel death that awaited him and the two other Doolittle Fliers condemned with him. He was thinking of his mother, and of the girl he now would never marry. How could he comfort them, excepting to remind them of the faith that was his own great comfort in this hour of trial?

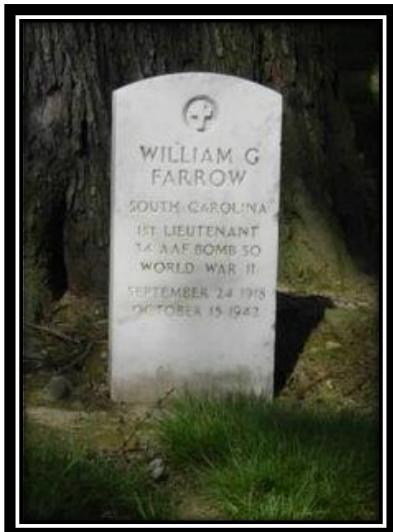
The time was getting short. He re-read what he had written to his mother, and anxious to spare as much grief as possible, added these closing immortal words:

"Don't let this get you down. Just remember God will make everything right and that I'll see you all again in the hereafter. Read 'Thanatopsis' by Bryant. If you want to know how I am taking this. My faith in God is complete, so I am unafraid."

The letter was found in the files of the War Ministry Building in Tokyo, along with the last messages of those condemned with him. These letters were used as evidence in the war crimes of Japanese accused of executing the Doolittle Fliers, and they were widely publicized at the time.

The brief excerpt from Lt Farrow's letter appeared in newspapers all over the world and stirred the hearts of millions of readers. To many who had faced tragedy and grief during the war years, it came almost as a personal message. Parents who had lost sons clipped it and carried it about with them, finding unexpected consolation in Farrow's lost brave message to his mother. Ministers in all the churches made it the subject of moving sermons on faith, and newspapers the theme of countless editorials on courage.

Appearing at a time when many people were lost in the bitterness of their own bereavement, Lt Farrow's letter made an immense impression and helped many regain the faith and peace of mind they thought they had lost forever.



Lt Farrow's thrilling exploit will never be forgotten by his grateful nation. We should remember he gave more than he knew. For his simple, yet eloquent, words of courage and faith live on; and the now-famous quotation from his last letter to his mother takes its place among the inspirational messages of mankind.

During the course of his pilot training and career, Lt Farrow flew a wide array of aircraft. Some of these include the B-25 Mitchell, Boeing B-29 Superfortress, numerous variations of the PT-17 and PT-18 families of the Boeing-Stearman series, BT-14 Yale, AT-6 Texan, T-28 Trojan, and P-51 Mustang.

For his part in the Doolittle Raid, Lt Farrow was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Chinese Order of the Clouds, the Purple Heart, and a presidential citation. He is the namesake of USC's Arnold Air Society William Glover Farrow Squadron hosted by Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps Detachment 775.

