

## Randolph Air Force Base Remembers Namesake

Posted 2/9/2011

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2/9/2011 - RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas -- The brave captain didn't worry about his Air Force PT score and never direct-dialed a phone number, because neither the Air Force nor direct dial phone service existed when he died in a plane crash in 1928.

It's entirely possible Captain William Randolph didn't want to be a pilot as a child because flight in "heavier than air" machines began roughly when he was born. Word about these flying contraptions didn't spread as fast then as information does today and it's not likely he would have heard of such a machine. There were no social networking websites to use on the computers that hadn't been invented yet, connected with the Internet that was still a few years off.

Today the adventure of flying is gone, but in Captain Randolph's time, flight was a new and daring adventure and air speed was less than 50 miles per hour. Faster portions of modern day bicycle races can reach such speeds and modern aircraft can be flown ten times faster, or more.

Captain Randolph was born in Austin, Texas and graduated Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College in 1916. There in 1910 he had his first military training, records show.

After graduation, William Randolph joined the military and served along the Mexico border in Company X, Second Texas Infantry, a mobilized Texas National Guard unit.

A year later, April 1917, Congress declared war on Germany at the request of President Woodrow Wilson. This declaration catapulted the United States into what was seen at the time as "Europe's War." Captain Randolph was one of the first to begin training at the officer's training camp established in Leon Springs, Texas, now surrounded by San Antonio.

In August 1917, William Randolph received his commission with the rank of 1st Lieutenant of infantry, Reserve Officer Corps. He was stationed at Fort Travis, Texas, near Galveston, until he was assigned to the 345th Machine Gun Battalion.

Records don't show where Lieutenant Randolph served in the battalion, but they do show he returned to Austin shortly after his commission to begin flying training.

Lieutenant Randolph began his flight training at the School of Military Aeronautics, Austin in 1918 during the military buildup during World War I. His flying training brought him from Austin to Kelly Field, now part of Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

After he completed flying training in Texas, Captain Randolph was stationed in Rockwell Field, California, near San Diego. In July 1920, Lieutenant Randolph was promoted to captain in a permanent commission in the Army Air Service.

Captain Randolph returned to Texas in 1927 when he became adjutant of the Army Air Corps Advanced Flying School at Kelly. For three years before that, he was in command of the 25th Bombardment Squadron, France Field, Panama Canal Zone, Panama.

Captain Randolph died in a plane crash in difficult weather with strong winds shortly after takeoff from Gorman Field, Texas en route to Kelly Field. He was one of the officers in the group responsible for naming the new Air Corps field being designed to meet the expanding needs of the Army.

The remaining members of the group decided to name the new air field in honor of the late Captain Randolph. The name designation was approved by the War Department Sept. 27.

Captain Randolph left behind a wife, a daughter and two sons. His sons followed in their father's footsteps and both died in plane crashes, one near Boerne, Texas and the other in France during World War II.

[Records from the deactivated 3510th Flying Training Wing, Office of Information Services, Randolph Air Force base and the Randolph historian's office, compiled and edited by many sources during the past decades, contributed to this story.]