

# USAF Almanac

## Air Force Magazine's Guide to Aces



Striking a pose in front of Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker's airplane are (l-r) 1st Lt. Joseph Eastman, Capt. James A. Meissner (eight victories), Rickenbacker (26 victories), 1st Lt. Reed M. Chambers (seven victories), and 1st Lt. Thorne C. Taylor (two victories).

### Some Famous US Fighter Firsts

May 30, 1918	First US-trained AEF ace: Capt. Edward V. Rickenbacker
Dec. 7, 1941	First AAF victories of WW II: Six pilots at Pearl Harbor
Dec. 16, 1941	First AAF ace of WW II: 1st Lt. Boyd D. Wagner
June 27, 1950	First USAF victories in the Korean War
Nov. 8, 1950	First jet-to-jet victory of the Korean War
May 20, 1951	First USAF ace of the Korean War: Capt. James Jabara
Nov. 30, 1951	First USAF ace of two wars (WW II and Korea): Maj. George A. Davis Jr. (7 in WW II and 14 in Korea)
Jan. 2, 1967	First (and only) USAF ace with victories in WW II and Vietnam: Col. Robin Olds (12 in WW II and 4 in Vietnam)

By tradition, anyone with five official victory credits is an ace. In compiling this list of aces who flew with the US Air Force and predecessor organizations (the Air Service, Air Corps, and Army Air Forces), *Air Force Magazine* relied on USAF's official accounting of aerial victory credits, which is the responsibility of the Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

Air Force historians have kept the official records of aerial victories by USAF pilots and crew members since 1957. The Office of the Air Force Historian initially published four separate listings—for World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. The four volumes have been corrected, updated, and combined into one comprehensive volume.

In each war in which its members flew and fought, the Air Force established criteria for awarding aerial victory credits. These criteria varied from war to war, and therefore one cannot make direct comparisons of aces across all wars.

In many cases during World War I, several aviators worked together to down a single aircraft. The Air Service awarded one whole credit to each aviator who contributed to the victory. A single victory could—and often did—result in three or four victory credits.

In World War II and Korea, the criteria were changed. The service divided one credit among all aviators who contributed to destruction of an enemy plane. With the awarding of fractional credits, a single victory could result in no more than one credit.

The rules were changed again in the Vietnam War. When an F-4 downed an enemy aircraft, USAF would award two full aerial victory credits—one to the front-seater and one to the back-seater. As in World War I, a single victory resulted in multiple victory credits.

Thus, the standards for World War II and Korea were more restrictive than those for World War I and Vietnam.

## American Aces of World War I

Rickenbacker, Capt. Edward V. ....	26	Hays, 2d Lt. Frank K. ....	6
Luke, 2d Lt. Frank, Jr. ....	18	Hudson, 1st Lt. Donald.....	6
Vaughn, 1st Lt. George A. ....	13	Knotts, 2d Lt. Howard C. ....	6
Kindley, 1st Lt. Field E. ....	12	Lindsay, 1st Lt. Robert O. ....	6
Springs, 1st Lt. Elliott W. ....	12	MacArthur, 2d Lt. John K. ....	6
Landis, 1st Lt. Reed G. ....	10	Ponder, 2d Lt. William T. ....	6
Swaab, 1st Lt. Jacques M. ....	10	Putnam, 1st Lt. David E. ....	6
Baer, 1st Lt. Paul P. ....	9	Stovall, 1st Lt. William H. ....	6
Cassady, 1st Lt. Thomas G. ....	9	Tobin, 1st Lt. Edgar G. ....	6
Hamilton, 1st Lt. Lloyd A. ....	9	Vasconcells, 1st Lt. Jerry C. ....	6
Wright, 1st Lt. Chester E. ....	9	Badham, 2d Lt. William T. ....	5
Clay, 1st Lt. Henry R., Jr. ....	8	Bair, 1st Lt. Hilbert L. ....	5
Coolidge, Capt. Hamilton ....	8	Bissell, 1st Lt. Clayton L. ....	5
Donaldson, 2d Lt. John O. ....	8	Brooks, 2d Lt. Arthur R. ....	5
Erwin, 1st Lt. William P. ....	8	Buckley, 1st Lt. Harold R. ....	5
Hunter, 1st Lt. Frank O'D. ....	8	Cook, 1st Lt. Everett R. ....	5
Jones, 2d Lt. Clinton ....	8	D'Olive, 1st Lt. Charles R. ....	5
Meissner, Capt. James A. ....	8	Easterbrook, 1st Lt. Arthur L. ....	5
Stenseth, 1st Lt. Martinus ....	8	Furlow, 1st Lt. George W. ....	5
White, 2d Lt. Wilbert W. ....	8	George, 1st Lt. Harold H. ....	5
Burdick, 2d Lt. Howard ....	7	Grey, 1st Lt. Charles G. ....	5
Chambers, 1st Lt. Reed M. ....	7	Haight, 1st Lt. Edward M. ....	5
Cook, 1st Lt. Harvey W. ....	7	Healy, 1st Lt. James A. ....	5
Creech, 1st Lt. Jesse O. ....	7	Knowles, 1st Lt. James, Jr. ....	5
Holden, 1st Lt. Lansing C. ....	7	Larner, 1st Lt. G. DeFreest ....	5
Robertson, 1st Lt. Wendel A. ....	7	Luff, 1st Lt. Frederick E. ....	5
Rummell, 1st Lt. Leslie J. ....	7	O'Neill, 2d Lt. Ralph A. ....	5
Schoen, 1st Lt. Karl J. ....	7	Owens, 2d Lt. John S. ....	5
Sewall, 1st Lt. Sumner ....	7	Porter, 2d Lt. Kenneth L. ....	5
Beane, 1st Lt. James D. ....	6	Ralston, 1st Lt. Orville A. ....	5
Biddle, Capt. Charles J. ....	6	Seerley, 1st Lt. John J. ....	5
Campbell, 1st Lt. Douglas ....	6	Strahm, Capt. Victor H. ....	5
Curtis, 1st Lt. Edward P. ....	6	Todd, 2d Lt. Robert M. ....	5
Guthrie, 1st Lt. Murray K. ....	6	Vernam, 1st Lt. Remington D. ....	5
Hammond, 1st Lt. Leonard C. ....	6	Wehner, 1st Lt. Joseph F. ....	5



2d Lt. Frank Luke Jr.



1st Lt. George A. Vaughn

## Leading Army Air Forces Aces of World War II

(14.5 or more victories)

Bong, Maj. Richard I. ....	40	Herbst, Lt. Col. John C. ....	18
McGuire, Maj. Thomas B., Jr. ....	38	Zemke, Lt. Col. Hubert ....	17.75
Gabreski, Lt. Col. Francis S. ....	28 <sup>a</sup>	England, Maj. John B. ....	17.50
Johnson, Capt. Robert S. ....	27	Beeson, Capt. Duane W. ....	17.33
MacDonald, Col. Charles H. ....	27	Thornell, 1st Lt. John F., Jr. ....	17.25
Preddy, Maj. George E. ....	26.83	Varnell, Capt. James S., Jr. ....	17
Meyer, Lt. Col. John C. ....	24 <sup>a</sup>	Johnson, Maj. Gerald W. ....	16.50
Schilling, Col. David C. ....	22.50	Godfrey, Capt. John T. ....	16.33
Johnson, Lt. Col. Gerald R. ....	22	Anderson, Capt. Clarence E., Jr. ....	16.25
Kearby, Col. Neel E. ....	22	Dunham, Lt. Col. William D. ....	16
Robbins, Maj. Jay T. ....	22	Harris, Lt. Col. Bill ....	16
Christensen, Capt. Fred J. ....	21.50	Welch, Capt. George S. ....	16
Wetmore, Capt. Ray S. ....	21.25	Beerbower, Capt. Donald M. ....	15.50
Voll, Capt. John J. ....	21	Brown, Maj. Samuel J. ....	15.50
Mahurin, Maj. Walker M. ....	20.75 <sup>a</sup>	Peterson, Capt. Richard A. ....	15.50
Lynch, Lt. Col. Thomas J. ....	20	Whisner, Capt. William T., Jr. ....	15.50 <sup>a</sup>
Westbrook, Lt. Col. Robert B. ....	20	Bradley, Lt. Col. Jack T. ....	15
Gentile, Capt. Don S. ....	19.83	Cragg, Maj. Edward ....	15
Duncan, Col. Glenn E. ....	19.50	Foy, Maj. Robert W. ....	15
Carson, Capt. Leonard K. ....	18.50	Hofer, 2d Lt. Ralph K. ....	15
Eagleston, Maj. Glenn T. ....	18.50 <sup>a</sup>	Homer, Capt. Cyril F. ....	15
Beckham, Maj. Walter C. ....	18	Landers, Lt. Col. John D. ....	14.50
Green, Maj. Herschel H. ....	18	Powers, Capt. Joe H., Jr. ....	14.50

<sup>a</sup>Aces who added to these scores by victories in the Korean War.

Ranks are as of last victory in World War II.



Maj. Richard I. Bong



Capt. Joseph C. McConnell Jr.

### USAF Aces of the Korean War

McConnell, Capt. Joseph C., Jr. ....	16
Jabara, Maj. James .....	15 <sup>a</sup>
Fernandez, Capt. Manuel J. ....	14.50
Davis, Maj. George A., Jr. ....	14 <sup>a</sup>
Baker, Col. Royal N. ....	13 <sup>a</sup>
Blesse, Maj. Frederick C. ....	10
Fischer, 1st Lt. Harold E. ....	10
Garrison, Lt. Col. Vermont .....	10 <sup>a</sup>
Johnson, Col. James K. ....	10 <sup>a</sup>
Moore, Capt. Lonnie R. ....	10
Parr, Capt. Ralph S., Jr. ....	10
Foster, Capt. Cecil G. ....	9
Low, 1st Lt. James F. ....	9
Hagerstrom, Maj. James P. ....	8.50 <sup>a</sup>
Risner, Capt. Robinson .....	8
Ruddell, Lt. Col. George I. ....	8 <sup>a</sup>
Buttleman, 1st Lt. Henry .....	7
Jolley, Capt. Clifford D. ....	7
Lilley, Capt. Leonard W. ....	7
Adams, Maj. Donald E. ....	6.50
Gabreski, Col. Francis S. ....	6.50 <sup>a</sup>
Jones, Lt. Col. George L. ....	6.50
Marshall, Maj. Winton W. ....	6.50
Kasler, 1st Lt. James H. ....	6
Love, Capt. Robert J. ....	6
Whisner, Maj. William T., Jr. ....	5.50 <sup>a</sup>
Baldwin, Col. Robert P. ....	5
Becker, Capt. Richard S. ....	5
Bettinger, Maj. Stephen L. ....	5
Creighton, Maj. Richard D. ....	5 <sup>a</sup>
Curtin, Capt. Clyde A. ....	5
Gibson, Capt. Ralph D. ....	5
Kincheloe, Capt. Iven C., Jr. ....	5
Latshaw, Capt. Robert T., Jr. ....	5
Moore, Capt. Robert H. ....	5
Overton, Capt. Dolphin D., III ....	5
Thyng, Col. Harrison R. ....	5 <sup>a</sup>
Wescott, Maj. William H. ....	5

<sup>a</sup>In addition to World War II victories.



Cpts. Charles B. DeBellevue and Richard S. Ritchie

### USAF Aces of the Vietnam War

DeBellevue, Capt. Charles B. ....	6
Feinstein, Capt. Jeffrey S. ....	5
Ritchie, Capt. Richard S. ....	5



Capt. Jeffrey S. Feinstein



*Maj. George A. Davis (left), the first ace in two wars, was the leading ace in Korea with 14 aircraft destroyed when he was shot down on a mission for which he would receive a posthumous Medal of Honor. With him are Col. Ben Preston (center), 4th Fighter-Interceptor Group commander, and Maj. Winton W. Marshall, also an ace. Davis would eventually be surpassed by only three pilots, including Capt. Joseph C. McConnell Jr., USAF's leading ace in Korea.*

## AAF/USAF Aces With Victories in Both World War II and a Later War

	WW II	Other*	Total
Gabreski, Col. Francis S. ....	28	6.50	34.50
Meyer, Col. John C. ....	24	2	26
Mahurin, Col. Walker M. ....	20.75	3.50	24.25
Davis, Maj. George A., Jr. ....	7	14	21
Whisner, Maj. William T., Jr. ....	15.50	5.50	21
Eagleston, Col. Glenn T. ....	18.50	2	20.50
Garrison, Lt. Col. Vermont ....	7.33	10	17.33
Baker, Col. Royal N. ....	3.50	13	16.50
Jabara, Maj. James ....	1.50	15	16.50
Olds, Col. Robin ....	12	4 <sup>a</sup>	16
Mitchell, Col. John W. ....	11	4	15
Brueland, Maj. Lowell K. ....	12.50	2	14.50
Hagerstrom, Maj. James P. ....	6	8.50	14.50
Hovde, Lt. Col. William J. ....	10.50	1	11.50
Johnson, Col. James K. ....	1	10	11
Ruddell, Lt. Col. George I. ....	2.50	8	10.50
Thyng, Col. Harrison R. ....	5	5	10
Colman, Capt. Philip E. ....	5	4	9
Heller, Lt. Col. Edwin L. ....	5.50	3.50	9
Chandler, Maj. Van E. ....	5	3	8
Hockery, Maj. John J. ....	7	1	8
Creighton, Maj. Richard D. ....	2	5	7
Emmert, Lt. Col. Benjamin J., Jr. ....	6	1	7
Bettinger, Maj. Stephen L. ....	1	5	6
Visscher, Maj. Herman W. ....	5	1	6
Liles, Capt. Brooks J. ....	1	4	5
Mattson, Capt. Conrad E. ....	1	4	5
Shaeffer, Maj. William F. ....	2	3	5



Col. Francis S. Gabreski



Capt. Robert S. Johnson



Col. John C. Meyer



Maj. James Jabara



Col. Robin Olds

\*Olds' four additional victories came during the Vietnam War; all others\* during the Korean War.

## Leading Air Service/AAF/USAF Aces of All Wars

Bong, Maj. Richard I. ....	40	WW II
McGuire, Maj. Thomas B., Jr. ....	38	WW II
Gabreski, Col. Francis S. ....	34.50	WW II, Korea
Johnson, Lt. Col. Robert S. ....	27	WW II
MacDonald, Col. Charles H. ....	27	WW II
Preddy, Maj. George E. ....	26.83	WW II
Meyer, Col. John C. ....	26	WW II, Korea
Rickenbacker, Capt. Edward V. ....	26 <sup>b</sup>	WW I
Mahurin, Col. Walker M. ....	24.25	WW II, Korea
Schilling, Col. David C. ....	22.50	WW II
Johnson, Lt. Col. Gerald R. ....	22	WW II
Kearby, Col. Neel E. ....	22	WW II
Robbins, Maj. Jay T. ....	22	WW II
Christensen, Capt. Fred J. ....	21.50	WW II
Wetmore, Capt. Ray S. ....	21.25	WW II
Davis, Maj. George A., Jr. ....	21	WW II, Korea
Voll, Capt. John J. ....	21	WW II
Whisner, Capt. William T., Jr. ....	21	WW II, Korea
Eagleston, Col. Glenn T. ....	20.50	WW II, Korea
Lynch, Lt. Col. Thomas J. ....	20	WW II
Westbrook, Lt. Col. Robert B. ....	20	WW II
Gentile, Capt. Don S. ....	19.83	WW II

<sup>b</sup>Under WW II and Korean War counting rules, Rickenbacker would have been credited with 24.33 victories. The change would not alter his position on this list.