



# BARKSDALE

## This Life, This Death

He was a true Southern man, born and reared in Goshen Springs, Miss., a tiny hamlet in the center of the state. He had one brother and three sisters and was part of a family whose tradition of arms, it was said, dated back to the Revolutionary War.

Throughout his life, everyone called him "Hoy." What rings out in the Air Force today, however, is his last name—Barksdale.

In 1914, Eugene Hoy Barksdale left the family farm to enter Mississippi State College (now University). The Great War in Europe had just begun. When the US entered in April 1917, Hoy was only a junior, but he packed his bags and left, never to return.

First stop was an Army officer training camp in Arkansas. He was about to receive a commission but instead took a life-changing gamble. He forsook officer status, volunteered for aviation, and enlisted—as a private—in the Army Signal Corps.

At the Army School of Military Aeronautics in Austin, Texas, he completed ground school. On Sept. 18, 1917, he and other pilots-in-the-making embarked for England. There, Barksdale received flight training from Royal Flying Corps pilots, the world's most experienced combat fliers. Barely a year after he enlisted, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant on May 26, 1918. He was placed on Active Duty and assigned to RFC No. 41 Squadron, a pursuit unit at Alquines, France.

Barksdale participated in the Somme and Amiens offensives of August 1918 and was wounded on Sept. 2, 1918, during the Cambrai Offensive. The RFC credited him with downing three German aircraft in air combat. He helped destroy five more on the ground.

Barksdale left the RFC on Oct. 15, 1918, for the new US 25th Aero Squadron. The move effectively ended Barksdale's war, however. The 25th did not go into action until Nov. 10—the day before the armistice. Within six months, he was back in the US.

Barksdale had impressed many. One was Lt. Ira C. Eaker, a friend from basic training who, based on Barksdale's exploits, signed up to be an Army pilot. Another was Lt. Jimmy Doolittle, a close friend with whom Barksdale worked after the war.

Barksdale did not leave the Army at war's end. He became a noted test pilot and set several flight records. In March 1924, he and his navigator flew a DH-4B Liberty 400, instruments only, from McCook Field, Ohio, to Mitchel Field, N.Y.—a record distance.

Barksdale was killed on Aug. 11, 1926, while he was testing a Douglas O-2 observation aircraft over McCook. He tried to bail out when the O-2 entered an uncontrolled spin, but his parachute lines were severed by the wings and he fell to his death. He was buried with full military

1/ Lt. Eugene Hoy Barksdale. 2/ B-52s take off from Barksdale AFB, La., for a SAC readiness exercise in 1986.

### EUGENE HOY BARKSDALE

**Born:** Sept. 5, 1896, Goshen Springs, Miss.  
**Died:** Aug. 11, 1926 (flying accident), Dayton, Ohio  
**College:** Mississippi State College (now Mississippi State University)  
**Service:** Army Signal Corps (Aviation), Army Air Service, Air Corps  
**Occupation:** US Military Officer  
**Assigned:** Royal Flying Corps, 1917-18  
**Main Era:** World War I  
**Years Active:** 1917-26  
**Combat:** Western Front  
**Final Grade:** First Lieutenant  
**Honors:** Purple Heart  
**Famous Friends:** Jimmy Doolittle, Ira C. Eaker

### BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE

**State:** Louisiana  
**Nearest City:** Bossier City  
**Area of Main Base:** 34.4 sq mi/22,000 acres  
**Status:** Open, operational  
**Opened:** (as Barksdale Field) Feb. 2, 1933  
**Renamed:** (Barksdale Air Force Base) Jan. 13, 1948  
**Former Owners:** Strategic Air Command, Air Combat Command  
**Current Owner:** Air Force Global Strike Command

honors in Arlington National Cemetery.

The Air Corps in 1933 honored the famous Mississippi flier by bestowing his name on its newest base—Barksdale Field, La., renamed Barksdale Air Force Base in 1948. Today, it is the home of Air Force Global Strike Command and headquarters of Eighth Air Force—"the Mighty Eighth"—and the B-52s of 2nd Bomb Wing. It has been in continuous operation for more than 80 years.