



Janelle Doyle
Widow of Lonnie A. Doyle, Jr.
U.S. Army Air Corps
100th Bomb Group
World War II

During the time my husband Lonnie was a pilot in World War II, I thought being separated from him was just terrible. When his crew flew to England six months after we married, I thought, *I just can't do without him*. Saying goodbye that day was extremely difficult. I was a student at Hardin-Simmons University when he sent me a telegram that read, "Education can wait. Come be with me." So I went to Louisiana to be with him until they left.

After that, I couldn't get back into Hardin-Simmons. My father was very ill at the time, and his doctor asked me to come work for him. There was a shortage of nurses because of the war. He taught me how to give shots. Meanwhile, Lonnie learned to repair motors and read maps. Later while we were working as missionaries in Brazil, those abilities helped us tremendously. If our boat broke down, he could always fix it, and we were never lost. At the time, all medicine was given by injection... even aspirin. So I gave thousands of injections while we were there. After plastic came along, medicine became available in pill form and I said goodbye to my nursing career. The things we learned during our year apart truly gave us a good start in Brazil. Also, Lonnie's two years of training in architecture at Texas Tech enabled him to build 51 churches and design 10 others.

My husband felt a strong need to serve when he went into the Air Corps. He was the first ministerial student from Hardin-Simmons to enter the service. Lonnie truly felt that he not only owed a lot to God; he owed a lot to his country. He was able to receive his military training in the States and transfer some credit hours to Hardin-Simmons.

Lonnie became a pilot and went overseas in November 1944. When the war ended, he did not come home immediately. They were flying food into Holland and cargo into Africa at the time. He had flown 29 combat missions during the war and finished the required 35 missions afterward. That was very satisfying to him. Before they could return to the States, the flight crews had to have their planes in balance. Lonnie worked out a solution for all of the planes using logarithms and no adding machine. I believe he learned about logarithms at Texas Tech.

Recently our daughter Elizabeth found her father's plane on the Internet. It was called Yo-Yo Buddy. He had written "I love Jennie" right below the pilot's window. She managed to locate one of his officers (the bombardier) and e-mailed him. He replied, "We were all so impressed that your daddy was a religious man. We never could get him involved in things that were not Christian." It was something to hear that more than 50 years later from one of his colleagues.

Lonnie used to say, "You don't have to be successful, but you do have to be faithful." Our children learned that and lived by it. One of our sons recently retired as a captain in the U.S. Navy.

While my husband was overseas and I was in school, I drew a great big rabbit on my door. Every time Lonnie sent me a paper describing his missions, I would put a big whisker on my rabbit. Everybody in the dorm would come by to see how many whiskers were there. That was a fun way of dealing with the fact that he was in a great deal of danger. I think this is what God gives to youth — the ability to meet challenges and get through them. As an older person now, I probably would worry about a lot more things. But then I knew that God was in charge and that one day we would get to our field of missionary work.

Fortunately, he was never shot down or even shot at. Their crew was wonderful with a navigator who was just 19 years old. Lonnie was 21 at the time. Because their navigator was so good at his job, they flew as the lead plane many times. Only once did they get lost and have to land, but they were in friendly territory.

Lonnie was my pastor's son in Anson, Texas. Though I didn't like him at first, his sister was my very best friend. We visited each other a lot but didn't want Lonnie to be around. After I graduated from high school, my family moved to Tulia, Texas. One day, I had to travel through Lubbock. Lonnie was attending at Texas Tech, so he was there to help me change buses. I still didn't like him. Just before the attack on Pearl Harbor, I enrolled at the University of California. After war broke out, my parents brought me back to Texas so I could enter Hardin-Simmons.

By then, Lonnie had felt a call to the ministry and also had enrolled at Hardin-Simmons. He hitchhiked to Anson one Sunday in December to see his father's old church, and I happened to be there at the same time. When we saw each other across the church, things popped like we would never have dreamed. By April, we were engaged. But Lonnie felt he couldn't remain a student with the war going on, so he joined the Army Air Corps. He was commissioned on May 23, 1944, and we were married the next day. He always liked to tell people that he got his wings one day and got them clipped the next day.

As children, we both had been called to become missionaries. I was called at the age of seven, and Lonnie was called when he was nine. Eventually, we linked our lives together. By the time Lonnie came home from the war, I had caught up with him in school. We attended Hardin-Simmons another year before earning our master's degrees at Southwestern. Then the Foreign Mission Board appointed us as missionaries in Brazil. Our 39 years of service there with our five children was a wonderful experience.

Lonnie's experiences during the war and afterward in the Reserves helped him tremendously. When he returned from his year of duty overseas, he called me that morning to say he had arrived in the States. I had to tell him that my father had died just a few hours earlier. He said, "You stay there with your mother. I'll get my discharge papers and meet you in Dallas."

Our first child was born while I was in the seminary. We left for Brazil in April 1949 and stayed almost 40 years. We had a wonderful life together. Upon hearing of my husband's death, several Brazilian churches called to say they would hold special services of thanksgiving for what the Lord had done through Lonnie Doyle in Brazil. Lonnie was definitely God's man, but

he never could have done the things he did in Brazil without his military training.