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The Hall of Fame of the Air

An illustrated newspaper feature from 1935 - 1940

By [Stephen Sherman](#), Mar. 2007. Updated April 11, 2012.

Up in my father's garage attic, along with unopened lawn mowers and fireplace andirons, we came across these cartoons he had saved for six decades --- the "Hall of Fame of the Air" (HFA). Every Sunday in the late 1930's, newspapers ran this cartoon feature, depicting the feats of legendary aces and early aviators. Next to each pilot, an airplane associated with him was shown.

Well-known American aviation artist Clayton Knight (1891 - 1969) created HFA. He was also the father of Hilary Knight, author of "Eloise," the little girl who lived in New York's Plaza Hotel. Clayton Knight had served with a British fighter squadron in WWI. His artwork from the Depression era and World War Two typified the iconic, heroic art of the period, used in propaganda posters. In WWII, along with Billy Bishop, he helped to organize the Eagle Squadrons, volunteer American fighter pilots who flew with the RAF before Pearl Harbor.

The scans below show the development of the HFA itself. Beginning in 1935, the first weeks featured world-renowned aviators like Lindbergh, Earhart, and Doolittle. These early strips were also rather small, about nine by five inches. On June 23, in a feature on Raoul Lufbery, the strip introduced a new, larger format, now fourteen by seven, doubling its previous size. Aviation was big news in 1935! In the next month, [Captain Eddie Rickenbacker](#)'s by-line appeared. Whether "America's Ace of Aces" wrote the pieces or not; his name added authenticity to the strip. The Hall of Fame of the Air ran at least from 1935 to 1940. As the weeks wore on, into 1936, ever more obscure aviators graced its panels. My son read Lawrence Sperry's piece, which noted that he used to land his small airplane on the street. "Gee, it doesn't seem like someone had to do much to get into this Hall of Fame of the Air." My father's collection starts in February, 1935 and includes thirty-nine items, the last one dated September, 1936. From other web sources, I found a reference as late as March, 1940. The comic strip was collected into [this book](#), which occasionally can still be found.

In the scans, one can see taped corners, pin holes, and occasionally missing pilot sections; evidence of my Dad having cut up and tacked pictures to his wall or notebook. From the condition of the clippings, he was very fond of Jimmy Doolittle, and also the Northrop "all-metal high-speed" plane.