



Thomas Doyle Class of 2013

First Lieutenant, Thomas E. Doyle, United States Air Force (deceased) graduated from Las Plumas High School (LPHS) in 1981. His overall grade point average was 3.5 and he was honored by being named Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Good Citizen of the Year for Dependability, Leadership, Service, and

Patriotism by the National Society of the DAR. He was also an honor student and member of the varsity tennis team.

Known as Tom by his friends, his interest in aviation was evident at an early age when he became a member of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) at age 12 and made his solo flight in a glider at age 14. He became a Cadet Commander in the CAP at age 15 and at age 16 was the youngest member ever to be named California Wing Cadet of the Year. As a result, he was chosen to participate in the Civil Air Patrol Ambassador Contingent to England, but was unable to go there due to his orders to report to the USAFA. He then earned his private pilot certificate at age 17.

In 1980, Thomas received an appointment to the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) in Colorado Springs, CO. Upon graduation from LPHS, Thomas attended the academy for four years and in 1985 earned his degree in Aeronautical Engineering. He was also named to the Superintendent's List for outstanding academic achievement and military performance as well as serving as cadet instructor for gliders and being picked to attend F-16 pilot training the following year.

Thomas served three years in the United States Air Force (USAF) and attained the rank of First Lieutenant. Among his many honors was being selected for the prestigious and highly selective Euro-NATO pilot training program, receiving the Academic Excellence Award for 96.9 GPA and the Aircrew Distinction Award. He was also honored in 1987 with a Certificate of Recognition at Mardill Air Force Base for outstanding contributions to safety and accident prevention through professional performance, knowledge and devotion to duty.

When time allowed, Lieutenant Doyle returned to his native Oroville where he served as a model professional in the community. During his leaves, he would visit local schools and teach classes at his church. He was a frequent speaker at Civil Air Patrol squadron meetings and was recognized by the Palermo Union School District as its first graduate to be inducted into its Hall of Fame.

On a cloudy day in March of 1988, Lieutenant Doyle took off on a training flight in West Germany that would cost him his life and earn him the permanent title of hero. He made the ultimate sacrifice when he could have ejected safely, but as his plane was over a school in the crowded heart of the village of Forst, chose to stay with his F-16 fighter aircraft which was quickly losing altitude after catastrophic engine failure. Ejection would guarantee massive casualties on the ground. Instead of ejecting, Lieutenant Doyle attempted to fly his jet away from a school and the center of the town of Forst, West Germany. The jet crashed just at the edge of town killing Lieutenant Doyle and one villager on the ground.

The Doyle family, using a donation from the townspeople of Forst, established a memorial fund with scholarships being awarded annually to cadets who were planning a career in aviation or aerospace. The funding has since ended.

Lieutenant Doyle received the Robert P. Connelly Award of Heroism posthumously by Kiwanis International in 1994. The award was made for 'service beyond the call of duty' in giving his life in an attempt to save the lives of many others.

Joe High, LPHS teacher and tennis coach writes: *"Tom was one of the finest young men I've ever had the pleasure to coach." Tom lived his dream by flying an F-16 jet fighter plane until a catastrophic engine failure took his life in 1988 while training in Germany.*"

Former United States Congressman Wally Herger wrote in a statement to Tom's parents that he also submitted in the Congressional Record the week of April 20, 1988, *"Your son was a sterling example of the best that our young people have to offer. While his death was certainly tragic, we can all look towards his commitment to his goals and ideals with respect and admiration."*

Lieutenant Thomas Edward Doyle died in the service of his country, and therefore in the service of his community. He was a true American hero!