

## ***First Lieutenant Thomas E. Doyle***

On a grim, cloudy day in the Spring of 1988, in a little town in West Germany, a young California pilot gave his life to save local children and townspeople.

USAF 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Tom Doyle was returning with his flight from a low level NATO mission. While over the center of the city of Forst, his F-16 fighter experienced catastrophic engine failure. Although he could have bailed out, Lt. Doyle elected to stay with his crippled fighter to guide it away from the shops, schools and congestion below. He succeeded — and died in the ensuing crash.

After the crash the townspeople of Forst, in recognition of Lt. Doyle's act of heroism, established a small memorial fund for him — a fund which has grown through contributions of friends and family, and is now known as the Thomas E. Doyle Memorial Fund. The Fund now makes annual cash awards toward the continuing education of young Californians who are planning a career in aviation or aerospace, whether in the air or in a related technical field. Candidates should be youths whose performance in school or in their community best demonstrates the qualities of character, leadership and commitment to excellence that characterized the life of Lt. Tom Doyle.

Lt. Doyle graduated from Las Plumas High School in Oroville, California. His love and flying and commitment to excellence were evident early in his life. At age 14 he soloed in gliders. At 15, he was cadet commander of his Civil Air Patrol squadron. At 16 he was the California Wing Cadet of the Year. At 17 he earned his FAA private pilot certificate and won appointment to the U.S. Air Force Academy. As an AFA cadet he earned his CFI rating in gliders and became a glider instructor for his Academy classmates. Graduating near the top of his class, he won a coveted Air Force assignment to fly fighter aircraft.

Once, during fighter training, he experienced an engine failure in formation at low altitude. He successfully landed his F-16 "deadstick," saving both himself and his aircraft, and subsequently received an "Aircrew of Distinction" citation from the Air Force. During another incident after his assignment to Germany, he successfully landed his malfunctioning F-16 at night. But besides being an excellent pilot, Lt. Tom Doyle's quiet competence, friendliness and modesty made him numerous friends among the townspeople and children near his base.

Lt. Thomas E. Doyle will not be forgotten, either in Germany or by his many friends in Civil Air Patrol's California Wing.