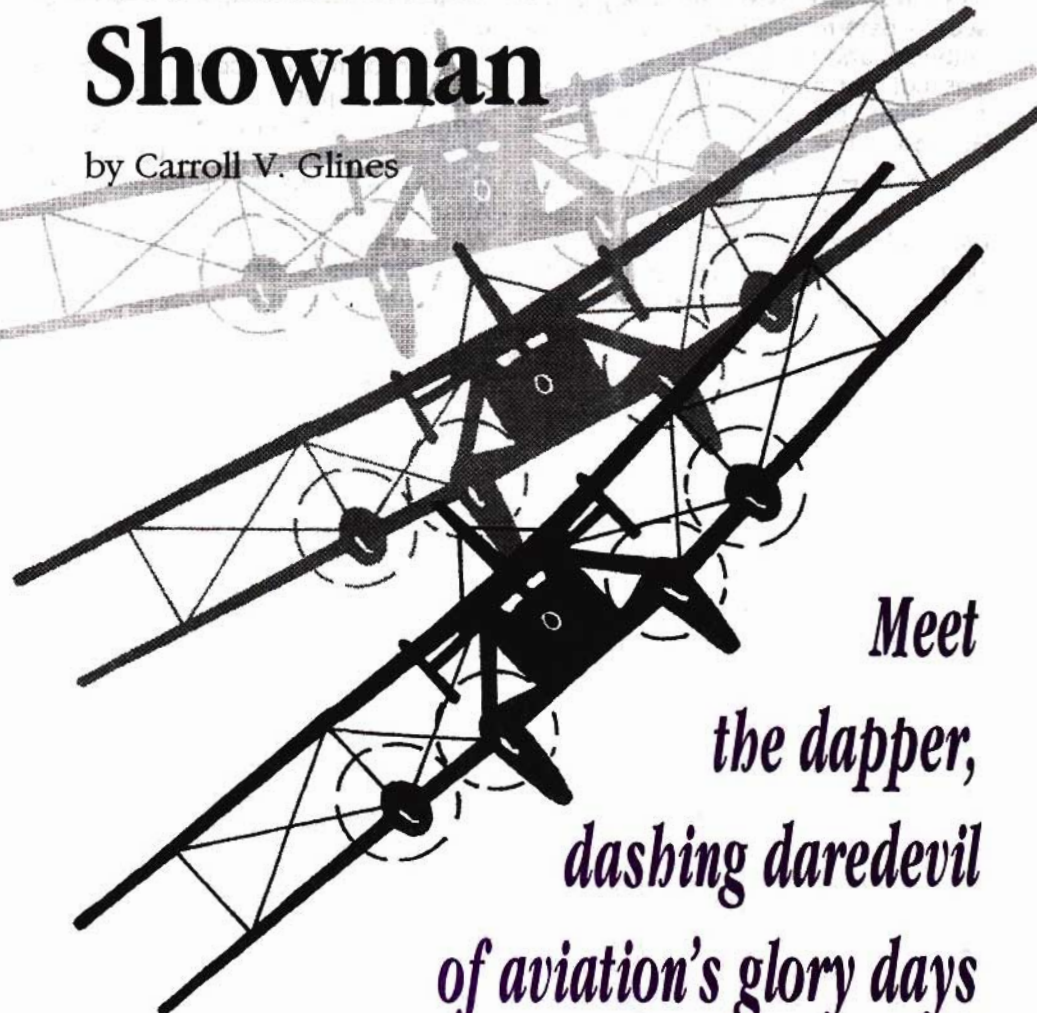


The  
**Aviators'**  
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VOLUME 13 NUMBER 4  
MAIN SELECTION

# Roscoe Turner Aviation's Master Showman

by Carroll V. Glines



*Meet  
the dapper,  
dashing daredevil  
of aviation's glory days*

# Roscoe Turner

## Aviation's Master Showman

by Carroll V. Glines; Foreword by James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle

*"I could never see any other reason for an airplane than to go fast."*

—Roscoe Turner

You always saw him in his tallored blue military-style uniform that declared him to be a serious aviator. Now you can see the determination and disasters, the setbacks and successes of a man who was not just one of aviation's earliest celebrities, but a record-setting pilot—Roscoe Turner.

His name was synonymous with speed, his flamboyant persona as carefully crafted as that of a Hollywood star. Born in Corinth, Mississippi, in 1895, Turner was an audacious risk-taker and

tireless self-promoter who focused America's attention well into the '60s on the potential of aviation for the common good.

With complete access to Turner's personal papers, photographs, and memorabilia, biographer Carroll V. Glines presents the first full account of the life of this American aerial showman. After serving as a balloon pilot during World War I, Turner found his future in the 1920s as a daredevil stunt man, creator of his own flying circus, and a

Flying was an early obsession of Turner's, as this excerpt shows:

*As so many kids did in those days, Roscoe turned to flying kites. Starting with small ones, he learned the secret of lofting them and keeping them airborne. He built one six feet across, which he thought would be big enough to lift him off the ground. "My takeoff technique was simple," he said. "I hitched the kite with a rope to one of our mules. Then I hung onto a cross-member of the kite's frame with one hand and threw rocks at the mule with my free hand. The damned mule wouldn't move, so I tried jumping off the barn roof into a hay stack to get the kite some momentum and almost broke my neck when the kite collapsed. However, the fall didn't hurt as much as the whipping I got when Dad found out what I had tried to do."*

From the Foreword by James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle:

*You couldn't help but like Roscoe, and although we were keen rivals in the air, we became close friends on the ground. I had great respect for his flying ability and marveled at how he could bounce back so quickly after some personal adversity and more than a few aircraft mishaps. His life story is characteristic of the ups and downs of most of us in those days when we raced each other or the clock for money and glory. It was an era of individualism in aviation that historians now call the Golden Age of Aviation. No one dominated and popularized it more than Roscoe. He was a colorful survivor who kept the public interested in advancing the science of aeronautics by personally exploring the limits of airplane performance.*

pilot in Howard Hughes's World War I feature, *Hell's Angels*, Hollywood's most expensive movie before *Gone With the Wind*. Turner glided smoothly into movie society, becoming good friends with fellow pilot and actor Wallace Beery and taking movie stars Clark Gable and Fred MacMurray for their first airplane rides.

Turner was perhaps best known as the pilot who flew with the lion cub Gilmore as an oil company promotion. His place in flight history rests on his skill as a racing pilot—he is the only person ever to win the Thompson Trophy three times and, along with Jimmy Doolittle, to win both the Thompson and Bendix trophies. In 1934, he and his two-man crew were the only Americans to finish the grueling London-to-Melbourne race.

After his retirement from racing in 1939, he stayed close to aviation technology—as a pilot, founder of a regional airline, director of a school for pilots and mechanics, operator of an aircraft servicing company, and as a persuasive voice for public support of military and commercial aviation.

From the pylon-by-pylon accounts of his record-setting air races, and the dinner with President Richard Nixon where Turner met astronaut Michael Collins, to his death in 1970, you'll witness all the events that helped shape one of the most memorable and influential aviators of his day.

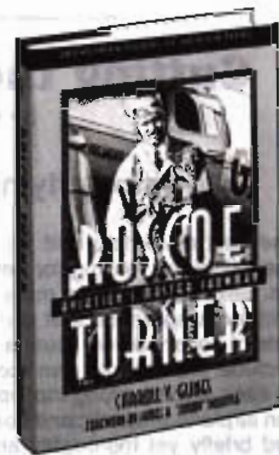
### About the Author

Carroll V. Glines, pilot and retired Air Force colonel, is the award-winning author of 27 books on aviation and military subjects, including co-author of the autobiography of James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle, *I Could Never Be So*

*Lucky Again*. He is the resident scholar at the Doolittle Library at the University of Texas, Dallas.

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