

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

COMMODORE ARTHUR GAVIN,
UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED

Arthur Gavin was born in Ashland, Wisconsin, on October 23, 1895, and was graduated from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1917. He enlisted as an Apprentice Seaman in the U. S. Navy in December of that year, and served during World War I. After flight instruction at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, he was commissioned Ensign and designated Naval Aviator #1242 in the U. S. Naval Reserve Force on September 14, 1918. He was promoted to Lieutenant (junior grade), April 1, 1920; Lieutenant, July 1, 1920; was transferred to the Regular Navy in that rank and subsequently was promoted as follows: Lieutenant Commander, December 9, 1931; Commander, August 1, 1938; Captain, June 23, 1942, and Commodore, November 2, 1945, reverting to Captain on August 26, 1947. On July 1, 1949, he was transferred to the Retired List and advanced in grade to that of Commodore.

In October 1918, he was ordered to duty at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, and the following October he was ordered to the Naval Recruiting Station, Houston, Texas, for duty in connection with recruiting aviation mechanics. From January 1920 to June 1923 he had duty at the Naval Air Station, San Diego, California.

Ordered to Aircraft Squadrons, Scouting Fleet, in June 1923, he was assigned duty with Scouting Plane Squadron ONE, attached to the aircraft tender WRIGHT, and in June 1925 was transferred to Scouting Squadron ONE, based on the aircraft carrier LANGLEY. While serving in this assignment he made the historic flight from the West Coast to Hawaii. Detached from Scouting Squadron ONE, in January 1926, he had duty in the USS MEDUSA until June of that year. The following two years he had duty as a Test Pilot at the Naval Aircraft Factory, Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In 1927, using the first pair of Wright cyclone engines ever made, he won the Schiff Trophy (annual presentation for the greatest number of hours flown with safety to personnel and material), when he set an endurance record of thirty-seven hours in the air. His record for that year was eight hundred and sixty-five hours and twenty minutes.

He joined Observation Squadron THREE (later redesignated Scouting Squadron FIVE), in August 1928, and was based aboard the USS MEMPHIS, operating on Asiatic Station. Transferred to Scouting Squadron FIVE, aviation unit of the USS MARBLEHEAD, in November 1929, he served with that squadron until August 1930, when he returned to the United States for duty at the Naval Air Station,

Anacostia, D. C., serving in that assignment until May 1933. The succeeding two years he commanded Torpedo Squadron ONE, and later Bombing Squadron ONE, based on the aircraft carrier LEXINGTON.

Between June 1935 and May 1937, he had duty as a Designer of dive-bombers in the Engineering Division, Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. He served as Navigator and later Air Officer of the aircraft carrier LANGLEY from May 1937 until June 1939, when he was assigned duty as Operations Officer on the staff of the Commander, Patrol Wing THREE. From January 1941 until December 1942 he was Commander Patrol Wing SEVEN, and Patrol Wing THREE, successively.

On December 14, 1942, he assumed command of the Naval Air Station, Miami, Florida, and in August 1943 was designated Commandant, Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida. Detached from that duty in April 1944 he assumed command of the USS RANGER, and on April 24 she departed from Staten Island, New York, for Casablanca with a cargo of U. S. Army P-38 airplanes, plus a passenger group of Allied service personnel.

He was in tactical command as Commander Task Group TWENTY-SEVEN POINT ONE and the RANGER remained at Casablanca from May 4 to May 7, casting off on the latter date with nineteen war-worn U. S. Army airplanes, plus a passenger group of Allied service personnel. On returning to the United States the RANGER under his command reported to Norfolk, Virginia, for reconditioning and addition of a modern Combat Information Center, and new radar equipment. Transferred to the Pacific the RANGER operated on transport duty and acted as a carrier qualification training ship.

Detached from command of the RANGER in January 1945, he assumed duty as Commander, Fleet Air Wing FIVE, commanding that group from February to July 1945. He assumed command, on August 17, 1945, of the Naval Air Base, Philippine Islands, with additional duty as Commander, Naval Air Base, Samar Island, Philippine Islands. In January 1946 he was ordered to duty as Commander, Fleet Air Wing TEN, with additional duty as Commander, Aircraft, Philippine Sea Frontier. He was assigned to the Naval Air Material Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in June 1947, and continued to serve in that duty until July 1, 1949, when he was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy

Commodore Gavin has the World War I Victory Medal, the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the American Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; the World War II Victory Medal; and the Philippine Independence Ribbon.