

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

HUGH CABOT  
U. S. NAVY COMBAT ARTIST

Hugh Cabot was born on March 22, 1930, in Boston, Massachusetts, son of Hugh Cabot, Sr., and Mrs. (Louise I.) Cabot. He was graduated from New Hampton (New Hampshire) Preparatory School, and in January 1948 entered Vesper George Art School in Boston. From December 1949 until October 1950 he was a staff artist (landscapes) for the Boston Museum of Science and had a summer art school in Massachusetts. A professional ski instructor, he painted many skiing subjects, which made up the largest portion of his pre-Naval Portfolio, which included Canadian lumbermen, West Texas bronco riders and New England fishermen.

He enlisted in the U. S. Navy in Boston, shortly after the outbreak of Korean hostilities, and began "Boot" training at the Naval Training Station, Newport, Rhode Island, on November 14, 1950. His course was shortened by letter of the Office of Naval History to the Chief of Naval Personnel, and after nine of the eleven weeks, he was released to paint in the Far East. Reporting to Commander Naval Forces, Far East, on February 18, 1951, he was advanced in rating to that of Journalist-Seaman on September 8, 1952.

On board the USS PRINCETON he recorded action of Fast Carrier Task Force 77, and while attached to COMNAVFE he made many transfers at sea, gathering material from the ships in the screen as well as the rugged destroyer sailors. For aviation subjects he obtained permission to fly combat missions with Navy pilots then striking hard at North Korean supply points. His acute interest in the force and power of jet aircraft is evidenced in the sense of speed and excitement of air attack in the water colors in his Naval Aviation Portfolio.

From the cruisers ST. PAUL and MANCHESTER, engaged in the United Nations Blockade of Korean waters, he painted close-fire support and bombardment of coastal installations, the hazards of Wonsan harbor and the bombardment of that city. To obtain a more accurate account of the city's complete destruction, he traveled by helicopter which was often hit by fragments of North Korean flak while he sketched and shot photos. The result was later depicted in the large "Portrait of a City," presented to Vice Admiral C. T. Joy, who was then in command of the U. S. Naval Forces, Far East.

The only officially assigned Combat Artist in the Far East, Cabot was directed to the First Marine Division Headquarters to record his impressions of the bitter cold of the Korean Winter and the outstanding bravery of the men who fought north of the 38th Parallel. During the next few months, working closely with the Marines, sketching their action while observing their bravery, he was also able to convey the self-sacrificing spirit of the Navy Hospital Corpsmen while they administered aid to the many casualties of war.

While attached to the "Commonwealth Division," composed of troops from various countries under the United Nations Command, he moved from one unit to another, working primarily with the Australian Brigade. However, he saw

action all across the front, from Inchon to the east coast, and with the ROK Capitol Division which was engaged in bitter fighting in the mountains. He worked up his rough sketches in Tokyo during the next few months.

He was next assigned to the heavy cruiser LOS ANGELES, but his work on his "bombardment series" was interrupted in the early days of Kaesong, when the beginning of a year of truce talks found him located in Munsan. There he accomplished a complete coverage of the base camp, press train, and the City of Kaesong, during the days of dead-locked discussion in the heat of the Korean summer, while the United Nations and North Korean officials slowly negotiated for peace. He returned to Tokyo in the fall.

When the talks came to a standstill, Cabot revisited Task Force 77 to paint minesweepers in Wonsan harbor, and was again with the hospital corpsmen at Christmas and the following winter. The summer of 1952 found him in Formosa, sketching the colorful Taiwanese and Chinese Nationalist soldiers. The lack of combat produced serene drawings of Chinese temples and picturesque landscapes so often associated with the Orient.

Having brilliantly contrasted the fighting Marines with those in the PanMunJom peace corridor, Cabot rejoined the Navy hospital corpsmen at Bunker Hill and became involved in some of the toughest fighting of the war. His paintings are evidence of the horrors experienced in the emotion-filled forward aid bunkers, where the sailors in steel helmets and flak-vests continued to fight the war of life and death with the aid of plasma and scissors.

Hugh Cabot returned to the United States in 1953, and after his discharge late in 1954 resumed life as a civilian artist, free-lancing.

His paintings have been exhibited in Japan as well as the United States, and his work used in various magazines and newspapers in Canada, Australia and the United States, including articles and illustrations in the New York Herald Tribune, Quick Magazine, the Army, Navy and Air Force Times, and Life Magazine. His combat paintings are to be found in the Pentagon and Main Navy Building in Washington, D. C., and through "Operation Palette" are shown to the public in all large cities of the United States and possessions.