

COMMANDER RALPH E. ELLIOTT, JR., U. S. NAVY

Ralph Earle Elliott, Jr., was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on August 22, 1920. He attended John Green High School in Hoopeston, Illinois, and had three years at the University of Illinois, where he majored in Accounting. He entered the Naval Service as Seaman, second class, on February 28, 1941, was appointed Aviation Cadet on May 1, that year, and was designated Naval Aviator and commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Naval Reserve on October 8, 1941. Through subsequent advancement and his transfer to the U. S. Navy on May 13, 1946, he attained the rank of Commander, USN, to date from January 1, 1954.

Completing elimination flight training at Glenview, Illinois, and Jacksonville, Florida, and flight training at Jacksonville, and Miami, Florida, he served as a Flight Instructor at the Naval Air Station, Corpus Christi, Texas, from December 1941 until October 1943, during the early period of World War II. He then joined Composite Squadron 27, and served as a pilot in that squadron which was based on the USS SAVO ISLAND (CVE-78), operating in the Pacific Combat Area. From March to October 1945 he was Commanding Officer of Composite Squadron 27.

He is entitled to the Ribbon for, and a facsimile of the Presidential Unit Citation awarded the USS SAVO ISLAND, with her Composite Squadrons 27 and 91, for heroic service in the Pacific Area. He was personally awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Gold Stars in lieu of the Second and Third similar awards, and the Air Medal with nine Gold Stars in lieu of additional like awards during a period when he was credited with shooting down nine and one-half planes. The citations follow, in part:

Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight as Pilot and Division Leader in Fighting Squadron TWENTY-SEVEN, attached to the USS SAVO ISLAND, in action against major units of the Japanese Fleet during the Battle for Leyte Gulf on October 25, 1944. A skilled and aggressive airman, Lieutenant Elliott intercepted and shot down three of a group of attacking enemy planes and, with his division, succeeded in driving off the remainder before they could reach and damage our forces..."

Gold Star in lieu of Second DFC: "For heroism...as Pilot of a Fighter Plane in Composite Squadron TWENTY-SEVEN...from September 25 to October 19, 1944. Completing his twentieth combat mission during this period, Lieutenant Elliott contributed materially to the success of his squadron in the infliction of damage on enemy installations..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Third DFC: "For heroism...as Pilot of a Fighter Plane in Composite Squadron TWENTY-SEVEN, attached to the USS SAVO ISLAND, during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Philippine Islands, on October 24, 1944. Leading his division in a counterattack on a large group of enemy bombers attacking our Fleet in Leyte Gulf, Lieutenant Elliott blasted three of the hostile aircraft from the sky and then assisted his wingman in shooting down a fourth..."

Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement in aerial flight as Pilot of a Fighter Plane and Flight Leader in Composite Squadron TWENTY SEVEN...during the assault and occupation of Palau Islands, September 15, 1944...(He) led his flight in an attack against enemy installations and succeeded in destroying several oil dumps, machine gun nests, pillboxes and enemy barges and in seriously damaging one grounded, camouflaged hostile bomber..."

Gold Star in lieu of Second Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement... during action against enemy Japanese forces in the Sulu Sea on December 15, 1944. While providing cover for our Fleet during the invasion of the Philippine Islands, (he) led a combat air patrol in breaking up an enemy air attack on our surface forces, personally shooting down a hostile fighter plane which was about to attack friendly ships..."

Gold Star in lieu of Third Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement... in action against enemy Japanese forces during the invasion of Luzon, Philippine Islands, January 5, 1945. Leading a division of combat planes as cover for our Fleet, (he) assisted in breaking up a determined enemy air attack and, in coordination with his wingman, shot down a hostile fighter..."

Gold Stars in lieu of the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Air Medals were awarded for the completion of five missions each during the period September 12, 1944, to January 15, 1945. Citations accompanying the Ninth and Tenth awards follow, in part:

Gold Star in lieu of the Ninth Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement in aerial flight as Pilot of a Fighter Plane in Composite Squadron TWENTY SEVEN, attached to the USS SAVO ISLAND, during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Philippine Islands Area, on January 5, 1945...(He) skillfully attacked and shot down a Japanese single engine suicide bomber attempting to attack our surface forces off the Island of Luzon..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Tenth Air Medal: "...in action against enemy Japanese forces during the invasion of Luzon, Philippine Islands, January 5, 1945. Leading a division of planes as cover for our Fleet, Lieutenant Elliott and his wingman shot down a second hostile fighter plane. His devotion to duty was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

After the war, from October 1945 until June 1946 he served as Executive Officer of Bomber-Fighter Squadron 11, and when detached he reported to the Navy Department, Washington, D. C., for a three year tour of duty in the Office of the Judge Advocate General of the Navy. While there he completed a postgraduate course in Law at George Washington University Law School, and was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Laws and admitted to the Bars of Virginia and the District of Columbia. From June to November 1949 he served as Executive Officer of Fighter Squadron 132, of the Air Force, Atlantic Fleet, and during the next two years had successive duty as Executive Officer of Fighter Squadron 173 and Commanding Officer of Fighter Squadron 174. Under his command Fighter Squadron 174 won the AIRLANT Efficiency "E" award.

During the period August 1951 to August 1953 he served as War Plans Officer and Assistant Legal Officer on the Staff of the Commander Naval Air Bases, Sixth Naval District, Jacksonville, Florida. There he also served as Trial and Defense Counsel of the General Court Martial. He attended the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, from August 1953 to June 1954, and the next two years served with the Commander Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean. Under orders of October 3, 1956, he reported to the Navy Department for duty in the Office of Legislative Liaison.

In addition to the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Gold Stars, the Air Medal with nine Gold Stars, and the Presidential Unit Citation Ribbon, Commander Elliott has the American Defense Service Medal; the American Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with four operation stars; the World War II Victory Medal; the National Defense Service Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon.

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