

# NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

## CAPTAIN JOHN A. FERGUSON, UNITED STATES NAVY

John Alexander Ferguson was born in Watertown, South Dakota, on May 9, 1912, son of Alexander R. and Bertha Edith (Herum) Ferguson. He attended public schools in Watertown and Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota, where he participated in athletics (football, two letters; track, one letter), debating and oratory, and was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Delta Sigma Rho (National Forensic), and Sigma Delta Psi (National Athletic) fraternities. He was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1933, and that summer cruised to Europe as a deck hand on a cotton freighter. From October 1933, to July 1936 he was employed by Standard Oil Company of Indiana, as Warehouseman, later Territorial Salesman.

He began naval service on September 28, 1936, as a Naval Aviation Cadet at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, where he completed flight training and was designated Naval Aviation, September 10, 1937. Commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Naval Reserve, to date from October 1, 1937, he transferred to the U. S. Navy, effective October 1, 1940, and subsequently advanced in rank to that of Captain, to date from July 1, 1956.

Upon completion of flight training, he was detached from the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, with orders to Patrol Wing ONE, based at San Diego, California, and served as Co-pilot, Navigator and Assistant Engineering Officer of that Wing until August 1939. During the next three months he was Co-pilot and Navigator of XPB2Y-1, of Patrol Wing ONE, the aircraft which transported Harriman's Mission to England and Sumner Welles to the Roosevelt-Churchill Meeting at Argentia, Newfoundland.

From November 1939 to December 1941 he served as Co-pilot of XPB2Y-1, of Patrol Wing FIVE, based at Norfolk, Virginia, and for six months thereafter was Officer in Charge of that craft. In June 1942 he was assigned to the Naval Air Station, Anacostia, D. C., where he served until July 1943 as Assistant Engineering Officer in the Flight Test Division, then had fourteen months' duty in the Flight Test Division at the Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, Maryland. In September 1944 he assumed command of Patrol Bombing Squadron THIRTEEN, and during the latter months of World War II commanded that squadron in operations in the Pacific Theater.

He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and a Letter of Commendation, with authorization to wear the Commendation Ribbon, from the Secretary of Navy. The citations follow in part:

Bronze Star Medal: "For meritorious achievement as Commanding Officer of a Patrol Bombing Squadron in Western Pacific waters during operations against enemy Japanese forces from April 26 to July 1, 1945. In spite of the extremely difficult operational conditions and enemy action, his squadron met the heavy demands made on it with outstanding

success and by so doing aided materially the successful accomplishment of search and armed reconnaissance missions in support of assault and post-assault phases of important war operations..."

Letter of Commendation: "For outstanding performance of duty in establishing and maintaining the Southwest Pacific Airline Route from the Hawaiian Area to Australia during the first eight months of the war. Operating under extremely difficult conditions from improvised advance base facilities and with a limited number of aircraft along a lightly held line of communication, Lieutenant Commander Ferguson exercised superb flying skill and sound judgment in the successful transportation of large groups of personnel evacuated from Japanese-held areas, key officers of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps who were to guide the progress of the war, and urgently needed freight to our various task forces, on an emergency occasion delivering bullet proof aircraft fuel tanks to the USS YORKTOWN prior to the Coral Sea Engagement. Although it was necessary to make repeated trips with a minimum of rest, he accomplished his important missions without accident or loss of life...and contributed in large measure to the effective development of a vital air line route..."

In addition, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for "heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Western Pacific War Area, from March 27 to July 16, 1945..." during which period he participated in twenty missions and contributed materially to the success of his squadron. He was also awarded the Air Medal for meritorious achievement in that area from March 27 to May 11, 1945, during which he completed his fifth mission.

Following the Japanese surrender, he reported in October 1945 as Executive Officer of the USS ATTU (CVE-102), and served in that capacity while that carrier escort operated independently in the Pacific as a unit of Carrier Division TWENTY-FOUR on Magic Carpet duty. In July 1946 he returned to Patuxent River, Maryland, for duty in the Flight Test Division, Naval Air Test Center. There he served for two years as Senior Project Officer, Non-Carrier Section. From June 1948 until June 1949 he was a student at the U. S. Naval School, General Line, Newport, Rhode Island, after which for two years he was Executive Officer of Air Transport Squadron TWO, based at Alameda, California.

Again returning to Patuxent River, he had a tour of duty as Assistant Director, Flight Test Division, from June 1951 until June 1953, and shortly thereafter reported for instruction (Naval Warfare course) at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island. Following graduation in June 1954, he joined the USS WASP (CVA-18) in August of that year, and served as Executive Officer of that attack carrier until October 1955. The next month he was transferred to the Naval Air Station, Glynnco, Brunswick, Georgia, for duty as Commanding Officer of the Naval Combat Information Center Officers School.

On June 10, 1957 he reported as Operations and Plans Officer on the Staff of Commander Carrier Division SEVENTEEN, USS PHILIPPINE SEA, flagship. From August 1959 until July 1960 he headed the Navy Plans Branch, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., after which he commanded the USS PINE ISLAND (AV-12). In September 1961 he assumed command of the USS BENNINGTON (CVS-20) and in October 1962 was assigned to the Bureau of Naval Weapons, Navy Department, where he was serving as Assistant Chief for Financial Management (Comptroller) when ordered detached in September 1965 for duty on the Navy Council of Personnel Boards, Navy Department.

In addition to the Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal and Commendation Ribbon, Captain Ferguson has the American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal, China Service Medal (extended); and the National Defense Service Medal.