

## NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

COMMANDER JAMES W. BARNITZ, U. S. NAVY

James Wanner Barnitz was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 10, 1920, son of Eckert W. and Ethel Amelia (Mankedick) Barnitz. He attended Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana, for three years before entering the Naval Service in June 1941 for aviation training. Appointed Aviation Cadet in August of that year, he was designated Naval Aviator and commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Naval Reserve on May 1, 1942. Through subsequent advancement and his transfer to the U. S. Navy, he attained the rank of Commander, USN, to date from July 1, 1954.

Upon completion of flight training at the Naval Air Station, Corpus Christi, Texas, in May 1942, he was ordered to the Naval Air Station, San Diego, California, where he had further instruction from August of that year until February of the next. He then served with Bombing Squadron 13, based on the USS SARATOGA, for five months, and from July 1943 until December 1944 as a pilot in Bombing Squadron 15, based on the USS ESSEX. During the latter period his carrier and her air groups participated in raids on Marcus and Wake Islands and the Bonins; strikes on Rabaul; the Gilbert Islands operation; occupation of Kwajalein and Majoro in the Marshalls; attacks on Truk and Marianas Islands; capture and occupation of Saipan and Northern Palau Islands; assaults on the Philippine Islands; and the Leyte operation, including the Battle of Surigao Strait and attacks on Luzon and Formosa.

Commander Barnitz was awarded the Navy Cross and a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Navy Cross, the Air Medal and Gold Star in lieu of the second similar award, and is entitled to the Ribbon for the Presidential Unit Citation awarded the USS ESSEX and her Air Groups for heroic service in the operations named above. His personal citations follow, in order of action for which received:

Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement in aerial flight as Pilot of a Dive Bomber in Bombing Squadron FIFTEEN, attached to the USS ESSEX, in action against enemy Japanese forces on an island in the Marianas Group, June 24, 1944...Lieutenant, junior grade, Barnitz disregarded intense and accurate enemy antiaircraft fire to dive bomb the assigned targets and...aided in the destruction of numerous enemy aircraft installations..."

Gold Star in lieu of Second Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement... during action against enemy Japanese forces in the Pacific War Area, from May 19 to September 24, 1944. Courageous and daring in combat, (he) participated in numerous strikes against enemy positions and shipping at Marcus and Wake, in the Marianas, the Bonins, Palau and the Philippine Islands during this period, pressing home his attacks aggressively and with outstanding skill and contributing materially to the success of these hazardous missions..."

Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism as Pilot of a Dive Bomber in Bombing Squadron FIFTEEN, attached to the USS ESSEX, in action against major units of the Japanese Fleet during the Battle for Leyte Gulf on October 24, 1944. Fearlessly leading his three-plane section in over a formidable enemy

task force, Lieutenant Barnitz pressed home his attack in the face of accurate and intense antiaircraft fire and scored a direct hit upon a Japanese battleship of the Yamato Class. By his superb airmanship, courageous leadership and steadfast devotion to duty throughout a perilous mission, (he) contributed materially to the defeat of the enemy in this historic Battle..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Second Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism as Pilot of a Dive Bomber...in action against enemy Japanese forces in Manila Bay, Philippine Islands, November 5, 1944. Leading a three-plane section in the face of accurate antiaircraft fire, Lieutenant Barnitz pressed home his attack on an enemy cruiser scoring a direct hit and contributing materially to the destruction of the hostile vessel..."

In December 1944 he reported to the Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida, where he remained as an instructor (bombing planes) until May 1947. While so assigned he served as the first Public Information Officer for the "Blue Angels," famous aerobatic team. Two years' service as Operations Officer of Attack Squadron 74, of the USS LEYTE, was followed by a year as a student at the General Line School, Newport, Rhode Island. In May 1950 he reported to the Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Whiting Field, Pensacola, Florida, as Public Information Officer, and while so assigned until December 1951, he attended PIO School at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

He attended the Senior School, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia from January to June 1952, then served until April 1954 as Planning Officer of Tactical Air Control Squadron 5. He next served as Executive Officer of Attack Squadron 55, based on the USS PHILIPPINE SEA (April 1954 to December 1955), and in January 1956 reported to the Navy Department, Washington, D. C. for duty in the Office of Naval Intelligence.

In addition to the Navy Cross with Gold Star, the Air Medal with Gold Star, and the Presidential Unit Citation Ribbon, Commander Barnitz has the American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal, Europe Clasp; National Defense Service Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon.

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