

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

COMMANDER ROBERT LOUIS ELDRIDGE, U.S. NAVY

Robert Louis Eldridge was born in DeKalb, Illinois, November 30, 1912. He attended Harvard Military Academy, and Oregon State College for three years before enlisting in the U.S. Naval Reserve in November, 1935. His subsequent discharge was followed by his appointment as an Aviation Cadet on January 16, 1936. He was designated a Naval Aviator in January, 1937, was commissioned Ensign upon his completion of training, April 1, 1937, and has advanced in rank as follows: Lieutenant (junior grade) April 1, 1940; (in that rank he transferred to the regular Navy one year later); Lieutenant for temporary service, January 2, 1942; Lieutenant Commander (temporary) May 1, 1943, and Commander (temporary) March 15, 1944.

His elimination training commenced at Naval Reserve Aviation Base, Long Beach, California, and when nominated an Aviation Cadet, he reported for training at Naval Air Station, Pensacola. In April, 1937, he joined the USS ARIZONA as a member of Observation Squadron 2-B. The following July he was attached to Observation Squadron ONE, based on that battleship, which was then flagship of Battleship Division One, Battle Force. In September, 1939, when detached from that Squadron, he returned to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, and served until February 26, 1940. He then had orders to duty in connection with the establishment of the Naval Reserve Aviation Base at Dallas, Texas, and served continuously there and at Braniff Airways, Dallas, until ordered, in August, 1941 to duty with Utility Squadron One.

He received the Air Medal "For meritorious achievement in aerial flight as Pilot of a plane in Utility Squadron ONE, during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the vicinity of the Hawaiian Islands from December 11, 1941 to June 9, 1942. During this trying period when the Naval air strength in the Hawaiian Area was at its lowest ebb due to damage suffered by the Japanese attack, (he) flew numerous long patrol, search and convoy missions in non-combatant type aircraft which had already seen long service. These aircraft which had been damaged by attack were hastily repaired, armed with a small calibre gun and pressed into service during a time of great national stress. Frequently returning to a blacked-out base after dark without the use of navigational and radio aids, he effected safe landings on an unlighted field . . ."

He also was awarded the Bronze Star Medal "For meritorious service as Engineering and Executive Officer of Utility Squadron ONE and subsequently as Commanding Officer of that unit, from December, 1941 to July, 1944; and as Chief Staff Officer of Commander Utility Wing, Service Force, Pacific Fleet, in connection with operations against enemy Japanese forces from July, 1944 to August, 1945 . . ."

Returning to the United States at the close of the war in the Pacific, he was named Commander, Utility Squadrons, West Coast, San Diego, California, and served from October, 1945 until March, 1947. He was ordered to the Naval General Line School, Newport, Rhode Island. After completion of the course, he reported to the Navy Department, Washington, D. C. in April, 1948, for duty in Bureau of Naval Personnel, Enlisted Personnel Division, as Assistant Head for Aviation Policy and Distribution Control, his present assignment.

In addition to the Bronze Star Medal, and Air Medal, Commander Eldridge has the American Defense Service Medal with Fleet Clasp; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with one bronze star, and World War II Victory Medal.

24 April 1950