

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

ENSIGN WILLIAM WARNER ABERCROMBIE, U. S. NAVAL RESERVE (DECEASED)

Ensign William Warner Abercrombie was born in Medford, Oregon on July 24, 1914, and died as a result of enemy action in the Pacific Area, the presumptive date of his death being June 5, 1943. He was officially reported missing in action on June 4, 1942, when the plane of which he was pilot was shot down by the enemy in the Battle of Midway.

Ensign Abercrombie enlisted in the United States Naval Reserve, as Seaman Second Class, at Kansas City, Kansas on August 27, 1940, and on December 24, 1940, was discharged with an Honorable Discharge, to accept appointment as Aviation Cadet. On December 27, 1940, he accepted appointment and executed the oath of office as Aviation Cadet to rank from December 16, 1940; was designated Naval Aviator (heavier-than-air) on July 10, 1941, and accepted appointment and executed the oath of office as Ensign in the United States Naval Reserve on August 4, 1941, to rank from June 3, 1941.

On September 16, 1940, Ensign Abercrombie reported for active duty at the Naval Reserve Aviation Base, Kansas City, Kansas, and on October 5 was released from active duty upon completion of elimination flight training. As an Aviation Cadet he reported on December 30, 1941, to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola, Florida, for active duty undergoing training. He was detached from Pensacola on June 24, 1941, and transferred to the Naval Air Station at Miami, Florida, for further active duty undergoing training, reporting June 25, 1941. On August 4, 1941, he was detached from Miami and reported to Fleet Air Detachment, Naval Air Station, Norfolk, Virginia, on August 25, 1941, for temporary active duty involving flying under instruction. Upon completion of temporary duty, he was ordered to report to Torpedo Squadron EIGHT (USS HORNET) for active duty involving flying. He was reported missing in action as of June 4, 1942, and was officially presumed dead a year and a day later.

Ensign Abercrombie was awarded the Navy Cross posthumously, with the following citation:

NAVY CROSS:

"For extraordinary heroism and distinguished service beyond the call of duty as a pilot of Torpedo Squadron EIGHT in the 'Air Battle of Midway', against enemy Japanese forces on June 4, 1942. Grimly aware of the hazardous consequences of flying without fighter protection, and with insufficient fuel to return to his carrier, Ensign Abercrombie, resolutely, and with no thought of his own life, delivered an effective torpedo attack against violent assaults of enemy Japanese aircraft and against an almost solid barrage of antiaircraft fire. His courageous action, carried out with a gallant spirit of self-sacrifice and conscientious devotion to the fulfillment of his mission, was a determining factor in the defeat of the enemy forces and was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

Ensign Abercrombie was also entitled to the ribbon for, and facsimile of, the Presidential Unit Citation to Torpedo Squadron EIGHT, as follows:

PUB - TORPEDO SQUADRON EIGHT:

"For extremely heroic and courageous performance in combat during the 'Air Battle of Midway,' June 4, 1942. Flying low without fighter support, TORPEDO SQUADRON EIGHT began the perilous mission, 'Intercept and attack!' First to sight the enemy, the SQUADRON attacked with full striking power against crushing enemy opposition, scoring torpedo hits on Japanese forces. Realizing to a man that insufficient fuel would prevent a return to the carrier, the pilots held doggedly to the target, dropping torpedoes at pointblank range in the face of blasting antiaircraft fire that sent the planes, one by one, hurtling aflame into the sea. The loss of twenty-nine lives, typifying valor, loyalty and determination, was the price paid for TORPEDO SQUADRON EIGHT's vital contribution to the eventual success of our forces in this epic battle of the air."

A destroyer escort vessel, the USS ABERCROMBIE (DE 343) has been named to honor Ensign William W. Abercrombie, USNR. The ship was built by the Consolidated Steel Corporation, Orange, Texas, and launched January 11, 1944.

