

## NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

REAR ADMIRAL JAMES DUKE BARNER  
U. S. NAVY, RETIRED

James Duke Barner, one of the officers of the U. S. Navy who rose from the ranks, was born in Albion, Michigan, on May 21, 1890, son of James David and Marie Theresa McCarthy Barner. He was graduated from Schenectady, New York, High School in June 1907, and enlisted in the Navy in November of that year, reenlisted in 1911, and again in 1915. During the World War he received temporary appointment as Boatswain while serving in the USS WYOMING, and temporary appointment to the ranks of Ensign and Lieutenant (junior grade), being commissioned in the latter grade July 1, 1920. He subsequently was promoted as follows: Lieutenant, April 27, 1922; Lieutenant Commander, June 30, 1932; Commander, August 1, 1938; and Captain, June 17, 1942. He was transferred to the Retired List of the Navy and advanced to the rank of Rear Admiral on June 30, 1949.

As an enlisted man, he served in the following ships: CONSTELLATION, NEW HAMPSHIRE, MAINE (during the Cuban pacification), NEBRASKA, IOWA, HANNIBAL, NEW JERSEY, VIRGINIA, NEW YORK, and ARKANSAS. During World War I he served in the USS WYOMING and USS NEVADA; and had duty as Signal Boatswain on the staff of Vice Admiral DeWitt Coffman, USN, Commander, Battleship Force 2, Atlantic Fleet, in the USS ARKANSAS and USS NEW MEXICO flagships. From September 1918 until January 1919 was under instruction at the Naval District Base, New London, Connecticut.

In January 1919, he joined the USS NORTH DAKOTA and after two months was transferred to the USS BRIDGE. In December 1921 he reported to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, for flight training. Designated naval aviator (seaplanes) June 8, 1922, he reported on June 26, to Commander Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet, and was assigned to Squadrons attached to the USS AROOSTOOK until November 1924. He then reported for duty as test pilot at the Naval Air Station, Anacostia, D. C., where he served until June 1927.

During his tour of duty at Anacostia, he was a member of the Navy Racing Teams. In June 1925 he piloted the SC-6, a bomber, in the Liberty Engine Builders Trophy Race at Mitchell Field, New York, and the following November was entered as a contestant in the Detroit News Air Transport Trophy Race at the same field. In 1926 he piloted the F6C-1 in the Curtiss Marine Trophy Race, winning second place, and was pilot of the same plane in the National Air Races at Philadelphia. In an FB-3 he won first place at the New York air races, and on April 30, 1927, established the world speed record for seaplanes carrying 500 kilos of weight.

Detached from the Anacostia Station in June 1927, he joined Fighting Squadron 5, attached to the seaplane tender WRIGHT, Flagship of Aircraft Squadrons, Scouting Fleet. In March 1928 this Squadron, later redesignated Bombing Squadron ONE, was transferred to Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet, and based on the aircraft carrier LEXINGTON. From June 1930 until November 1933, he had duty in the Maintenance Division of the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. He then reported to the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, Newport News, Virginia, to assist in fitting out the aircraft carrier RANGER, and commanded Bombing Squadron 5, based on that carrier, from July 1934 until November 1935, continuing in command after that Squadron was transferred to the carrier LEXINGTON, until June 1936.

He next served as Inspector of Naval Aircraft at the Glenn L. Martin Company, Baltimore, Maryland, and from January through 1937, was Executive Officer of the Naval Air Station at Anacostia. He was Chief Inspector at the Naval Aircraft Factory, Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from June 1937 until March 1941, when he again reported to the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, this time for duty in connection with the conversion of the motor ship MORMACMAIL into the USS LONG ISLAND, one of the first carrier escort vessels. He served as her Executive Officer from her commissioning June 2, 1941, until April 18, 1942, then had command of that vessel until February 1, 1943.

The LONG ISLAND, an experimental vessel, proved so successful that others of her type were procured, helped solve the many problems encountered in developing a new type of ship. She was the first base for Composite Squadron 1, the first aircraft squadron to operate from a carrier escort against underwater craft, and led in the development of successful carrier plane tactics against submarines.

Detached from command of the LONG ISLAND in February 1943, he then served as Commander of the Naval Air Station, Astoria, Oregon, with additional duty in command of the Pre-commissioning Detail at Seattle, Washington, where he trained crews for, and put in commission carrier escorts. He was awarded the Legion of Merit, "For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States as Commanding Officer of the Naval Station, Astoria, and the CVE Pre-Commissioning Detail, Astoria, from February 10, 1943, to July 8, 1943..." The citation continues:

Maintaining difficult and heavy commissioning schedules throughout this critical period, Captain Barner was responsible for the outfitting, commissioning and preparing of many Escort Carriers for service in the Fleet and, by his marked organizational

ability, handled the countless details of assembly and installations of equipment and the many problems of adjustment, expeditiously and with comprehensive thoroughness. A splendid and inspiring leader, untiring in his devotion to duty, Captain Barner has contributed essentially to our effective prosecution of the war by his success in insuring these ships against serious material casualties at sea."

On July 4, 1944, he was ordered to duty in charge of fitting out the USS SHANGRI-LA, and assumed command when that aircraft carrier was commissioned on September 15, 1944. During the climactic months of the war against Japan, the SHANGRI-LA operated with Admiral (now Fleet Admiral) William F. Halsey's Third Fleet in action against the Japanese home islands. Captain Barner was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Legion of Merit with citation, as follows:

"For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States as Commanding Officer of the USS SHANGRI LA during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Western Pacific War Area from April 24 to July 16, 1945. Participating in fast carrier air strikes against Kyushu, Shikoku, Honshu and Hokkaido during this period, Captain Barner maintained his ship and air group at a high state of combat readiness and fighting efficiency. Although joining the Task Group with a new ship and an inexperienced crew, he ably exercised command in repelling hostile attack and in launching aircraft to carry the fight to the enemy..."

Detached from command of the SHANGRI-LA, he reported, in August 1945 as Commander, Naval Air Test Center, Patuxent River, Maryland. He had orders in February 1947 to duty in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, and was so serving when relieved of active duty pending his retirement on June 30, 1949.

In addition to the Legion of Merit and Gold Star, both with Combat "V," Rear Admiral Barner has the Cuban Pacification Medal (USS MAINE); Mexican Service Medal; Victory Medal, Atlantic Fleet Clasp (USS ARKANSAS); the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; and World War II Victory Medal. He also has the Good Conduct Medal for enlisted service.

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