

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

CAPTAIN NORMAN D. CHAMPLIN, UNITED STATES NAVY

Norman David Champlin was born in Detroit, Michigan, on January 6, 1919, son of Howard Norman and Doris Ilene (Smith) Champlin. Receiving the degree of Bachelor of Science from Western Michigan College of Education at Kalamazoo, he subsequently was employed as a Basketball Coach at Portage (Michigan) High School. He enlisted in the U. S. Naval Reserve on May 20, 1941 and after completing elimination flight training was appointed Aviation Cadet. He had flight training at the Naval Air Station, Corpus Christi, Texas and on March 1, 1942 was designated Naval Aviator and commissioned Ensign. Advancing progressively in rank, he attained that of Captain, to date from March 1, 1962, having transferred from the Naval Reserve to the Regular Navy on July 11, 1946.

After receiving his "Wings" in 1942, he had duty with Escort Squadron TWELVE and Torpedo Squadron TWENTY-ONE. "For heroism and extraordinary achievement as pilot of an airplane in Torpedo Squadron TWENTY-ONE, during action against enemy Japanese forces in the Solomon Islands Area on July 22, 1943. Participating in a raid on four hostile warships and a seaplane tender in Bougainville Straits, Lieutenant (junior grade) Champlin, in the face of tremendous anti-aircraft fire and fierce fighter opposition, scored a direct hit which contributed materially to the sinking of the tender..."

In November 1943 he reported for duty with Torpedo Squadron THIRTEEN, which was based on the USS FRANKLIN. For outstanding services while attached to that squadron, he was awarded the Air Medal, a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Distinguished Flying Cross, a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Air Medal; the Legion of Merit with Combat "V," and the Navy Cross. The citations follow in part:

Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement...in action against enemy Japanese forces during operations at Iwo Jima, July 4, 1944. Leading a daring flight against aircraft dispersal areas on an enemy airstrip, (he) struck furiously at the assigned targets despite intense antiaircraft fire and fierce enemy fighter opposition and, scoring a direct hit on one grounded enemy airplane, skillfully directed his group in the destruction of two other grounded planes and in the infliction of serious damage throughout the dispersal area..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Second Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement...in action against enemy Japanese forces in the vicinity of the Bonin Islands, on August 4 and 5, 1944. Plunging through intense enemy antiaircraft fire, (he) pressed home a bold attack against a large cargo vessel, scoring a direct hit which caused the destruction of the hostile craft. Later, he led a division of planes in a glide bombing attack against a concentration of enemy landing craft, barges and luggers, scoring direct hits upon his objective..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Second Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement...during action against enemy Japanese forces in the Pacific Area, from September 1 to 18, 1944. Participating in numerous strikes against heavily defended enemy bases, (he) carried out his assignments in the face of intense anti-aircraft fire at extremely low altitude, pressing home an attack at Yap which caused considerable damage to buildings and other facilities and landing a close support bombing mission which aided demolition teams working along the beach. His expert airmanship, cool courage and conscientious devotion to duty throughout these and other missions against grounded aircraft, airfields, gun emplacements, shipping facilities, troops and tanks were contributing factors in the infliction of extensive damage upon the enemy..."

Legion of Merit: "For exceptionally meritorious conduct...during operations against enemy Japanese shipping in the Formosa-Philippine Islands Area, on October 12, 18 and 19, 1944. Skillfully leading aerial torpedo and mast-head bombing attacks, (he) scored three direct hits on merchant ships in the face of vicious enemy fighter opposition and was instrumental in sinking at least eight Japanese ships..."

Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism...during action against enemy Japanese Fleet units in the Battle for Leyte Gulf on October 25, 1944. A daring and intrepid leader, (he) dauntlessly braved withering hostile anti-aircraft fire and intense fighter opposition to launch a smashing aerial glide bombing attack against the enemy and, by his relentless determination and indomitable courage, succeeded in scoring a devastating bomb hit on a Japanese aircraft carrier to assist in its subsequent sinking..."

Detached from Torpedo Squadron THIRTEEN in December 1944, he was next assigned to the Antisubmarine Warfare Training Unit, San Diego, California, and from October 1945 to the Fleet Airborne Electronics Training Unit, Pacific. In those assignments he had duty in connection with Project Cadillac (airborne radar development). In November 1946 he joined Composite Squadron TWELVE, participating in antisubmarine warfare-airborne early warning night operations, and in December 1950 reported for instruction at the Naval School, General Line, San Diego, California. He became Superintendent of Training at the Fleet Airborne Electronics Training Unit, Pacific in December 1951, and from December 1953 until June 1956 was Project Officer at the Naval Air Development Unit, Weymouth, Massachusetts.

In June 1956 he joined the Staff of the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, and from October 1958 until May 1960 served as Executive Officer and Commanding Officer of Air Antisubmarine Squadron TWENTY-SEVEN. He next commanded Carrier Antisubmarine Group FIFTY-SIX, and in November 1961 was assigned to the Naval Section, Military Assistance Advisory Group, Germany, with headquarters in Bonn. Detached in December 1964, he was ordered to the Bureau of Naval Weapons, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., and later was transferred to the Office of Naval Material, Navy Department, where he now serves as Project Manager, Air Traffic Control Radar Beacon Systems (ATCRBS) IFFMARK XII System (AIMS) Project.

In addition to the Navy Cross, the Legion of Merit with Combat "V," the Distinguished Flying Cross with Gold Star and the Air Medal with Gold Star, Captain Champlin has the American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with one silver star and two bronze stars (seven operations); World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Service Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon.