

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

REAR ADMIRAL LOUIS J. KIRN, UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED

Louis Joseph Kirn was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on June 8, 1908. He attended High School in Milwaukee, and the Peddie School, Hightstown, New Jersey, before entering the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, in 1928, from Wisconsin. As a Midshipman he was a trackman, played varsity football for three years, and commanded the winning Color Company in his First Class year. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 2, 1932, he subsequently attained the rank of Rear Admiral, to date from May 1, 1959.

Upon graduation from the Naval Academy in 1932, he was assigned to the USS TENNESSEE and served in that battleship until December 1934. He was then ordered to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, for flight training, and on January 6, 1936, was designated a Naval Aviator. From February 1936 to June 1937 he was attached to Fighting Squadron ONE, based first on the USS LANGLEY, and later on the USS LEXINGTON. He was assigned next to Torpedo Squadron TWO, based on the USS SARATOGA, and after two years' service attended the General Line Course at the Postgraduate School, Annapolis, until it was terminated because of the National Emergency in 1939. In January 1940 he returned to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, for duty as a Flight Instructor.

In October 1941 he was ordered to duty as Executive Officer of Scouting Squadron THREE, aboard the USS SARATOGA, then under command of Captain D. C. Ramsey, USN. He assumed command of that squadron in May 1942, and participated in the Guadalcanal and Solomons operations in the Pacific. For heroism during that period of service, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Gold Star in lieu of a second Distinguished Flying Cross, the Navy Cross, and the Air Medal. The citations follow, in part:

Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement as Commander of a Scouting Squadron...in the Solomon Islands Area on August 24, 1942. Leading his Squadron...in the face of tremendous anti-aircraft fire and fierce fighter opposition (he) pressed home his attack with skill and determination, then returned his squadron intact to its carriers. By his superb airmanship and conscientious devotion to duty, he contributed immeasurably to the severe damaging of an enemy aircraft carrier..."

Gold Star in lieu of second Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement as Squadron Commander of Scouting Squadron THREE during operations of the United States Naval Forces against Japanese-occupied Solomon Islands on August 7, 1942. Leading his squadron in vigorous dive-bombing and strafing raids against hostile land and troop installations, (he)...assisted in completely silencing Japanese opposition and thereby assuring the success of our landing operations with minimum casualties..."

Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism as Squadron Commander of a group of dive bombers and torpedo planes in aerial combat against enemy Japanese surface forces in the Solomon Islands area, between September 16 and October 5, 1942. Leading his squadron in repeated attacks against enemy vessels, (he) and his valorous comrades in the face of heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire, scored many near misses and three sure hits...He personally on October 5, scored a direct hit with a thousand pound bomb on an enemy destroyer, which sank within five minutes..."

Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement in aerial flight...during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the vicinity of New Georgia and the Solomon Islands from October 6 to 14, 1942..."

Returning to the United States, he commanded Bombing Squadron FOUR, reforming at San Diego, during January-March 1943; and from April to September of that year served on the Staff of the Chief of Naval Air Operational Training, Jacksonville, Florida. During that period he also had two months' temporary additional duty in the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

In October 1943 he was assigned as Operations Officer on the Staff of Vice Admiral A. W. Fitch, USN, Commander Aircraft, South Pacific Force, based on Guadalcanal. During this period, the Solomon Islands Campaign was successfully concluded. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for "meritorious service (in that assignment) from November 23, 1943 to May 1, 1944..." The citation states in part: "Utilizing his sound professional knowledge of our aircraft, Commander Kirn planned and directed the institution of new search plans as required by the changing situation in the South Pacific Theatre, and in addition was responsible for the excellent coordination of the activities of air units in that area..."

When detached in May 1944, he continued on staff duty as Operations Officer on the Staff of Rear Admiral R. Davison, USN, Commander Carrier Division TWO (Fast Carrier Task Groups 38.4 and 58.4) and participated in Peleliu, Iwo Jima, Chichi Jima, Philippine Islands and Japan operations from the USS FRANKLIN and other carriers. On two occasions when the FRANKLIN suffered heavy battle damage, the staff continued operations from other carriers--LEXINGTON, ENTERPRISE and HANCOCK. He received the Legion of Merit with Combat "V," "For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States as Operations Officer on the Staff of Commander Carrier Division TWO, during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Western Pacific Area from August 15, 1944 to March 24, 1945..."

Upon returning to the United States, he was ordered in August 1945 to the Staff of Rear Admiral F. Wagner, USN, Chief of Naval Air Training at Pensacola, Florida, where he served as Assistant Director of

Flight Training until January 1948. Thereafter until June 1948, he attended the Armed Forces Staff College, Norfolk, Virginia. In July, he joined the USS LEYTE and served one year as Executive Officer of that aircraft carrier. In September 1949 he reported as Force Training Officer on the Staff of Vice Admiral T. L. Sprague, USN, Commander Air Force, Pacific, with headquarters at San Diego, California. He attended the Strategic and Tactical course at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, from August 1951 to July 1952, when he was assigned as Head of the Field Liaison Branch, Office of Information, Executive Office of the Secretary of Navy, Navy Department.

He was hospitalized from March 1954 until November 1955 and after instruction at the Imperial Defense College, London, England, assumed command in February 1957, of the USS CURRITUCK (AV-7). Six months later he transferred to command of the attack aircraft carrier RANDOLPH and in June 1958 was detached for duty as Chief of Staff and Aide to Commander Carrier Division FOUR.

His selection for the rank of Rear Admiral was approved by the President on July 18, 1958, and on February 14, 1959 he became Commander Carrier Division NINETEEN. He was Chief of Naval Air Advanced Training, with headquarters at the Naval Air Station, Corpus Christi, Texas, from February 1960 until June 1962, when he assumed command of Carrier Division FIVE. In July 1963 he reported as Commander Key West Force, with additional duty as Commander Naval Base, Key West, Florida; and on January 15, 1964, assumed further additional duty as Commander Fleet Air, Key West. From January 1965 until January 1966 he was Deputy Director of the Joint Staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D. C.; then served as Vice Director of the Joint Staff. "For exceptionally meritorious service as Deputy Director, Joint Staff, from January 1965 to January 1966, and as Vice Director, Joint Staff, Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, from January through December 1966..." he was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit. The citation further states in part:

"In these assignments, embracing the development and prosecution of U. S. national political and military policy, Rear Admiral Kirn has displayed inspiring leadership and superb professional competence in supervising, coordinating, and guiding the Joint Staff and other agencies of the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The deployment by the United States of large military forces to Southeast Asia, while maintaining balanced forces in other parts of the world, required the utmost professional quality in Joint Staff planning. Admiral Kirn's astute military judgment and superior acumen contributed significantly to the effectiveness and responsiveness of the staff support provided the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary of Defense in the successful accomplishment of U. S. national objectives..."

In April 1967 he reported as U. S. Defense Attache/U. S. Naval Attache and U. S. Naval Attache for Air, United Kingdom, with headquarters in London, and served as such until relieved of active duty pending his retirement, effective July 1, 1970.

He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and cited as follows: "For exceptionally meritorious service...as United States Defense Attache, United States Naval Attache and United States Naval Attache for Air, London, from April 1967 through June 1970. During this period, (he) was responsible for the collection and reporting of essential intelligence information; for providing direct representation from the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the United States Marine Corps to the British Defense Establishment; and for providing expert counsel in Defense matters to the United States Ambassador to the Court of St. James during a period of complex and critically dangerous worldwide political and military tensions. Rear Admiral Kirn provided outstanding liaison between the defense establishments of the United States and the United Kingdom, and also between the United States Department of Defense and the representatives of all nations represented militarily in London, thereby contributing directly and significantly to the achievement of optimum combined strength for defense of the United States and Great Britain and to the defense of the Free World. His brilliant leadership, his outstanding expertise in defense matters, his talent for human communication and his ceaseless dedicated efforts were instrumental in stimulating close voluntary cooperation within the United Kingdom as well as between these elements and the American Embassy, London..."

In addition to the Navy Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit with Gold Star and Combat "V," the Distinguished Flying Cross with Gold Star, the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V," and the Air Medal, Rear Admiral Kirn has the American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; the National Defense Service Medal with bronze star; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon. He also has the facsimiles of and Ribbons for, the Presidential Unit Citation to the First Marine Division, Reinforced, and the Navy Unit Commendations to the USS FRANKLIN and USS ENTERPRISE.

Rear Admiral Kirn's home town address is [REDACTED]. He is married to the former Miss Ray Reynoir of New Orleans, Louisiana.