

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

REAR ADMIRAL THURSTON B. CLARK U. S. NAVY, RETIRED

Thurston Booth Clark was born on September 18, 1904, in New Rochelle, New York, son of Arthur Ludlow and Cornelia LeRoy (Ludlow) Clark. He attended Stuyvesant School, Warrenton, Virginia, and the Army and Navy Preparatory School, Washington, D. C., before his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from the Eighth Congressional District of Virginia in 1923. As a Midshipman he played Class and B-Squad baseball and football. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 2, 1927, he subsequently advanced in rank to that of Captain to date from March 20, 1945. His selection for the rank of Rear Admiral was approved by the President on July 25, 1955, his date of rank January 1, 1956.

After graduation from the Naval Academy in 1927, he was assigned to the USS IDAHO, and in November 1928 transferred to the USS HENDERSON. The majority of his cruise in that vessel was spent in Asiatic waters, transporting Marines along the China coast following the Chinese troubles. Detached from the HENDERSON in July 1929, he was ordered to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, for instruction. Detached in October of that year, he joined the USS MARBLEHEAD. He served in that vessel until May 1933, interspersed with a six months' course between January and June 1931, in torpedoes at the Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, Rhode Island.

Detached from the MARBLEHEAD, he continued duty afloat in the USS HATFIELD until January 1934, when he returned to the United States for flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola. Designated Naval Aviator on February 27, 1936, he was assigned in June of that year to Aircraft, Battle Force.

Between June 1938 and June 1940, he served at the Naval Aircraft Factory, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, after which he had fitting out duty with Patrol Squadron FOURTEEN. Upon the commissioning of that Squadron on November 25, 1941, he assumed command and commanded it for a year thereafter. "For heroism and extraordinary achievement... (in that capacity) during action against enemy Japanese forces in Southwestern Pacific waters from February 7 to March 22, 1942..." he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. The citation continues in part: "Fully aware that his squadron was the vanguard of our defense line against the Japanese, (he) vigilantly directed the operation of his squadron, maintaining daily patrol and scout missions over the entire Coral Sea Area in all types of weather and under the most adverse conditions. Effectively supporting our Task Force against surprise attacks by the enemy during our strike on Salamaua and Lae, he provided an additional security for our ships operating in that area and was instrumental in obtaining intelligence data vital to the movement of our Army Expeditionary Force into New Caledonia at that time. By his skillful airmanship and his courage and initiative as a leader, Captain Clark contributed materially to the success of his squadron's mission..."

Detached from command of Patrol Squadron FOURTEEN in November 1942, he next had duty in connection with the establishment of the Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, Maryland. Upon its commissioning he became Executive Officer of that station, and continued to serve there until March 1945. From May of that year until February 1946 he commanded the USS BOUGAINVILLE, after which he joined the Staff of Commander, Tenth Fleet as Aviation Officer.

Transferred in July 1946 to the Staff of Commander, U. S. Naval Forces, Mediterranean, he served as Assistant Chief of Staff until August 1947. He then returned to the United States, and reporting to the Navy Department, Washington, D. C., served in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations until July 1950. From that time until January 1953 he served as Commander Naval Activities, Port Lyautey, French Morocco, after which he had command of the USS KEARSARGE (CVA-33) during the rest of that year. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V," for meritorious service in Korea from February 6 to 23, 1953. In December 1953 he became Chief of Staff and Aide to Commander, Naval Advanced Training, with Headquarters at the Naval Air Station, Corpus Christi, Texas.

On November 22, 1954 he became Executive Assistant and Senior Aide to the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, and on April 16, 1956 reported as Commander Carrier Division SEVENTEEN. He had temporary duty with the Air Force, U. S. Pacific Fleet during November and December 1956, after which he was in command of the Naval Air Test Center, Patuxent River, Maryland. On January 27, 1959 he assumed command of Fleet Air Wings, Atlantic Fleet and, as additional duty, also served as Commander Fleet Air Wing FIVE. On July 1, 1962 he was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy.

"For exceptionally meritorious conduct...as Commander Fleet Air Wings, United States Atlantic Fleet, from January 1959 to June 1962..." he was awarded the Legion of Merit. The citation continues in part:

"Exercising vision, leadership, and initiative of a high order, Rear Admiral Clark contributed immeasurably to the achievement of recent improvements in antisubmarine warfare (ASW) capabilities of the aircraft squadrons and wings under his command. Instrumental in establishing the Maritime Air Task Force, which has led to greatly improved reaction time for special air antisubmarine operations and in long-range surveillance situations, he has made a significant contribution to the achievement of a high state of readiness in the development of ASW tactics; to marked improvement in the ability of patrol aircraft to coordinate effectively with the Ocean Surveillance System; and to improvements in submarine/air barrier tactics. In addition, he has furthered the liaison among the Maritime Air Task Force, Royal Air Force Coastal Command, and the Canadian Maritime Coastal Command, resulting in enhanced national and NATO ASW capabilities..."

In addition to the Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V," Rear Admiral Clark has the American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with four engagement stars; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal, Asia and Europe Clasps; the National Defense Service Medal; Korean Service Medal and United Nations Service Medal. He also has the Korean Presidential Unit Citation..

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