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Damon W. Cooper, Vice Admiral, USN

Damon Warren Cooper was born in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, on April 27, 1919, son of Damon M. and Mary Adelaide (McDermott) Cooper. He attended Elizabethtown High School and Western Kentucky State Teachers College at Bowling Green, prior to entering the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, on appointment from his native state in 1937. As a Midshipman he won his "letters" in track, football and basketball. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on February 7, 1941 (course of instruction shortened by several months due to the "National Emergency"), he subsequently advanced in rank, attaining that of Rear Admiral, to date from July 1, 1967 and Vice Admiral, to date from August 16, 1972.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy in 1941, he joined the USS *Waters* and in February 1943 was detached for flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida. Designated Naval Aviator on September 10, 1943, he remained at the Pensacola Air Station until July 1944 and the next month joined Torpedo Squadron TWENTY-FOUR, which he commanded until August 1945.

For outstanding services from April 1 to June 14, 1945 during which time he completed sixty combat missions in the Ryukyus area he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with Gold Stars in lieu of the Second and Third Distinguished Flying Crosses and the Air Medal with Gold Stars in lieu of the Second through Ninth Air Medals. He is also entitled to the Ribbon for and a facsimile of the Presidential Unit Citation awarded the USS *Santee* on which Torpedo Squadron TWENTY-FOUR was based.

In September 1945 he reported as Navigator on board the USS *Kasaan Bay* and from July 1946 to September 1947 was a student at the Naval Intelligence School, Washington, D. C. He next served as Intelligence Officer on the Staff of Commander Air Force, Pacific Fleet and in October 1949 assumed duty as Assistant Training Officer and Officer in Charge of Fighter Squadron ATU-4 at the Naval Auxiliary Air

Station, Cabanis Field, Corpus Christi, Texas.

He was Intelligence Officer on board the USS *Philippine Sea* from August 1950 to January 1951 and was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V". The citation commends him For meritorious service (in that capacity)...during the sustained operations (of the *Philippine Sea*) against enemy North Korean and Chinese Communist forces from August 5, 1950 through December 31, 1950... He also is entitled to the Ribbon for and a facsimile of the Navy Unit Commendation awarded the USS *Philippine Sea*.

After an assignment as Intelligence Officer on the Staff of Commander Carrier Division FIVE, he reported in September 1951 as Commanding Officer of Fighter Squadron EIGHT HUNDRED TWENTY ONE, He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V," for "meritorious service as Commanding Officer of Fighter Squadron EIGHT HUNDRED TWENTY ONE...during Operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from July 18, 1952 to January 10, 1953..." The citation further states in part: "...During combat operations, the squadron had an overall aircraft availability of ninety two percent, while ninety-six percent of the missions assigned were successfully completed without loss of a single aircraft or pilot..."

He was also awarded Gold Stars in lieu of the Tenth, Eleventh Twelfth and Thirteenth Air Medals for completing twenty missions during the periods August, 1 to September 29, 1952; October 3 to November 22, 1952 and November 23, 1952 to January 2, 1953. He is entitled to the Ribbon for and a facsimile of the Navy Unit Commendation awarded the USS *Essex* on which Fighter Squadron EIGHT HUNDRED and TWENTY ONE was based.

He headed the Aviation Armament Section in the Air Warfare Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., from March 1953 to February 1955. He next commanded Attack Squadron

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THREE, based on the USS *Shangri-La*, and in June 1956 reported as Operations Officer on the Staff of Commander Air Force, U. S. Pacific Fleet. After instruction, July 1957 to June 1958, at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, he was ordered to the New York Naval Shipyard, Brooklyn, where the USS *Independence* (CVA-62) was building. He joined that attack aircraft carrier as Executive Officer when she was commissioned January 10, 1959, and served in her until detached in July 1959 for duty as Commanding Officer of Attack Squadron FORTY-FOUR.

From July 1960 to July 1961 he was a student at the National War College, Washington, D. C., after which he had duty in the Programs Branch, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D. C. In 1963 he was awarded the degree of Master of Arts in International Affairs. In April that year he assumed command of the USS *Pine Island* (AV-12) and in July 1964 reported as Commanding Officer of the USS *Ticonderoga* (CVA-14). He was awarded the Gold Star in lieu of the Second Navy Commendation Medal. The citation follows in part:

“For meritorious service from August 2 through 5, 1964 as Commanding Officer, USS *Ticonderoga* (CVA-14)...(He) was responsible for exceptionally effective airborne support of SEVENTH Fleet operations in the South China Sea, for immediate offensive action in support of destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin, and for aircraft retaliatory strikes against North Vietnam PT boats and their bases...”

He is also entitled to the Ribbon for and a facsimile of the Navy Unit Commendation awarded the USS *Ticonderoga*.

Detached from the *Ticonderoga*, he was ordered to the Bureau of Naval Personnel, where he served as Assistant Director for Captain Detail (Aviation) from June 1965 to July 1966, then as Deputy Assistant Chief for Personnel Control. In December 1966 he assumed command of Patrol Force, SEVENTH Fleet/Taiwan Patrol Force/Fleet Air Wing ONE. “For exceptionally meritorious service from December 1966 to July 1968...” he was awarded the Legion of Merit. The citation further states in part: “..(He) contributed significantly to antisubmarine-warfare readiness and to the success of SEVENTH Fleet patrol operations...”

In August 1969 he reported as Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Personnel Control, Navy Department. “For exceptionally meritorious service from August 1968 to August 1970...” he was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit. The citation further states in part: “...(His) great perceptiveness, superb managerial ability, and ingenuity were vigorously applied to the marked advances made in the centralized distribution and utilization of enlisted personnel; long-range programs for the professional management of officer careers; procurement, training and assignment of Naval Aviators in times of critical turbulence and imbalances in the community; and increased quality and effectiveness of the Navy’s recruiting program...”

In August 1970 he assumed command of Carrier Division NINE and in March 1971 reported as Commander Attack Carrier Striking Force, SEVENTH Fleet/Commander Carrier Division FIVE. “For exceptionally meritorious service... during combat operations against enemy forces in Southeast Asia from March 1971 to February 1973...” he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. The citation further states in part:

“Commanding the largest task force assembled during the Vietnam conflict, Vice Admiral Cooper displayed exceptional operational expertise and brilliant leadership in prosecuting air strikes, reconnaissance, naval gunfire support, and aerial mining operations deep in enemy territory...”

In April 1973 he became Chief of Naval Reserve with headquarters in New Orleans, Louisiana, with additional duty as Director of Naval Reserve, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. He served as such until relieved of active duty pending his retirement, effective June 1, 1974.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit with Gold Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Gold Stars, the Bronze Star Medal with Combat “V,” the Air Medal with twelve Gold Stars, the Navy Commendation Medal with Gold Star and Combat “V,” the Presidential Unit Citation Ribbon and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon with two Bronze Stars, Vice Admiral Cooper has the American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with four stars; World War II Victory Medal; China Service Medal; National Defense Service Medal with bronze star; Korean Service Medal with five stars; the United Nations Service Medal; Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Vietnam); and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon. He also has the Vietnam Navy Distinguished Service Order, First Class; the Special Order of Cloud and Banner from the Republic of China; the Korean Presidential Unit Citation Badge and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device.

His home town” address was Springfield, Kentucky. He was married to the former Anne Porter Leverich of Olympia, Washington, and they had three daughters, Anne Michele (now Mrs. Davidson), Mary Patricia, Jeanne Fleetwood and a son, John Rockwell Cooper.