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James J. Davidson, Captain, USN

James Jennings Davidson was born on July 19, 1919, in Sparta, Wisconsin, son of Mrs. Clara J. Gilbertson of Rochester, Minnesota, and the late David Davidson. He attended Lewiston, Wisconsin, High School and Winona State Teachers College, Winona, Minnesota, from which he was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Science in 1940. On November 25, that year he enlisted in the U. S. Naval Reserve, and on February 15, 1941, was appointed an Aviation Cadet, and began flight training. Designated a Naval Aviator on August 4, 1941, he was commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Naval Reserve, and through subsequent advancement and his transfer to the U. S. Navy on June 10, 1943, he attained the rank of Captain, USN, to date from July 1, 1960.

After training with the Advanced Carrier Training Group, Naval Air Station, San Diego, California, from September to December 1941, he was assigned to Scouting Squadron THREE. He served as Communications Officer of that Squadron, based on the USS *Saratoga*, during the early months of World War II and from September to December 1942 at Guadalcanal; and a Flight Officer of the Squadron, based at San Diego from December 1942 until March 1943. During the next fourteen months he served as Operations Officer of Bombing Squadron FOUR at the Naval Air Station, Norfolk, Virginia until July 1943, then based on the USS *Yorktown*.

He is entitled to the Ribbons for the Presidential Unit Citations to the First Marine Division, Reinforced, and the USS *Yorktown* and was personally awarded the Silver Star Medal; Distinguished Flying Cross; and the Air Medal with two Gold Stars in lieu of additional Air Medals; and a Letter of Commendation with Ribbon from the Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet, for World War II service. The citations follow in part:

Silver Star Medal: "For conspicuous gallantry intrepidity as pilot of Scouting Squadron THREE during action

against enemy Japanese forces in the Solomon Islands Area, September and October 1942. In addition to participation in daring raids on enemy ground installations, Lieutenant (junior grade) Davidson was a member of numerous search missions over dangerous hostile territory. Attacked by four float biplanes while operating over New Georgia Island, Lieutenant (jg) Davidson, firing in unison with his gunner, damaged one enemy plane and then succeeded, by his skillful maneuvers, in eluding the other hostile craft. With outstanding courage and excellent airmanship, he assisted, on a later date, in sinking one destroyer out of force of six and in damaging another so severely that it was left in a sinking condition..."

Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight as Dive Bomber Pilot and Strike Leader in action against enemy Japanese forces at Truk Island, February 16-17, 1944. Leading his flight on repeated high-level and low-level bombing attacks against enemy shipping and shore installations, Lieutenant Davidson was instrumental in sinking five enemy ships, including a destroyer..."

Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement in aerial flight as Leader of a Flight of Bombers in Bombing Squadron FIVE, attached to the USS *Yorktown*, during operations in support of the occupation of Hollandia, New Guinea, on April 23, 1944. Observing that the progress of our advancing infantry was threatened by a vastly superior number of enemy troops, Lieutenant, Davidson led his flight to the area and, despite concentrated anti-aircraft fire which damaged his plane, directed his group in the destruction of the enemy positions ...He flew at extremely low altitudes in order to direct his group to important targets and was himself the last to leave the attack area..."

Gold Star in lieu of Second Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement...as Leader of a flight of Dive Bomber Planes in Bombing Squadron FIVE during the attack on enemy Japanese shipping at Kwajalein, December 4, 1943. Pressing home a determined attack despite antiaircraft fire which wounded the leader of his second section, (he) secured a direct hit upon an armed merchantman, and shared credit with another of the squadron for sinking this vessel..."

Gold Star in lieu of Third Air Medal: "...as Pilot of a Dive Bomber in Bombing Squadron FIVE, attached to the USS *Yorktown*, in action against enemy Japanese forces on Marcus Island, on August 31, 1943. Undaunted by antiaircraft fire, Lieutenant Davidson led his flight in a bombing attack against hostile installations in this area and, pressing home his attacks with skill, contributed materially to the success of his flight in causing extensive loss to the enemy in personnel and equipment..."

The Letter of Commendation, with authorization to wear the Commendation Ribbon, by the Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet, was for action at Guadalcanal on August 7, 1942, when he was assigned to strafing of enemy antiaircraft targets.

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The Presidential Unit Citation was awarded the First Marine Division, Reinforced, with which his squadron served briefly, for heroic action on August 7 to 9, 1942 during landing assaults against a number of strongly defended Japanese positions on Tulagi, Gavutu, Tanambogo, Florida and Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands; and from that period to December 9, 1942 for holding their important strategic positions despite determined and repeated Japanese naval, air and land attacks, and by a series of offensive operations, driving the Japanese from the proximity of the airfield.

The USS *Yorktown* won the Presidential Unit Citation for "extraordinary heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces in the air, at sea and on shore in the Pacific War Area from August 31, 1943, to August 15, 1945..." The citation states that the *Yorktown* and her air groups struck crushing blows against the enemy's fighting strength, provided air cover for our amphibious forces, and inflicted terrific losses on the Japanese in fleet and merchant marine units sunk or damaged.

From May 1944 until February 1945 he served as Project Officer, Flight Test Division, at the Naval Air Test Center, Patuxent River, Maryland, and following ten months' service with Commander Naval Forces, Europe, during which he was a student, Empire Test Pilots School, returned for further duty at the Naval Air Test Center, Patuxent River. This time he remained on duty as Project Officer for three years. From January to June 1949 he was a student at the Air Command and Staff School, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, after which he was assigned to the USS *Valley Forge*, for duty as Executive Officer of Fighter Squadron FIFTY-TWO, during the period July 1949 to September 1950.

He served as Assistant to the Assistant Chief of Staff to Commander Naval Forces, Far East, from September through December 1950, then returned to Fighter Squadron FIFTY-TWO, based at the Naval Air Station, San Diego, California, as Commanding Officer. The next ten months that squadron, under his command, was based on board the carriers *Essex* and *Valley Forge*, successively, while operating under the United Nations Command in the Korean Area. He is entitled to the Ribbon for the Navy Unit Commendation awarded the USS *Valley Forge* and her Air Groups for Korean Service, and was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Fourth Air Medal for meritorious achievement from July 3 to August 1950, while serving as Executive Officer of Fighter Squadron FIFTY-TWO.

For three months he served as Assistant Safety Officer on the Staff of Commander Naval Air Force, Pacific Fleet, then from February to December 1952 was a student at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, where he completed the General Line course. In January 1953 he reported to the Navy Department, Washington, D. C., for a tour of duty in Air Warfare Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. Detached in January 1955, he had a year as Executive officer of Composite Squadron THREE, based at the Naval Air Station, Moffett Field, California.

From April 1956 until July 1957 he was at sea as Air

Officer of the USS *Kearsarge* (CVA-33), and in August 1957 became Commander Air Group FOURTEEN. He was ordered to the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, in July 1958, and served in the Fighter Branch after that Bureau and the Bureau of Ordnance were combined as the Bureau of Naval Weapons in January 1960. He was a student at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, during the 1960-1961 school year and in June 1961 joined the Staff of Commander Naval Air Force, Atlantic. In May 1963 he was again assigned to the Bureau of Naval Weapons where he remained until July 1964 when he transferred to the Office of Naval Material, Navy Department.

In addition to the Silver Star Medal; Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with three Gold Stars, Commendation Ribbon, and the Ribbons and Star for the Presidential Unit Citations and the Navy Unit Commendation, Captain Davidson has the American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal with star; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with seven stars; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal; China Service Medal (extended); National Defense Service Medal; Korean Service Medal; and the United Nations Service Medal.

Captain Davidson was married to the former Muriel Mindrum of Lanesboro, Minnesota, and had a daughter, Barbara Claire Davidson.

He was Captain of his College Track Team in 1940-1941, and was in Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities, 1941. Five years later he landed the FH-1 PHANTON on board the USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* for the first USN all-jet airplane carrier operations.