



Robert E. Dixon, Rear Admiral, USN

Robert Ellington Dixon was born in Richland, Georgia, on April 22, 1906, son of R. J. and Willie (Brown) Dixon. He attended Richland High School and Marion (Alabama) Institute, prior to his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from the Third District of his native state in 1923. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 2, 1927, he subsequently advanced in rank, attaining that of Rear Admiral, his date of rank July 1, 1955,

Following graduation from the Naval Academy in 1927, he remained there for the summer course in aviation, before reporting in October of that year aboard the USS *Richmond*, flagship of Commander Light Cruiser Division THREE, Asiatic Fleet. Detached from that cruiser in November 1929, he was ordered to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, for flight training. Designated Naval Aviator on July 28, 1930, he was assigned the next month to Scouting Squadron FIVE, aviation unit of the USS *Memphis*.

In August 1933 he returned to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, where he remained until June 1935, when he joined Fighting Squadron SIX as Gunnery Officer, attached to the USS *Saratoga*. He became Landing Signal Officer aboard that aircraft carrier in March 1937, and in June 1938 was assigned to the Experimental Division, Naval Air Station, Norfolk, Virginia. Transferred to the Naval Air Station, Anacostia, D. C., he served in the Flight Test Section until June 1940, when he assumed command of the USS *Avocet*.

Relieved of command of the *Avocet* in July 1941, he then became Commanding Officer of Scouting Squadron TWO (flying SBD-1's) based on the USS *Lexington*. He

was so serving when the United States entered World War II, December 8, 1941, and subsequently participated in the early actions of the war including the Battle of the Coral Sea (May 7-8, 1942), when the *Lexington* was sunk as a result of enemy action. For his services in the action of May 10, 1942, when planes from the *Lexington* and *Yorktown* struck at Lae and Salamaua in New Guinea from the Gulf of Papua, he was awarded the Navy Cross, and for his courageous devotion to duty during the Coral Sea action, he received a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Navy Cross. The citations follow in part:

Navy Cross: "For distinguished service...when, on March 10, 1942, in enemy waters, he led his squadron in a determined and vigorous dive bombing attack in the face of heavy enemy antiaircraft fire on enemy ships, sinking or crippling three of them."

Gold Star in lieu of Second Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism...in offensive action against enemy Japanese forces in the Coral Sea on May 7 and 8, 1942. With an enemy carrier as the objective, he led his squadron on a determined dive bombing attack in which Lieutenant Commander Dixon dove to a low altitude and, in the face of heavy antiaircraft fire and enemy fighter opposition, he dropped his bomb on the deck of the carrier, thereby aiding in the total destruction of that vessel. The next day, May 8, having sighted a vastly superior enemy Japanese air force, he remained on station to report its movements and disposition to his squadron, then engaged in search operations. These Scouting and bombing missions...were distinctive contributions to the ultimate victory attained by our forces."

After the loss of the *Lexington*, he was transferred to the *Yorktown* where he served for a brief period before being assigned to the Aircraft Carrier Training Group at the Naval Air Station, San Diego, California. In October 1942 he joined the staff of Commander Task Force 38, South Pacific, (later Carrier Division ONE), to serve as Operations Officer, until April 1944. During this period he served aboard the *Enterprise*, *Saratoga*, and the *Bunker Hill*, participating in most of the major carrier actions of the war.

"For exceptionally meritorious conduct (in the latter capacity)...during air strikes against the Buka-Bonis Areas Bougainville, British Solomon Islands, on November 1-2 and Rabaul, New Britain; on November 5, and 11, 1943..."he was awarded the Legion of Merit with Combat "V." The citation continues in part:

"Through his meticulous planning and thorough knowledge of air and task force operations, Commander Dixon contributed materially to the major success of vigorous strikes against the enemy which resulted in the destruction of important air bases in the Buka-Bonis Area, the infliction of severe damage on many hostile combat ships in Rabaul Harbor and the demolishing of numerous enemy aircraft. Commander Dixon's aggressiveness and gallant devotion to duty throughout this period were essential factors in the

success of our forces then occupying new bases in the North Solomons Area.”

He also received a Letter of Commendation with authorization to wear the Commendation Ribbon, from the Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet. The citation follows in part; "... By his extensive and practical knowledge of air and task force operations, by his careful planning, and by force of his aggressive and determined personality, he contributed to the successes attained by the task group in the following engagements with the enemy First Nauru Strike, 19 November 1943; Capture and Defense of the Gilbert Islands, 20 November to 6 December 1943; Second Nauru Strike, 9 December 1943; First Kavieng Strike, 25 December 1943; Second Kavieng Strike, 1 January 1944; Third Kavieng Strike, 4 January 1944; Capture and Occupation of the Marshall Islands, 29 January to 5 February 1944 including the first strike on Kwajalein and Ebeye Islands on 29 January 1944; the first carrier strike on Eniwetok and Engeibi Islands on 30 January 1944, and subsequently several denying strikes daily thereon, on 31 January and 1 and 2 February 1944, Truk Strike, 16 and 17 February 1944, and the Tinian-Saipan Strike of 22 February 1944..."

After a few weeks aboard the USS *Essex* (May-June 1944), he returned to the United States and reported as Head of the Military Requirements Division, Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. Continuing duty in the Department, he was designated in June 1945, Chief of the Aircraft Sub-Section, Aviation Military Characteristics, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. From August 1947 to June 1948 he served as Chief of Staff and Aide to Commander Carrier Division ONE, after which he commanded the USS *Palau*.

Relieved of command of the *Palau* in June 1949, he became Commanding Officer of the Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Cabaniss Field, Corpus Christi, Texas. He continued duty in that capacity until July 1950, when he reported as Director of Flight Test, Naval Air Test Center, Patuxent River, Maryland. He remained there until June 1952, and the next month assumed command of the USS *Valley Forge*, operating in the Korean combat area. He was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit with Combat "V," for "exceptionally meritorious conduct...as Commanding officer of the USS *Valley Forge* during operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea, from January 2 to June 5, 1953..." The citation continues in part:

"...Captain Dixon discharged his many responsibilities with marked skill and foresight and maintained the *Valley Forge* and its embarked air group in a high state of operational readiness at all times. Displaying a thorough understanding of the naval mission in the Korean conflict, he constantly improved operations until they were brought to the peak of efficiency, thereby applying the striking power of his ship against the enemy with maximum effectiveness. By continually maintaining a high degree of morale and fighting spirit among the officers and men under his command, Captain Dixon contributed immeasurably to the successful missions

carried out against the enemy..."

In April 1953 he was assigned to the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, and in August 1955 reported as Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics for Research and Development. A month later he transferred to duty as Assistant Chief of that Bureau for Plans and Programs. He continued to serve in that capacity until July 1956, after which he served as Commander United States Taiwan Patrol Force.

In February 1957 he was ordered to duty as Deputy and Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics, and on July 15, 1957 was sworn in as Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics, for a four year term. That Bureau was disestablished in December 1959. "For exceptionally meritorious conduct from January 1957 to November 1959 as Chief, Bureau of Aeronautics..." he was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Third Legion of Merit. The citation further states in part:

"...Rear Admiral Dixon rendered distinguished service throughout this period, contributing significantly to the development, procurement, readiness, and availability of naval aircraft and weapon systems. Through his vision, exceptional initiative, and technical skill, he markedly improved the effectiveness of the United States Navy in the areas of financial integrity of the naval aircraft program, improved business methods in aircraft procurement, new modern techniques of supply support under the Refined Aeronautical Support Program, and cost reduction. Vigorous and articulate in the support of the merger of the Bureau of Aeronautics and the Bureau of Ordnance into the Bureau of Naval Weapons, he actively participated in the initial planning phase. Rear Admiral Dixon's keen appreciation of both the technical and human problems involved was a major factor in the smoothness and speed with which the consolidation was effected..."

On January 2, 1960 he became Commander Carrier Division FOUR and following brief duty from October 1960 at Headquarters, Fifth Naval District, Norfolk, Virginia, was relieved of all active duty pending his retirement, effective December 1, 1960.

In addition to the Navy Cross with Gold Star, the Legion of Merit with two Gold Stars and Combat "V," and the Commendation Ribbon, Rear Admiral Dixon has the American Defense Service Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; American Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Korean Service Medal; and the United Nations Service Medal. He also has the Korean Presidential Unit Citation Badge.

He was married to the former Mary Cornelia Baldwin of Norfolk, Virginia, and they had one daughter, the former Cornelia Dixon, now Mrs. Robert X. McKee.