



George J. Dufek, Rear Admiral, USN

George John Dufek was born in Rockford, Illinois, on February 10, 1903, son of the late Frank and Mary (Earth) Dufek. In 1921 he was graduated from Rockford High School, where he was a member of the Reserve Officers Training Corps. He was appointed Midshipman from the Chicago-Rockford area, and entered the U. S. Naval Academy on August 16, 1921. Graduated and commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Navy on June 3, 1925, he subsequently progressed in rank to that of Captain on July 30, 1943. He was advanced to the rank of Rear Admiral on June 30, 1955, when he was placed on the Retired List of the U. S. Navy, and was retained in command status on active duty until August 31, 1959.

After graduation from the Naval Academy in June 1925 and two years' service as a junior officer on board the USS *Maryland*, a unit of Battleship Division 5, Battle Fleet, he was assigned to the submarine tender USS *Canopus*, as Assistant Navigator and Assistant Communications Officer. After a year in the *Canopus* he was offered an opportunity to serve in submarines. He became qualified in submarines in the USS S-39, one of the few officers earning submarine qualification without attending a submarine school. He remained on China Station until 1930, serving in the S-39 and her sister ship S-38.

Early in the year 1930 he was ordered to the pre-commissioning detail of the submarine V-6, later designated the USS *Nautilus*. Completing four years' service in submarines, he was ordered in 1932 to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, as a student in flight training. He was graduated in June 1933, having been designated a Naval Aviator on April

29 of that year, and was ordered to duty as Junior Aviator in the USS *Concord*. He remained in that light cruiser until 1936, when he was transferred to patrol plane Squadron 3, based on board the USS *Saratoga* (CV-3). In June 1938 he became Navigator of Scouting Squadron 3 of the *Saratoga*, and from December of that year until September 1939 served as Executive Officer of Scouting Squadron 3, based on the USS *Lexington* (CV-2).

In the spring of 1939 the Navy Department asked for volunteers for the forthcoming Byrd Expedition to the Antarctic. Dufek, then a Lieutenant, requested this duty by dispatch. His application accepted, he reported in September as Navigator of the USS *Bear*, flagship of the Navy's Antarctic Development Project ordered by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. During that expedition he was credited with a considerable number of hours of exploratory flying over the barren wastes of the South Polar Continent, and was awarded the Antarctic Expedition Medal (1939-1941), authorized by the President on September 24, 1945 and presented on November 29, 1946.

He was transferred in May 1940 to Jacksonville, Florida, to assist in the building and development of the new Naval Air Station there. Subsequently, as Commanding Officer of a training squadron at Jacksonville, he started the first students through flight training. Later while serving at Jacksonville, he received news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, and immediately requested overseas duty. He was assigned to London, England, as a Special U. S. Naval Observer for Aviation. There, from April 1942 until March 1943, his duties involved mission studies and exchange of professional information of assistance to our Allies.

In November 1942 he participated in the Invasion of North Africa, and served as Senior Naval Aviator in the Oran and Mers El Kebir areas. Following a brief period of duty on the Staff of the Commander of the Oran operation, he was ordered to the Staff of Commander Naval Forces, North African Waters (V. Adm. H. K. Hewitt), for duty as Senior U. S. Naval Aviator. At the Algiers Headquarters, he assisted in the preparation of plans for the successful invasions of Sicily and Salerno, Italy. After the latter invasion, that command Headquarters moved to Naples, Italy, where he assisted in planning for the Invasion of Southern France.

Detached in September 1944, he assumed command of the USS *Bogue*, which with six accompanying destroyers became an anti-submarine killer group operating in the Atlantic, and which were assigned the mission of combating the possible threat of German launchings from submarines of V-I and V-II weapons against heavily populated areas of the U. S. East Coast. The *Bogue* with her aircraft and her escorting vessels, had the honor of sinking the final German submarine lost in world War II, that operation the forerunner of the Navy's present-day highly specialized hunter-killer technique.

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Detached from command of the *Bogue* after the European fighting had ceased, he was ordered to the Pacific area for duty as Commanding Officer of the former Japanese Naval Air Base at Ominato, Northern Honshu, during the first phase of the occupation. He later commanded the Naval Air Transport Service Terminal at Kisarazu Airfield, near Tokyo. Returning to the United States in January 1946, he served until June as a member of the Navy Regulations Board in the Navy Department, Washington, D. C. He then was assigned duty as Chief Staff Officer to Rear Admiral (then Captain) Richard H. Cruzen, USN, named Commander of a U. S. Navy - U. S. Coast Guard Task Group about to depart for the Arctic to establish weather bases in the far Northern polar regions. While with Task Force SIXTY-EIGHT in the Arctic during the following summer, he was directed by the Navy Department to assist in making plans for participating in Operation HIGHJUMP, a projected extended Navy exploration and development of Antarctica. In November 1946 the thirteen ships of the Task Force sailed for Antarctica under the direction of Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd, USN, Retired.

The Eastern Group of three ships of the Task Force were directly under command of Rear Admiral (then Captain) Dufek. The mission of this group was to develop the unknown coast line between Little America and the Palmer Peninsula. Locating outside of the great Polar ice belt, the group operated seaplanes from the tender, USS *Pine Island*, and he made the first flight over the Thurston Peninsula in the Bellingshausen Sea. The second flight over the area was made by Captain Howard Caldwell, USN, Commanding Officer of the *Pine Island*, whose plane crashed on the peninsula. Rescue operations were hampered by bad weather, and it was not until the tenth day that the rescue plane discovered the wreckage and landed in water alongside the ice barrier. Three members of the crew had been killed in the crash; the remaining six survivors, including Captain Caldwell, were rescued. A letter of commendation, signed by Admiral Byrd and addressed to the Chief of Naval Operations, states in part, "...Captain Dufek's rescue of the six survivors is in many ways unequalled in all the history of polar rescues..."

Upon his return to the Navy Department in June 1947, Rear Admiral Dufek assisted in the preparation of the official report for Operation HIGHJUMP. In August of that year he reported as a student at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, also located in Washington, D. C. Completing the course on June 24, 1948, he was designated Commander Task Force EIGHTY, comprising a cargo ship and two ice-breakers, its mission to supply the existing weather stations and to establish new weather stations near the North Pole. Vessels of this Task Force achieved the distinction of going further north under their own power than any former vessel. An original document left by Commander (later Rear Admiral) Robert E. Peary, CEC, USN, in 1905, was recovered from a cairn on the north coast of Ellesmere Island, 450 miles from the North Pole.

Following his duty with Task Force EIGHTY, he again reported to the Navy Department, this time to assist Admiral

Byrd in planning for Operation HIGHJUMP II, which was intended to further develop the South Polar regions. After four months' work in the planning stage, the polar project was cancelled because of the retrenchment program instituted in the summer of 1948 by the Department of Defense. Rear Admiral Dufek was assigned in September 1949 to the Joint Staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and worked with the Logistics Planning Section until December 1950.

Ordered that month to the USS *Antietam* (CV-36), He commanded that ship from January 1951 until May 1952, including 79 days of intensive combat operations against communist aggression in North Korea. Operating as a unit of Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN, under command of Rear Admiral John Perry, the *Antietam*, with Air Group FIFTEEN embarked on board, established what is believed to be a new safety record for aircraft carrier operations under sustained combat conditions. In 5,728 combat missions flown, only three pilots were lost in combat.

Upon his return to the United States in June 1952, he reported as Commander Naval Bases, Fourteenth Naval District. Six months later he was detached with orders to the Pacific as Commanding Officer, U. S. Naval Station, Kwajalein. He remained there until September 1953, when he was transferred to command of the Naval Air Station, Whidbey Island, Oak Harbor, Washington. In August 1954 he was assigned to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, where he was designated Head of the Special Antarctic Planning Group. In March 1955, he became Commander Task Force FORTY-THREE, for the Navy's Operation DEEP FREEZE. In April 1959 he was assigned to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department. On August 31, 1959 he was relieved of active duty.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal with Gold Star, Legion of Merit with two Gold Stars and Combat "V," and the Antarctica Expeditionary Medal, Rear Admiral Dufek has the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; American, Asiatic-Pacific and European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medals; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal, Asia Clasp; National Defense Service Medal; Korean Service Medal; and United Nations Service Medal. He also has the Korean Presidential Unit Citation; the Croix de Guerre and the Legion of Honor, with rank of Chevalier, awarded by the French Government; and the Andre Medal, awarded by the Swedish Geographical Society.

Married in 1927 to the former Mrs. Muriel T. Bones, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David Lyon Thomson of Chevy Chase, Maryland, Rear Admiral Dufek had four children: Mary Ellen Bellit, Barbara Bones Phillips, George Cruzen Dufek, and David Frank Dufek.