



**Richard L. Fowler, Rear Admiral, USN**

Rear Admiral Richard Labbitt Fowler was born on 13 May 1913 in Fargo, North Dakota to Arthur W. and Mabel L. Fowler. He graduated from Fargo High School and attended North Dakota State College for one year prior to entering the U. S. Naval Academy in 1932.

Following graduation and commissioning as an Ensign on, 4 June 1936, RADM Fowler served aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Lexington* as gunnery officer from June 1936 to June 1938. In July 1938, he reported to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, for flight training. He was designated a Naval Aviator in August 1939 and was assigned to Scouting Squadron 71 which was based aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Wasp* from April 1940 to January 1941. In January 1941, RADM Fowler was assigned to NAS Pensacola as assistant, Flight Officer and Officer-in-Charge of the Gunnery School.

After leaving NAS Pensacola, he reported as Executive Officer to Composite Squadron 22 aboard the light attack carrier USS *Independence*. From September 1943 through January 1945, RADM Fowler was in command of Composite Squadron 5, and Carrier Division Air Group 26 attached to Task Unit 77.4.3. During this time his squadron participated in the battles of Saipan, Palau, Leyte Gulf and Iwo Jima.

From January 1945 to February 1947 RADM Fowler was Officer-in-Charge of Tactical Development Unit on the staff of Commander Fleet Air Wing, West Coast. He served as Commander Attack Carrier Group ELEVEN from February 1947 to June 1948 aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Valley Forge*. During this period, the USS *Valley Forge* made a world cruise lasting thirteen months.

July 1948 to January 1950 found RADM Fowler in the

billet of Air Officer on the staff of Commander, Operational Development Force. After graduating from Armed Forces Staff College in July 1950, he was assigned to the staff of Chief, Naval Air Advanced Training in Corpus Christi, Texas as Single Engine Training Officer until June 1952.

In July 1952, RADM Fowler reported aboard USS *Leyte* as Executive Officer and in March 1953 became Commanding Officer. During the period from October 1953 through September 1955 he was Assistant Operations Officer for air on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief, Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, in London.

RADM Fowler attended the National War College during the 1955-1956 year and after graduation was assigned to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air as Executive Aide. He left Washington, D. C. in May 1958 to become Commanding Officer of USS *Salisbury Sound* (AV-13). In October 1959 he assumed command of the aircraft carrier USS *Essex* (CVA-9) and stayed in that billet until September 1960.

On 20 October 1960, RADM Fowler reported once again to Washington, D. C. for duty as Executive Assistant and Aide to Chief of Naval Operations. In October 1961 he was named a member of the Net Evaluation Sub Committee of the National Security Council. In September 1962 he was ordered to Commander Naval Air Force, U. S. Pacific Fleet in San Diego as Chief of Staff and Aide.

On 23 August 1964, Rear Admiral Fowler assumed command of Patrol Force SEVENTH Fleet and U. S. Taiwan Patrol Force. Operating as "Watch Dog" of the SEVENTH Fleet, the Taiwan Patrol Force is the Naval component command of the U. S. Taiwan Defense Command. As Force Commander, Rear Admiral Fowler had operational control of all naval aircraft patrol squadrons in the Western Pacific as well as surface units assigned. A seaplane tender served as the Admirals Flagship. In September 1965 he became Chief of Naval Air Reserve Training, with headquarters at the Naval Air Station, Glenview, Illinois. Rear Admiral Fowler died on January 18, 1967 from injuries from a fire in his quarters at the Glenview Naval Air Station.

Rear Admiral Fowler holds the following decorations and service medals: Presidential Unit Citation to Task Unit 77.4.3: "For extraordinary heroism in action against powerful units of the Japanese Fleet during the Battle off Samar, Philippines, October 25, 1944. Silhouetted against the dawn as the Central Japanese Force steamed through San Bernardino Strait toward Leyte Gulf, Task Unit 77.4.3 was suddenly taken under attack...With one carrier of the group sunk, others badly damaged, and squadron aircraft courageously coordinating in the attacks by making dry runs over the enemy Fleet as the Japanese relentlessly closed in for the kill, two of the Unit's valiant destroyers and one destroyer escort charged the battleships point-blank and, expending their last torpedoes...went down under the enemy's heavy shells...The courageous determination and superb teamwork of the officers and men...of Task Unit

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77.4.3 were instrumental in effecting the retirement of a hostile force threatening our Leyte invasion operations..."

Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism as Commanding Officer of Composite Squadron FIVE, attached to the USS *Kitkun Bay*, during action against enemy Japanese Fleet units in the Battle off Samar on October 25, 1944. Organizing and leading an airborne attack against a major enemy surface force which was in a position to annihilate a friendly escort carrier Task Unit, Commander Fowler contributed materially to the sinking of a cruiser and to the turning back of the enemy...saving our forces from almost certain destruction...personally scoring three heavy bomb hits on an enemy battleship as his flight inflicted further heavy damage on the hostile force..."

Distinguished Flying Cross: "For extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight from 27 July 1944 to 13 August 1944...during which he completed his twentieth flight.

Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement in aerial flight as Group Commander, Flight Leader and Air Coordinator of a Carrier-Based Air Group during attacks against enemy Japanese forces on Saipan and Tinian from June 15 to July 2, 1944...(He) led and directed numerous daring air strikes against enemy shipping and land installations, contributing materially to the success of our forces in this area..."

The Gold Stars in lieu of the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth Air Medals were for a "series of meritorious acts while participating in aerial flight," from June 14 to 28, 1944; June 29, 1944 to July 2, 1944; July 2 to 26, 1944; September 15 to 18, 1944; and from September 20 to October 20, 1944, respectively,

Navy Commendation Medal (posthumously): "For meritorious service as Commander Patrol Force SEVENTH Fleet and Commander Vietnam Patrol Force, SEVENTH Fleet during the period March through August 1965. Rear Admiral Fowler provided and directed the Air Patrol which supported the United States anti-infiltration efforts of the Republic of Vietnam. His large-scale utilization of sea planes from an advanced seadrome provided highly effective surveillance coverage and released many shore-based aircraft for other missions. As Commander Vietnam Patrol Force, (he) was responsible for both the air and surface surveillance of the thousand-mile coast of Vietnam with the assigned task of preventing infiltration of armaments and personnel into the Republic of Vietnam by sea. In carrying out his duties, it was necessary for him to coordinate his operations with the United States Army and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam. His fine sense of diplomacy was a major factor in establishing the close relationship and cooperation which were essential to the execution of this opera

In addition to the Navy Cross, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with five Gold Stars, the Navy Commendation Medal and the Presidential Unit Citation Ribbon (Task Unit 77.4.3), Rear Admiral Fowler had the American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign

Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Service Medal with bronze star; Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Vietnam); and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon.

Rear Admiral Fowler is survived by his wife, the former Mederies Coburn of Lewiston, Idaho and Seattle, Washington, and three children, Mrs. Deanne Fowler Dutton, Julia E. Fowler and Richard C. Fowler.

### Duty Assignment Chronology

6/36-6/38	USS <i>Lexington</i> (CV-2).
6/38-8/39	NAS, Pensacola, FL. (Instruction).
8/39-1/41	Scouting Squadron 71.
1/41-3/43	NAS, Pensacola, FL.
3/43-8/43	XO, Composite Squadron 22 .
8/43-1/45	CO, Composite Squadron FIVE.
1/45-2/47	Staff, Commander Fleet Air, West Coast (OinC, Tactical Development Training).
2/47-6/48	Commander, Attack Carrier Air Group ELEVEN.
6/48-1/50	Staff, Commander Operational Development Force (Air Off.)
1/50-7/50	Armed Forces Staff College (Student)
7/50-5/52	Staff, Chief of Naval Air Advanced Training, NAS, Corpus Christi, TX. (Training Off.)
5/52-3/53	XO, USS <i>Leyte</i> (CV-32).
3/53-9/53	CO, USS <i>Leyte</i> (CV-32).
9/53-6/55	Staff, Commander in Chief, U. S. Naval Force, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (Air Ops. Off.)
6/55-6/56	National War College (Student).
6/56-7/58	Office of the Ass't Secretary of the Navy for Air, Wash., D. C. (Naval Aide).
7/58-9/59	CO, USS <i>Salisbury Sound</i> (AV-13).
9/59-10/60	CO, USS <i>Essex</i> (CVA-9).
10/60-10/61	Office of CNO (Executive Ass't & Aide)
10/61-10/62	Office of Secretary of Defense, (Staff Off., Net Evaluation Sub-Committee, NSC).
10/62-8/64	COMNAVAIRPAC (C/S and Aide).
8/64-8/65	Commander, Patrol Force SEVENTH Fleet/ Commander, U. S. Taiwan Patrol Force/ Commander, Fleet Air Wing ONE
8/65-1/67	Chief of Naval Air Reserve Training, NAS, Glenview, Ill.

### MEDALS AND AWARDS

Navy Cross  
Distinguished Flying Cross  
Air Medal with silver star in lieu of five subsequent awards  
Navy Commendation Medal  
Presidential Unit Citation awarded Task Unit 77.4.3  
American Defense Service Medal with Fleet Clasp  
American Campaign Medal  
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal  
World War II Victory Medals  
Navy Occupation Service Medal with Europe Clasp  
China Service Medal, and others.