



Dixwell Ketcham, Vice Admiral, USN

Dixwell Ketcham was born in Buena Park, Illinois, December 2, 1889, son of the late Frank DeHaven Ketcham and Mrs. Eliza Tuthill Ketcham. He was appointed to the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from the Tenth District of Illinois in 1916. As a midshipman he served in the USS *New Jersey* which operated with the Atlantic Fleet in the summer of 1918 (World War I). Graduated and commissioned Ensign in June, 1919 with the Class of 1920, his subsequent promotions were as follows: Lieutenant, junior grade, June, 1922; Lieutenant, June, 1925; Lieutenant Commander, June, 1935; Commander, November, 1939, Captain, June 18, 1942; Commodore, September 8, 1944; and Rear Admiral to rank from November 29, 1943. He transferred to the Retired List of the Navy on November 1, 1949, and was advanced to the rank of Vice Admiral on the basis of combat awards.

After graduation in 1919, he served in the USS *Chester* one year, then in the USS *Hale* until June, 1922. Aboard the USS *Wright* from Philadelphia to Pensacola, Florida, he reported to the Naval Air Station there for flight training. Designated Naval Aviator on December 21, 1922, he reported in January, 1923 to Aircraft Squadrons Scouting Fleet, and was assigned duty with Scouting Squadron ONE, attached to the USS *Wright* at Hampton Roads, Virginia. After assisting with fitting out the USS *Richmond*, he served with the aviation unit of that cruiser from her commissioning, July 2, 1923, until July, 1924, then rejoined the USS *Wright*.

Following duty at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, from October, 1925 to July, 1928, he joined Observation Squadron THREE (later redesignated Observation Squadron FIVE), aviation unit of the USS *Marblehead*. He served with this Squadron until November, 1929 when he was assigned duty

as Aide, Flag Secretary, and Flag Lieutenant on the staff of the Commander, Aircraft Squadrons, Scouting Fleet, USS *Wright* flagship. In November, 1930 he transferred to the staff of Commander, Carrier Division ONE, U.S. Fleet, who had raised his flag in the USS *Wright*, and served as Aide and Flag Lieutenant until June, 1931.

Duty with Training Squadron EIGHT-D5, at the Naval Academy, Annapolis, for three years from June 1931-1934, was followed by two years served with Fighting Squadron SIX based on the aircraft carrier *Saratoga*. He commanded that squadron from June 1935 until June 1936. The next two years he served in the Division of Fleet Training Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. In July, 1938, rejoining the, *Saratoga*, he served until October, 1940, with consecutive duty as Carrier Air Group Commander, as Air Officer, and as Operations Officer on the staff of Commander, Carrier Division ONE, of which the *Saratoga* was flagship. When detached from that assignment in October, 1940, he joined the staff of Commander Aircraft, Scouting Force, aboard the flagship USS *Hulbert* and served as Chief of Staff, Aide and Operations Officer until May, 1941.

From June, 1941 until August, 1943, he was at the Navy Department, on duty in the Plans Division, Bureau of Aeronautics. On August 28, 1943, at San Francisco, California, he assumed command of the USS *Chenango*, and joined the Pacific Fleet. During the year under his command, that carrier escort participated in operations for the Gilbert Islands in November, and thereafter for the Marshall Islands, Palau, Yap, Ulithi, Woleai, western New Guinea and the Marianas, and was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation, the citation stating in part: "For outstanding heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces in the air, ashore and afloat. Operating for long periods in the most advanced areas, the USS *Chenango* and her attached air groups penetrated hostile submarine-infested waters to seek her targets and to destroy or damage Japanese warships, aircraft, merchant craft and shore facilities. . . Attacking boldly by day and night in the face of heavy enemy resistance, the courageous officers and men of the *Chenango* achieved a notable record..."

Vice Admiral Ketcham was awarded the Legion of Merit with combat distinguishing device "V", and cited "For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services...as Commanding Officer of the USS *Chenango*, and Commander of a Task Unit, in action against enemy Japanese forces from August 1943 to August, 1944. Efficiently operating his ship and unit (he) raided a base deep in enemy waters and materially assisted in the support of the successful amphibious operations on New Guinea and the Marianas Islands

In September, 1944 he became Commander Fleet Air Wing ONE with the rank of Commodore. He was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of a second Legion of Merit with combat "V", "For exceptionally meritorious conduct...as Commander Fleet Air Wing ONE and as a Task Group Commander

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under Commander THIRD Fleet, during offensive operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Western Pacific, the Philippine and South China Seas, and in support of Central and Southwest Pacific amphibious operations, from September 10, 1944, to January 26, 1945. Commanding search units which conducted daily reconnaissance over waters where contact with the enemy was probable and in close proximity to enemy held territory and bases, (he) furnished timely information of enemy movements and, in addition, prevented discovery of our own forces during critical periods..."

He was also awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the third Legion of Merit with combat "V", for "...outstanding services to the Government of the United States as Commander of the Search and Reconnaissance Task Group of the FIFTH Fleet during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the forward areas of the Central Pacific from January 27 to April 20, 1945. With the forces under his command flying searches over sea areas extending to the coastline of China and the Empire in support of our amphibious operations at Iwo Jim, and Okinawa, (he) also provided offensive patrols covering the advance and retirement of our fast carrier forces into Empire waters, conducting many aggressive and determined attacks on enemy picket boats guarding the approached to the Japanese Homeland, and providing air-sea rescue services when required. Both at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, he moved his seaplanes to the objective area before regular base facilities were available in order to provide more effective patrols.

In the rank of Rear Admiral in May, 1945, he assumed duty as Commander Carrier Division TWENTY-SEVEN. At the end of the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign, he had participated in the operations for Tarawa, Kwajalein, Hollandia, the Palaus, Eniwetok, Saipan, Guam, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and Balipapan. The following September, aboard the USS *Santee* in company with five other escort carriers, this task force liberated more than twelve hundred Allied military personnel from prison camps on Formosa. Entering through uncharted mine fields to bring the first official word of Japan's surrender to the imprisoned men, they were guided by planes from the *Santee* into the port of Kiirun. Taking the ill and suffering men aboard, many of whom were survivors of the fall of Corregidor, Bataan and Singapore, the huge hangar decks were converted into hospital wards and living quarters during their transportation to Manila,

Assigned additional duty in November, 1945 as Commander Escort Carrier Force, Pacific Fleet, Vice Admiral Ketcham remained in this dual capacity until ordered in January, 1946 to duty as Commander, Carrier Division SEVENTEEN. Relieved of that command in January, 1947, he visited successively the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, U. S. Naval Academy, Navy Department, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Bureau of Aeronautics. In April, 1947 he reported as Commander, Fleet Aircraft, Alameda, California, and served in that command until November 19, 1948, when he reported for duty as Commander Carrier Division FIVE, Pacific Fleet. On September 14, 1949 again attached to Fleet Air, Alameda, he

served until relieved of all active duty pending his transfer to the Retired List of the Navy, November 1, 1949.

In addition to the Legion of Merit and two Gold Stars for the second and third Legion of Merit, and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon (USS *Chenango*) Vice Admiral Ketcham has the Victory Medal, Atlantic Fleet Clasp (USS *New Jersey*); the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; American Campaign Medal; Atlantic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two silver stars and one bronze star (11 engagements); the World War II Victory Medal, and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon.

His wife was the former Sara Bushnell Chapin of Englewood, New Jersey. They had three children, Mrs. Elizabeth K. Michael, John Tuthill Ketcham, and Fred Dixwell Ketcham.