



November 1942, Henderson Field, Guadalcanal



1998 - Harlingen, Texas

Archie G. Donahue, Colonel, USMCR (Ret.)
 “Archie”

Date of Designation: December 1941 NA # 09018

Dates of Active Duty: 2 March 1941 - 1 May 1958
 Retired from Reserves

Total Flight Hours: 4,200

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 110

Approximate Flight Hours:
 Prop: 4,200

Combat Tours:

- WW II: VMF-112, Grumman Wildcat and Vought Corsair (F4F-4 & F4U-1) over Guadalcanal
 - 159 missions
- WW II: VMF-451 (F4U-1), USS *Bunker Hill* - 56 combat missions

Aviation Commands:

CO, squadron at El Toro, 1945

Combat Awards:

- Navy Cross
- 3 Distinguished Flying Crosses
- 5 Air Medals

Duty Assignment Chronology

- 3-2-41 Joined Navy as Aviation Cadet. Rank Seaman 2nd Class. Went to Kansas City, Missouri and Jacksonville, Florida.
- 12-16-41 Graduated as an Ensign, Corpus Christi Naval Station.
- 2-16-42 Transferred to the Marines and was Commissioned 2nd. Lt. Posted to Quantico, Virginia for Fighter Directors School. Assigned to VMF-112 (Wolf Pack) North Island, California flying Brewster Buffalo's and F4F. Went to the Pacific aboard the

- 9-42 Luraline, stopping in New Caledonia for 1 week, then to Guadalcanal. Between September 1942 and June 1943, was credited with 9 confirmed victories (one in F4F-4 and eight in F4U-1).
- 5-13-43 Destroyed five Mitsubishi A6M3 Zero's in a single engagement.
- 6-43 Returned to the United States with VMF-112 at which time the unit was disbanded. Served as Flight Operations Officer at El Toro California.
- 1944 Assigned to VMF-451 and given the responsibility for making the unit carrier qualified.
- 2-16-45 VMF-451 began combat operations from the deck of the USS *Bunker Hill* carrying out fighter sweeps over Tokyo, Kure, Kyushu, Iwo Jima and Okinawa.
- 4-12-45 Credited with five victories in a single engagement in a dogfight over Okinawa.
- 5-45 Bunker Hill was attacked and severely damaged during a Kamikaze attack and was forced to retire with her Air Group from active combat. Returned to United States and was put in command of a Squadron at El Toro before being posted to Quantico, Virginia
- 7/1/51 Lt. Colonel
- 5/1/58 Colonel. Retired

Summary of Significant Career Events

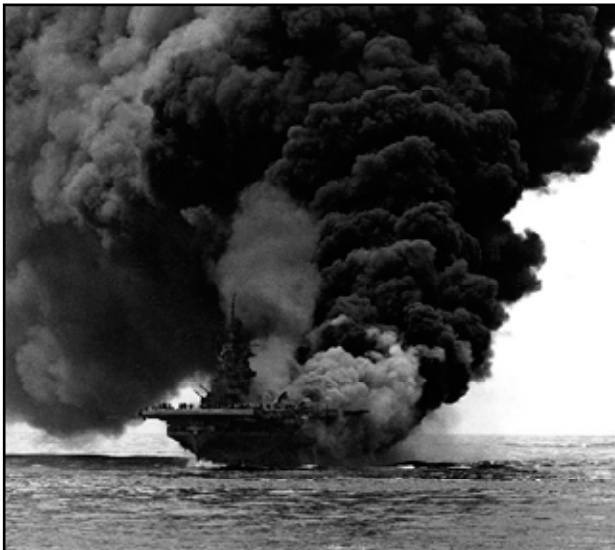
- (1) May 13, 1943, five Victories in a single engagement.
- (2) April 12, 1945 five Victories in a single engagement 14 confirmed victories
- (3) 1981 to 1991. Flight Operations Officer for the Confederate Air Force (which has been responsible for both restoring and maintaining many of the great war birds of WW II. Flew in “Tora, Tora” airshows flying the real Japanese Zero A6M3.

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Summary of Significant Career Events

- (4) 5/1979. Flew a mock zero (AT-6 in formation with F-14 Tom Cats during the filming of "The Final Countdown."
- (5) 4/90. Admiral Nimitz Museum, Fredricksburg, Texas, took Saburo Sakai, Japan's surviving leading Ace, with 64 victories to his credit for a ride in an SBD. An aircraft which shot him down during WW II.
- (6) July 21, 1999. Citation from Governor George W. Bush for 50 years in Real Estate as a Licensed Real Estate Broker.
- (7) Oct. 2000. Inducted into the American Airman Combat Hall of Fame.
- (8) A STORY OF SURVIVAL

Five minutes after returning from a morning Patrol Cap with a flight of 16 Corsairs, two Kamikaze's dived thru the afterdeck of the carrier USS *Bunker Hill*. At the moment of impact I was preparing to bunk out for a short rest, and had already removed my left leg from my flight suit when I heard the explosion. I immediately re-suited and scrambled toward the main deck.



Kamikaze hit, May 11, 1945

When I reached the port main deck of the Flagship *Bunker Hill* on the 11th of May, 1945, I saw catastrophic fires covering the after-deck. I was below the hanger deck when the explosions occurred and had just cancelled a "formal" debriefing of the flight because of "no activity" during the patrol. Fifteen pilots immediately left the debriefing area.

One pilot remained. Within 5 minutes the Kamikaze's struck. The pilot who remained to write a letter to his wife is among the 346 who died that day. Forty three were reported missing- 264 wounded.

After the attack, The *Bunker Hill*, severely damaged, was forced to retire from combat. She returned to the U.S. under her own power.

Our country honor's our fallen warriors as well as the survivors.

During peace time as well as war time many variables intervene in our daily lives - most of which we have no control.

"Each day in life
Is like a Carrier landing
If you can walk away from it
It's a good one"

Two thousand eight hundred and forty-five survivors walked away from the Bunker Hill May 11, 1945 as Tom Hanks said: "Have a good--life

Navy Cross Citation:

Major Archie Glenn Donahue, USMCR, for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For distinguishing himself by extraordinary heroism in operations against the enemy while serving as leader of a carrier based fighter division on Combat Air Patrol over Okinawa on 12 April 1945. After taking over the lead of two other fighter divisions in addition to his own, when the flight leader was forced to leave the formation, he skillfully and courageously led the flight into action against numerically superior enemy planes that were directing an attack against units of our shipping. As a result of his able and inspiring leadership the flight destroyed a total of sixteen enemy planes of which he personally shot down five. His prompt and effective action in routing the enemy not only removed a dangerous threat to our shipping but was also accomplished without loss to our own planes. His skill and courage were at all times inspiring and in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

M. A. MITSCHER,
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy.

Personal

Archie was born in Casper, Wyoming on October 24, 1917.

Archie and his wife Mary live in Harlingen, Texas. They have five children, eight grandchildren and four great grandchildren.