



Horace H. Epes, Rear Admiral, USN

Horace Hardaway Epes, Jr., was born in Washington, D. C., on August 10, 1917, son of Horace H. and Glenda R. (Millan) Epes. He attended the College of Engineering at New York University from 1934 to 1937 and on November 15, 1939 enlisted in the U. S. Naval Reserve. Appointed Aviation Cadet, USNR, on February 5, 1940, he had flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, and on October 26, 1940 was commissioned Ensign and designated Naval Aviator. He subsequently advanced in rank to that of Rear Admiral, to date from October 1, 1966, having transferred from the Naval Reserve to the Regular Navy on August 21, 1946.

Completing flight training in October 1940, he remained at the Pensacola Air Station for a month and in December, joined the USS *Augusta* for duty with squadrons based on board that cruiser. Detached in June 1941 he next served as Senior Aviator on board the USS *Cincinnati* and from January 1944 to June 1945 was Executive Officer and Fighter Pilot with Composite Squadron NINETY, based on the USS *Steamer Bay*. In that assignment he participated in the Philippine Liberation; the Luzon Invasion (credited with destruction of two Japanese aircraft) and the Iwo Jima and Okinawa Campaigns.

“For meritorious achievement...as Leader of a Division of Fighter Planes, in Composite Squadron NINETY... operating against enemy Japanese forces in the invasion of Luzon Island through Lingayen Gulf, on January 13, 1945...” he was awarded the Air Medal. The citation further states in part: “Alert and aggressive during a target combat air patrol (he) boldly intercepted a hostile dive bomber and pressing home a vigorous attack, blasted the Japanese aircraft out of the sky. By his resolute conduct and cool courage, he contributed materially to the success of his squadron in the fulfillment of an important mission...”

For completing twenty missions against enemy Japanese forces during the period January 6 to May 30, 1945, he was

awarded Gold Stars in lieu of the Second and Third Air Medals and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Detached from Composite Squadron NINETY in June 1945, he was next assigned as Project Officer in the Fighter Aircraft Design Branch, Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., and from July 1947 to June 1948 was a student at the Naval School, General Line, Newport, Rhode Island. In October 1948 he assumed command of Fighter Squadron THIRTY-THREE, based on the USS *Leyte*. Under his command that squadron had duty with the SIXTH Fleet in the Mediterranean and with Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN during the Korean hostilities, at which he took part in support operations of the FIRST Marine Division at Chosin Reservoir.

“For heroism and extraordinary achievement...as Pilot of a Fighter Plane and as Commanding Officer of Fighter Squadron THIRTY-THREE...during operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from October 10, 1950 to January 19, 1951...” he was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Distinguished Flying Cross. The citation further states: “Completing thirty-five missions during this period, (he) participated in strikes against hostile targets and, leading daring attacks, assisted in providing effective support for the landing at Wonsan, the redeployment of TENTH Corps forces and the defense of the EIGHTH Army’s line...” He was also awarded Gold Stars in lieu of the Fourth and Fifth Air Medals for “meritorious achievement in aerial flight in Korea...” from November 11 to December 23, 1950.

He is also entitled to the Ribbon for, and a facsimile of the Navy Unit Commendation awarded the USS *Leyte*.

In March 1951 he reported as Fighter Aircraft Requirements Officer in the Air Warfare Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, where he remained until February 1953. He next commanded Air Development Squadron FIVE and in May 1954 transferred to command of Carrier Air Group FIFTEEN, embarked in the USS *Yorktown*. That squadron had duty in the Far East, participating in SEVENTH Fleet operations in the Formosa area.

During the period January 1955 to February 1957 he was attached to the Naval Air Test Center, Patuxent River, Maryland, where he had test pilot training and also served as Assistant Director of the Service Test Division. Ordered to duty in connection with the fitting out of the USS *Ranger*, he joined that attack aircraft carrier as Operations Officer upon her commissioning, August 10, 1957. While so serving, he participated in Atlantic Fleet operations round the Horn. From August 1958 until June 1959 he attended the course in Naval Warfare at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, after which he served as Deputy Chief of Staff and Plans and Operations Officer to Commander SIXTH Fleet in the Mediterranean.

He commanded the USS *Thetis Bay* from November

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1961 until March 1963, participating in operations during the Cuban Crisis. In May 1963 he reported as Commanding Officer of the USS *Kitty Hawk* (CVA-63) and in April 1964 was detached for brief duty in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department. In August that year he was transferred to the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy Department and in February 1966 became Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Personnel Control. He commanded Carrier Division ONE from April 1967 until July 1968, and for “exceptionally meritorious service as Commander Carrier Division ONE and a Task Group Commander for Commander Task Force SEVENTY-SEVEN, from April 26 to July 1, 1967 and January 17 to June 8, 1968...” he was awarded the Legion of Merit. The citation continues in part:

“During these periods, Rear Admiral Epes was responsible for planning, coordinating, and executing combat air strike operations against enemy aggressor forces. He also served as Yankee Station Commander, providing day-to-day guidance to air and surface units of Task Force SEVENTY SEVEN. Following the seizure of USS *Pueblo* by North Korea, Rear Admiral Epes was designated Commander Task Force SEVENTY-ONE, in which capacity he was required to rapidly provide naval combat power in the Sea of Japan to respond to the aggressive actions of the communist leaders in North Korea. His superb planning ability permitted the U. S. Navy and the United States to move quickly in this critical period. The unique problems of operating a naval task force, in confined waters and close proximity to the Soviet Fleet, required the keenest judgment and professional knowledge. An extremely competent and forceful leader, Rear Admiral Epes constantly demonstrated precise control, enthusiasm, and sound judgment in directing combat operations against important military targets and lines of communications in North Vietnam...”

In July 1968 he became Chief of the Far East Division, J-5, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D. C. He was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit for duty in that capacity from July 1968 to July 1970. The citation follows in part: “...Rear Admiral Epes performed duties of great responsibility involving politico-military planning and policy matters of the highest importance to national security interests during a period of continuing crisis and wide-spread, active hostilities in Southeast Asia. In the numerous, diverse and complex interservice and interdepartmental actions for which he was responsible, Rear Admiral Epes’ performance was distinguished by practical vision, a breadth of view and an exceptionally high order of constructive thinking, objective judgment and dynamic leadership...”

In August 1970 he became Director of the Navy Space Program Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department and in March 1971 was designated Director of the newly-established Prisoners of War/ Missing in Action Task Force in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs), Washington, D. C.

In addition to the Legion of Merit with Gold Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross with Gold Star, and the Air

Medal with four Gold Stars, Rear Admiral Epes has the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon with Star (USS *Leyte* and USS *Enterprise*); the Meritorious Unit Commendation (USS *Ranger*); American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two stars; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal, Europe Clasp; China Service Medal; National Defense Service Medal with bronze star; Korean Service Medal with two stars; the United Nations Service Medal; Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Cuba); the Vietnam Service Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with two stars. He also has the Order of Prince Henry (Grand Officer) by Portugal; Legion of Merit, National Order of Vietnam, Fourth Class and the Gallantry Cross with Palm by the Republic of Vietnam; and the Korean Presidential Unit Citation Badge and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device.

He married the former Katherine Read of Pelham, New York.