



**William N. Leonard, Rear Admiral, USN (Ret.)**  
 “Bill”

Date of Designation: January 1941 NA # 6953

Dates of Active Duty: June 1934 - July 1971

Total Flight Hours: 4,087

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 329 Rotary: 7

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 1,326 Prop: 2,761 VF/VA: 2,600  
 VT: 150

Combat Tours:

WW II: VF-42/VF-3, USS *Yorktown* (CV-5), Dec. 1941 - Jun. 1942. Atlantic and Pacific Fleets - Gilbert Islands, Papua, New Guinea, Coral Sea and Midway.

WW II: VF-11, Aug. 1942 - Aug. 1943. Hawaii, Fiji and Guadalcanal.

WW II: Staff, Commander Task Force 38, Nov. 1944- Nov. 1945. Philippines, South China Sea, Taiwan, Okinawa and Japanese home islands: Kyushu to Hokkaido.

Total Missions - 170 (approximate) - Log Book #1 sank with the USS *Yorktown* on 6 June 1942). Planes - F4F-3/4, F6F-3/5, F4U-1/4.

Aviation Commands:

CO, VF-171 (FH-1, F2H-1 and F2H-2), Jul. 1948-Oct. 1950  
 CAG-17 (F2H-2, F4U-4/5, F2H-1, AD-4 and 4Q), Oct. 1950 - Feb. 1951.

CO, VX-5 (F2H-3, F7U-3, F9F-8, F3D-2 and AD-6), Jul. 1954 - Jul. 1955.

CO, USS *Ranger* (CVA-61), May 1961 - May 1962, WestPac deployed from 8/61 - 3/62.

Commander, Carrier Division Fourteen, Jul. 1965 - Jul. 1966. Atlantic Fleet.



Combat Awards:

2 Navy Crosses (Coral Sea and Midway battles)  
 3 Legion of Merit, 1 with Combat “V” device (TF-38)  
 Distinguished Flying Cross (Guadalcanal)  
 Bronze Star with Combat “V” device (TF-38)  
 5 Air Medals (Guadalcanal)

**Duty Assignment Chronology**

6/34-6/38 Midshipman, U. S. Naval Academy.  
 6/38-6/39 USS *Honolulu* (CL-48). Watch, Division Officer.  
 6/39-6/40 USS *Arkansas* (BB-33). 12” Turret Officer.  
 6/40-1/41 Flight training, NAS Pensacola, FL., and NAS Opalocka, FL.  
 1/41-5/42 VF-42 Pilot, USS *Ranger* (CV-4), USS *Wasp* (CV-7) and USS *Yorktown* (CV-5). Atlantic and Pacific Fleets, New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Coral Sea battle.  
 5/42-6/42 XO and Pilot, VF-3, USS *Yorktown*, USS *Enterprise* (CV-6), USS *Hornet* (CV-8). Midway battle.  
 8/42-8/43 VF-11 Pilot, Hawaii, Fiji and Guadalcanal.  
 8/43-11/44 Staff, Commander Fleet Air West Coast, Fighter Squadron Training Officer.  
 11/44-11/45 Staff, Commander Task Force 38. Philippines, South China Sea, Taiwan, Okinawa, Japanese home islands (Kyushu and Hokkaido).  
 12/45-7/48 Naval Air Test Center (NATC), Patuxent River, MD. - Tactical Test.  
 7/48-10/50 CO, VF-171 (CV-41, 42, 43, 47). Atlantic fleet operations.  
 10/50-2/51 Commander, Carrier Air Group 17. Mediterranean Sea.  
 2/51-7/53 Office of Secretary of Defense, Weapons Systems Evaluation Group.  
 7/53-7/54 XO, Air Development Squadron 3 (VX-3).  
 7/54-7/55 CO, Air Development Squadron 5 (VX-5).  
 7/55-4/56 XO, USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CVA-31)  
 - Continued -

## Duty Assignment Chronology continued

5/56-6/58 OPNAV (OP-55) - Air Warfare.  
6/58-6/59 National War College - Student.  
7/59-7/60 CO, USS *Salamonie* (AO-26). LANTFLT.  
7/60-4/61 Staff, COMNAVAIRLANT (Readiness and Operations), Norfolk, VA.  
5/61-5/62 CO, USS *Ranger* (CVA-61). WestPac deployment.  
6/62-10/63 Staff, SACLANT, Operations Officer.  
10/63-7/65 Staff, CINCLANT/CINCLANTFLT - Operations.  
7/65-7/66 Commander, Carrier Division 14. LANTFLT.  
8/66-1/68 OSD, Defense Research and Engineering, Director of Operational Test and Evaluation.  
1/68-7/70 OPNAV (OP-07), Assistant Deputy CNO for Development.  
7/70-7/71 Commander, U.S. Naval Safety Center, Norfolk, VA.  
7/71 Retired from active duty.

### **Summary of Significant Career Events**

- (1) Flew fighters from carriers 1941-45. Carrier qualified in F4U-1-4, F4F-3/4 and F6F-3-5. Operated in combat areas from CV-1, CV-3, CV-5, CV-6, CV-8, CV-14, CV-18, CV-19 and CV-38. For evaluation and demonstration, flew Japanese Zero A6M-1 (Type 21) and A6M-5 (Type 52) in adversarial flights with squadrons in training status.
- (2) As a pilot in Tactical Test Division, NATC Patuxent River, 1945-1948, flew projects in some 20 aircraft types including, P-59, P-80, P-51, RAF Mosquito, F6F, F7F, F8F, F4U, F2G, F8B, F15C, FH, FJ, XBT2D, AM, TBM, SB2C, PV, PBJ and PB4Y.
- (3) As CO, VF-171, 1948-50, took Navy's first deployable jet squadron to sea and thereafter on numerous operations/deployments until September 1950. Deployed in USS *Coral Sea* (CVB-43) to Mediterranean Sea in reaction to Korean conflict. Fleeted up to command of Air Group 17, completing deployment in February 1951. Carrier qualified F2H-2 (night), F4U-4/5 and AD-4.
- (4) As CO, VF-171 on TAD to OPNAV (OP-23), assisted (then) Captain Arleigh A. Burke present the Navy's case to Congress during the B-36 Controversy in fall of 1949. Showed during committee hearings that interceptors - Navy "Banshees" or Russian equivalents could expose the B-36 to sure destruction. This and other testimony put a halt to Army and Air Force attempts to replace Naval Aviation and its carriers with strategic bombers.
- (5) As XO of VX-3 and later CO of VX-5, was in the thick of pioneering flight operations to advance carrier capabilities, exploiting new equipment, aircraft, and weapons systems round the clock in all-weather and to greater combat ranges with in-flight refueling. Carrier qualified in F2H-3/4 and F9F-7.
- (6) While serving in OPNAV (OP-55), in 1956, was responsible for developing the military requirements document that brought into existence the A-6 all-weather attack airplane.
- (7) While serving in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Research and Engineering), worked with a small group that exposed flaws in the F-111 and F-111B of such severity that the Secretary of Defense cancelled the Navy's F-111B and permitted then the development of the F-14 "TOMCAT" in its place.