



1931

### **Robert Burns Pirie, Vice Admiral, USN**

Vice Admiral Pirie, Was, graduated, from the Naval Academy on June 5, 1926, Color Company Commander for the Class, of 1926. He, was designated Naval Aviator in June 1929, subsequently served at sea in the carriers *Lexington* and *Langley*, as Aide and Flag Lieutenant to Rear Admiral Alfred W. Johnson, USN, Commander Aircraft Scouting Fleet and as Senior Aviator onboard the cruiser *Raleigh*; as a flight test officer at the Naval Air Station, Anacostia, D. C., and as an instructor in the aviation training squadron at the Naval Academy.

In June 1938 he assumed command of the seaplane tender *Teal*, operating in Alaskan and Aleutian waters and in October 1939 became Executive Officer of Scouting Squadron 5-B, based on the carrier *Yorktown*. From late 1940 until the outbreak of World War II he was Superintendent of Training at the Naval Air Station, Miami, and when detached in September 1942, reported to the Staff of Vice Admiral Towers, USN, Commander, Air Force, Pacific Fleet. He was awarded the Legion of Merit for outstanding service as Assistant Air Operations Officer on the Staff from October 1942 until March 1943.

He next served as Executive Officer on the carrier *Mission Bay* from her commissioning, in September 1943 until May 1944 in Hunter-Killer operations in Atlantic waters, and returned to the Pacific for duty from July 1944 until March 1945 as Chief of Staff and Aide to Rear Admiral G. F. Bogan, USN, Commander Carrier Division 25 and later Commander, Carrier Division 4 in Admiral Mitscher's Task Force FIFTY-EIGHT. During this period he participated in the assault and capture of the Mariannas (Saipan, Tinian, and Guam); the assault and capture of Palau; the initial raid on the Philippine Islands, Okinawa, and Formosa; the Battle of Leyte Gulf; and the South China Sea Raid, January 1945. For services during this period he was awarded the Silver Star Medal; a second Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star Medal, both with Combat "V." He also is entitled to the Presidential



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Unit Citation, with stars for service in the carrier flagships *Fanshaw Bay*, *Lexington*, *Essex* and *Bunker Hill*.

During the final months of the war he served as Air Operations Officer on the Staff of Fleet Admiral E. J. King, USN, Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet, Washington, D. C., and in January 1946 returned to the Naval Academy as first head of the Department of Aviation. From March 1948 until July 1949 he commanded the carrier *Sicily*, after which he again returned to the Naval Academy, where he served this time as Commandant of Midshipmen. On February 12, 1952 he assumed command of the attack carrier *Coral Sea*, operating in European waters, and from December of that year until June 1954 served as Chief of Staff to Admiral Jerauld Wright, USN, Commander in Chief, U. S. Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, and later as Deputy Commander in Chief.

In August 1954 he was assigned as Deputy, Chief of Staff (Plans and Operations), and later served as Chief of Staff and Aide to the Commander in Chief, U. S. Atlantic Fleet. In March 1956 he assumed command of Carrier Division 6, which was deployed with the SIXTH Fleet in the Mediterranean from June to October 1956. He was Commander of the United States SECOND Fleet, and Commander Striking Fleet in the Allied Command, Atlantic, from July 3, 1957 until May 1958, when he became Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air), Navy Department.

#### DECORATIONS AND MEDALS:

Silver Star Medal; Legion of Merit, Combat "V"; Gold Star in lieu of Second Legion of Merit; Bronze Star Medal, Combat "V"; Presidential Unit Citation awarded USS *Fanshaw Bay* (Ribbon); Presidential Unit Citation awarded USS *Lexington* (Star); Presidential Unit Citation awarded USS *Essex* (Star); Presidential Unit Citation awarded USS *Bunker Hill* (Star); American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, with Silver Star (5 operations); World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal, Europe Clasp; National

- Continued -

Defense Service Medal and Philippine Liberation Ribbon with two stars.

CITATIONS:

Silver Star Medal: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity as Chief of Staff of Commander Task Group THIRTY EIGHT POINT TWO during the occupation of Palau and air attacks on the Philippine Islands, September 6 to 24; air attacks on Okinawa Jima, Formosa, and Luzon, October 6 to 20; during the Battle for Leyte Gulf, October 24 to 26; and air attacks on Luzon on October 29 and November 5 and 6, 1944. (His) Task Group was under sustained enemy attack on four occasions, but by expert maneuvering of the formation and superior performance of our planes in intercepting and fighting off attacking aircraft, no major damage to any ship was sustained...."

Legion of Merit: "For ... outstanding services to the Government of the United States...during operations against enemy Japanese forces off the coast of Luzon, Formosa and China, from November 7, 1944 through January 25, 1945. Assisting in planning operations against the enemy, Captain Pirie insured the effective employment of the full strength of the Task Group. As coordinator of operations he supervised the execution of missions by units of the Task Group, and contributed materially to their successful accomplishment. His courage under fire, leadership and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service."

Gold Star in lieu of Second Legion of Merit: "For...outstanding services as Assistant Air Operations Officer on the Staff of Commander Air Forces, Pacific Fleet, from October 1942 to march 1943. Directly responsible for discharging all functions of Fleet Air Wing multi-engined aircraft squadrons (he) capably supervised the preparation of these units for combat, skillfully controlled their movements until they reported for operational control by the fleet air wing commanders, and worked out the multitude of complex details involved in planning the rotation of personnel and aircraft ..."

Bronze Star Medal: "For meritorious achievement... during the assault and capture of the enemy Japanese-held Southern Marianas Islands, from June 14 to August 1, 1944. Exercising strong initiative and decisive judgement in the planning of aggressive support missions throughout the amphibious operations against these heavily fortified islands, (he) rendered invaluable assistance to his Commanding Officers... to provide effective aerial cover for our surface units during critical stages of the campaign..."

CHRONOLOGICAL TRANSCRIPT OF SERVICE

- 6/26-8/26 USNA (Instruction in Aviation).
- 8/26-6/27 USS *Dobbin*.
- 6/27-12/27 Naval Torpedo Station (Instruction).
- 12/27-7/28 USS *Barry*.
- 7/28-8/29 NAS, Pensacola, Fla. (SNA) Designated Naval Aviator, 6/25/29.
- 8/29-5/31 Fighting Squadron 3-B (USS *Lexington*

5/31-5/33

5/33-6/35

6/35-6/36

6/36-5/38

5/38-11/39

11/39-1/40

1/40-8/40

8/40-9/42

9/42-3/43

3/43-9/43

9/43-5/44

5/44-7/44

7/44-3/45

3/45-8/45

8/45-1/46

1/46-3/48

3/48-7/49

7/49-1/52

1/52-1/53

1/53-7/54

1/54-9/55

9/55-2/56

3/56-7/57

7/57 -

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and USS *Langley*).

Naval Air Station, Anacostia, D. C.

Aide and Flag LT. Staff, Commander Aircraft, Base Force.

USS *Raleigh* (Senior Aviator).

U.S. Naval Academy (VN8D-5 Squadron).

USS *Teal* (CO).

Bombing Squadron 5 (USS *Yorktown*).

Scouting Sqdn. 5 (USS *Yorktown*) (XO).

Naval Air Station, Miami, Florida (Supt. of Training).

Staff, Cdr. Air Force, Pacific Fleet.

SupShips, Tacoma, Wash., ffo USS *Baffins*.

USS *Mission Bay* (XO).

Staff, Cdr. Carrier Division 25 (Chief of Staff and Aide).

Staff, Commander Carrier Division FOUR (Chief of Staff and Aide).

Staff, Cdr. in Chief, U.S. Fleet (Air Operations Officer).

Office of Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department (OP-33).

U.S. Naval Academy (Head of Aviation Department).

USS *Sicily* (CO).

U.S. Naval Academy (Commandant of Midshipmen).

Chief of Staff and Aide, Commander U.S. Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean.

Deputy CINCELM (and Chief of Staff and Aide).

Deputy Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff (Plans & Operations) to CINCLANT.

Chief of Staff and Aide to CINCLANT.

CDR. Carrier Division SIX.

Commander, SECOND Fleet;

Commander, Striking Fleet, Allied

Command, Atlantic.

Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air), Navy Department.

PROMOTIONS

ENS - 6/3/26

CDR - 9/17/42

LT(jg) - 6/3/29

CAPT - 4/27/44

LT - 6/30/36

RADM - 7/1/53

LCDR - 7/1/40

VADM - 7/3/57

PERSONAL DATA

Born: Wymore, Nebraska, 18 April 1905.

Parents: Charles Bruce and Thelma Harms Pirie.

Wife: Gertrude May Freeman of New York City.

Children: Lieutenant (jg) Robert B. Pirie, Jr., USN (Class of 1955, USNA) and Sandra Pirie.

Education: Wymore High School (1922); USNA (BS, 1926); Flight Training, Naval, Air Stations Pensacola, FL; Torpedo Instruction, NTS, Newport, RI; Completed Naval War College Correspondence Course in Strategy and Tactics.