



**William Theodore Rassieur, RADM, USN**

William Theodore Rassieur was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on March 15, 1900, son of William R. and Augustina R. (Frisch) Rassieur. He attended Grover Cleveland High School in that city before enlisting in the U.S. Navy as a seaman in April, 1918. He served throughout the World War and was discharged in June, 1919 to accept appointment "at large" to the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland. While a midshipman he participated in football, baseball and wrestling. Graduated and commissioned Ensign in June, 1923, by subsequent promotions he attained the rank of Captain to date from May 1, 1943. On May 1, 1952 he was transferred to the Retired List of the Navy and advanced to Rear Admiral on the basis of combat awards.

After graduation in 1923, he joined the USS *Idaho*, serving in that battleship two years. In August, 1925 he reported for aviation and flight training in the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, and was designated Naval Aviator on April 24, 1926. Ordered to Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet, he was assigned duty with Scouting Squadron 1, based on the flagship *Langley*. He later served with Scouting Squadron 2 and with Utility Squadron 1 based on the *Langley*. In August, 1927 he was transferred to duty with Observation Squadron 1, aviation unit of the battleship *Tennessee*, and the next month, based on the *New Mexico*, operated with Aircraft, Battle Fleet. In March, 1928 he returned to duty with Utility Squadron 1 aboard the *Langley*.

From February, 1929, until April, 1931 he had duty at the Naval Air Station, Coco Solo, Canal Zone. The following June he joined Fighting Squadron 1, based on the USS *Saratoga*, and served with that squadron a year. From July,

1932 until May, 1933 he had instruction in aeronautical engineering at the Naval Postgraduate Schools Annapolis, and the next year continued the course at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, where he received the degree of Master of Science in June, 1934.

Assigned to Patrol Squadron 7 based on the aircraft tender *Wright*, he served the year June 1934-1935. He then served successively a year with Scouting Squadron 10 in the USS *Portland*, and a year as Executive Officer of Scouting Squadron 11 in the USS *Louisville*. From July, 1937 to May, 1940 he was attached to the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., Material Branch.

On May 25, 1940 he assumed command of Patrol Squadron 14, based at San Diego, California. In November, 1941 he was assigned duty as Air Officer of the USS *Curtiss*, and later had duty on the staff of the Commander, Patrol Wing 2. For his services in that assignment when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, T.H., December 7, 1941, he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with combat distinguishing device V. The citation in part follows:

"For meritorious service as Acting Executive Officer of the USS *Curtiss* during the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Shrewdly estimating the situation as he continuously patrolled the entire ships (he) rendered invaluable assistance by his periodic reports in persons enabling his commanding officer to "direct fire-fighting activities and effect the defense of the ship. In addition, he directed the rescue of the wounded and the recovery of the dead from isolated, damaged and burning compartments and . . . contributed materially to the reduction in fatalities among the crew. . ."

Detached from the *Curtiss* in September, 1942, he had duty in connection with the establishment of the Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, Maryland, under the Potomac River Naval Command in Washington, D.C., and was Commanding Officer of that station from September, 1942 until January, 1944. While so serving he had temporary detached duty with the U.S. Naval Forces in Europe in April, 1943. He received a Letter of Commendation "For outstanding performance of duty....from September 21, 1942 to January, 1944," and stating further: "By his broad vision, careful planning and sound judgment, (he) rendered invaluable service in establishing this vital activity and, in placing it in operation within a minimum of time despite the difficult conditions imposed by the national emergency..."

In January, 1944 he was assigned duty with the pre-commissioning detail at Kaiser-Vancouver Company, Inc., attached at the Naval Air, Station, Astoria, Washington, in charge of fitting out the USS *Shipley Bay*, (CVE-85), and the USS *Sargent Bay* (CVE-83). He commanded the latter carrier escort from her commissioning, March 21, 1944, until March, 1945. For his outstanding services in that command during operations at Iwo Jima from February 10 to March 11, 1945, he was awarded the Legion of Merit with Combat V.

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The citation, in part states: "During this period of intensified and hazardous operations against the enemy, (he) ably fought his ship and directed the aircraft based on his vessel in inflicting extensive damage on the enemy. By his leadership and professional skill, he aided greatly in providing effective support to our amphibious forces and our troops ashore, thereby contributing materially to the successful completion of this campaign,

In April, 1945 he reported in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, and was assigned duty as Chief of the Aviation Military Characteristics Section of that office. Detached from that assignment, he assumed command of the aircraft carrier Kearsarge, and served the year January, 1947-1948. He then received orders returning him to Washington, D.C., for duty on the joint staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

When detached, he reported to the Commander in Chief, Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, for duty as Commander Middle Eastern Force, in the Persian Gulf, where he served from February to September, 1950. Reporting in the Navy Department, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, after two months he was ordered to the 14th Naval District, Pearl Harbor, for duty as Commander, Naval Bases of that district, with additional duty in command of the Naval Air Station, Barber's Point, Oahu, T.H. He was so serving when relieved of active duty pending his retirement on May 1, 1952.

In addition to the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, both with Combat V, the Commendation Ribbon and Purple Heart Medal (for wounds received in action), Rear Admiral Rassieur has the Victory Medal; the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with four engagement stars; World War II Victory Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with two stars.

He was married to the former Miss Ruby Irene Holzapple of Hutchinson, Kansas.