



Ralph L. Shifley, Vice Admiral, USN

Date of Designation: 17 November 1937

Ralph Louis Shifley was born in Mounds, Illinois, on October 26, 1910, was graduated from Cairo (Illinois) High School, attended the University of Illinois for a year, and entered the U. S. Naval Academy from his native state on June 13, 1929. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 2, 1933, he was designated Naval Aviator on November 17, 1937, and attained the rank of Vice Admiral, USN, on September 1, 1967. He completed the Naval War College course in Strategy and Tactics in June 1952.

During the period July 1933 to December 1936, he served at sea in the cruisers *Memphis* and *Astoria* and after flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, served in the aviation unit of the cruiser *Savannah*, and subsequently had duty as her Senior Aviator. At the outbreak of World War II, he was an Instructor at the Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, and after his detachment in May 1942, was assigned successively as Executive Officer of the Naval Air Gunners School, Hollywood, Florida, and as Air Gunnery Training Officer on the Staff of the Chief of Naval Air Operational Training.

In June 1943 he assumed command of Bombing Squadron EIGHT, and from May to November 1944 was Commanding Officer of Air Group EIGHT, operating with Admiral Mitscher's Task Forces THIRTY-EIGHT and FIFTY-EIGHT. For "extraordinary heroism as Pilot of a Fighter plane and Commander Air Group EIGHT, attached to the USS *Bunker Hill*, in the First Battle of the Philippine Sea..." he was awarded the Navy Cross. He was four times awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and three times awarded the Air Medal, and is entitled to the Ribbon for the Presidential Unit

Citation to the USS *Bunker Hill*.

During the last eight months of the war he served as Superintendent of Aviation Training at the Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, and in June 1947 he again went to sea, serving successively as Air Officer and Executive Officer of the carrier *Randolph*, as Operations Officer of the carrier *Leyte*, and as operations Officer on the Staff of Commander Air Force, Atlantic Fleet. After completing the Naval War College course in June 1952, he was assigned for two years to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (Aircraft Programs), then served as Deputy Chief of Staff to the Commander SIXTH Fleet in the Mediterranean.

In August 1956 he reported as Commanding officer of the USS *Badoeng Strait*, and in February 1957 returned to the office of the Chief of Naval Operations, where he served from May of that year until July 1958 as Executive Assistant and Senior Aide to the Chief of Naval operations. He next commanded the attack aircraft carrier *Franklin D. Roosevelt* and in August 1959, was assigned as Assistant Director of the Aviation Plans Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

The President approved his selection for the rank of Rear Admiral in July 1960 and in October of that year he became Director of the Aviation Plans Division. He was Commander Carrier Division SEVEN from May 1962 until April 1963 when he was assigned to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. Two months later on 1 June 1963 he was assigned to duty with the Chief of Naval Material to assist in the planning for the organization of the Naval Material Support Establishment. Upon its activation in December 1963 he was ordered as Vice Chief of Naval Material with additional duties as Deputy Chief of Naval Material (Programs and Financial Management). In September 1965 he was relieved of his additional duties as Deputy Chief of Naval Material, but continued his primary assignment as Vice Chief until August 1967. "For exceptionally meritorious service from June 1963 to August 1967..." he was awarded the Legion of Merit.

Promoted to the rank of Vice Admiral on 1 September 1967, he assumed duties as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Logistics),

PROMOTIONS:

Commissioned Ensign, June 1, 1933
Lieutenant (junior grade), June 1, 1936
Lieutenant, July 1, 1940
Lieutenant Commander, October 1, 1942
Commander, January 1, 1944
Captain, July 1, 1951
Rear Admiral, July 1, 1961
Vice Admiral, September 1, 1967

DECORATIONS AND MEDALS:

Navy Cross
Legion of Merit

- Continued -

DECORATIONS AND MEDALS continued

Distinguished Flying Cross, with three gold stars
Air Medal, with two gold stars
Presidential Unit Citation (USS *Bunker Hill*)
American Defense Service Medal
American Campaign Medal
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, five operation stars
World War II Victory Medal
Navy Occupation Service Medal
National Defense Service Medal, with service star
Vietnam Service Medal
Spanish Naval Order of Merit Third Class
Philippine Liberation Ribbon
Philippine Republic, Presidential Unit Citation

CITATIONS:

Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism as Pilot of a Fighter Plane and Commander Air Group EIGHT, attached to the USS *Bunker Hill*, during action against warships of the enemy Japanese Fleet in the First Battle of the Philippine Sea, on June 20, 1944. Gallantly leading his strike group at extreme combat radius to attack major hostile Fleet units, Commander Shifley pressed to within point-blank range of his targets in bold defiance of fierce fighter opposition and intense antiaircraft fire from guns of all calibers including Japanese battleship and cruiser main battery fire, directing his group in a closely timed and well coordinated strike to inflict extensive and costly damage on hostile warships and, at the same time flying through the intense shellfire to obtain valuable photographs of the fierce action. Exerting every effort to protect aircraft of his group from enemy air attack during the engagement, he valiantly led his two-plane section against seven Japanese fighters and, striking furiously despite the tremendous odds, succeeded in blasting one from the sky, in probably destroying another and in damaging a third..."

Legion of Merit: "For exceptionally meritorious service from June 1963 to August 1967 as Vice Chief of Naval Material. Through his outstanding professional competence, effective leadership, and devotion to duty...was instrumental in the development and implementation of concepts and organization necessary for the establishment of a truly integrated Naval Material support system fully responsive to the complex material acquisition and support needs of the Navy and Marine Corps. His accomplishments in the creation and development of the Naval Material Command have immeasurably contributed to the improvement of the material readiness of the Naval Service..."

Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement ... as Commanding Officer of Bombing Squadron EIGHT, attached to the USS *Bunker Hill*, and Pilot of a dive bomber during operations against enemy Japanese shipping and shore installations at Palau, Woleai, Hollandia and Truk Islands, in March and April 1944...(he) inflicted extensive damage on enemy war and merchant vessels, grounded aircraft, hangars, runways, fuel dumps, buildings and gun positions...(he) inspired the members of his Squadron to an exceptionally high degree of achievement..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Second Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement... as Task Force Target Evaluator and Task Group Strike Leader, attached to Air Group EIGHT, operating from the USS *Bunker Hill*, during action...in the Philippine Islands Area from September 9 to September 24, 1944. By capable and efficient planning while over the target, (he) organized his forces and assigned targets to destroy or damage large numbers of enemy aircraft and numerous ground installations, and to inflict extremely heavy shipping losses upon the enemy. On September 21, he personally attacked and shot down one enemy plane and damaged another..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Third Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement...as Commander Air Group EIGHT and as Pilot of a Fighter Plane, attached to the USS *Bunker Hill*, during operation... in the Nansei Shoto, Formosa and Philippine Islands Areas, from October 10 to 22, 1944... during strikes against enemy aircraft, installations and shipping, (he) skillfully directed the attacks assigning and changing targets as the situation required... he personally shot down one hostile fighter, destroyed another on the ground, bombed and severely damaged a medium cargo ship, and strafed a destroyer escort..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Fourth Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement... as Commanding Officer of Bombing Squadron EIGHT, attached to the USS *Bunker Hill* during operations against enemy Japanese forces during the period from July 27 to September 8, 1944. Completing his twentieth mission, (he) led bombing and strafing attacks against hostile shipping and ground installations, thereby contributing materially to the success of his Squadron..."

PERSONAL DATA:

Born: Mounds, Illinois, October 26, 1910
Parents: M. M. Shifley and Mrs. Elizabeth Hawkins Shifley
Wife: Frances Ellen Norman of Demster, New York
Daughter: Mrs. Susan Shifley Cox
Education: Mounds and Cairo High Schools; University of Illinois, Urbana, one year; U.S. Naval Academy (BS, 1933); Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Fla. (Designated Naval Aviator, December 23, 1937); Naval War College, Newport, R. I. (Strategy and Tactics), 1952.

VADM Shifley died of cancer at his home in Washington, D. C. on January 5, 1995.