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Donald F. Smith, Captain, USN

Captain Smith was born in Timmonsville, South Carolina, June 2, 1900, the son of the late Charles A. Smith, former Governor of South Carolina, and Mrs. (Fannie Byrd) Smith. He was graduated from Timmonsville High School and attended Wilmer and Chews Preparatory School, Annapolis, Maryland, before his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy from the Sixth District of South Carolina in 1917. While a Midshipman he qualified as an expert rifleman, was a member of the lacrosse squad, and during the summer of 1918 served in the USS *Maine* which operated with the Atlantic Fleet during the World War. Graduated and commissioned Ensign in June, 1921, he was subsequently advanced through the grades to Captain, to rank from June 20, 1942.

After graduation in 1921, Captain Smith served two years in the USS *Utah* before he joined the newly commissioned minesweeper USS *Penguin* at Pearl Harbor. He remained on duty on Asiatic Station until December, 1925, and during this period while serving in the USS *Palos*, was an armed guard officer with forces ashore in the Yangtze River Valley. Returning to the United States, he served in the destroyers USS *Sharkey* and USS *Worden* before he reported at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, for flight training. Designated naval aviator June 1, 1927, he has served continuously with naval aviation since that time, with and in command of squadrons based on the USS *Langley*, as an instructor at Pensacola, with patrol squadrons at Coco Solo, Canal Zone, and as commanding officer of a squadron based on the USS *Lexington*

Captain Smith was Commander of the Naval Reserve Aviation Base at New York, New York from June, 1939 until April, 1941, when he was transferred to duty as Commander of the New York Naval Air Station, continuing in command of the Reserve Base. Returning to sea duty, he was navigator of the USS *Wasp* from August, 1941 until September 7, 1942, being detached just eight days before the loss of that aircraft carrier in the Solomon Islands area while she was assisting

in protecting the supply lines at Guadalcanal. Following command of the USS *Wright*, Captain Smith became the first Director of the Naval Air Transport Service in the Pacific Area, serving in this assignment from April to October, 1943, when he was named Director, Naval Air Transport Service, Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air), Navy Department, Washington, D.C. He was the first Commander of Naval Air Transport Service in the Pacific Area and Director of one of the greatest fleets of transport airplanes ever in existence to assume a command at sea. He inaugurated the Naval Air Transport Service in the Pacific for the purpose of extending and integrating functions previously performed by an inadequate emergency service. For services in that assignment he received a Letter of Commendation with the authorization to wear the Commendation Ribbon with the following citation:

LETTER OF COMMENDATION

“For exceptional services as the first Commander of the Naval Air Transport Service in the Pacific Area from April to October, 1943. With broad vision and sound judgment, Captain Smith inaugurated the Naval Transport service for the purpose of extending and integrating the functions which had been performed by an inadequate emergency service. Through his tireless efforts in fostering this necessary organization and the application of his singular technical knowledge, new bases were established and the services in this area grew from desultory flights accomplished on an irregular basis to well ordered flights maintained on rigid schedules. Captain Smith’s devotion to his cause and skillful performance of duty throughout this period laid the ground work for the success and effectiveness of the Naval Air Transport service in the Pacific Area.”

Under the efficient and personal supervision of Captain Smith the Naval Air Transport Service, which he directed from October, 1943, to December, 1944, expanded during this period from approximately 65,000, route miles flown to more than 85,000 route miles, exclusive of the flights of the Naval Air Ferry Command established in January, 1944, under his supervision. Naval Air Transport Service (NATS), organized December 12, 1941, under authorization of the Secretary of the Navy, flew mail, personnel, and vital supplies to the fleet on far flung battle fronts on regular schedule. An exceptional safety record has been established despite the fact planes were landed on fields where the Japanese still threatened. In addition, NATS maintained a flying ambulance service for-World War II war casualties. In December, 1944, he was ordered to duty in connection with fitting out the USS *Boxer*, assuming command when that aircraft carrier was commissioned on April 17, 1945.

Relieved of command of the *Boxer* on June 3, 1946, and ordered to duty as Commander, Naval Air Bases, Saipan, with additional duty as Island Commander, Saipan, and further additional duty from August 1946 as Chief Military Governor of other islands in that vicinity, including Tinian, Guam and Rota. He returned to the United States in October 1947, and following temporary duty with Fleet Air, West

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Coast, proceeded to the Naval Air Station, Anacostia, D.C. for duty. On January, 27, 1948 he reported for duty as Commanding Officer, Naval Air Station, Quonset Point, Rhode Island.

In addition to the Letter of Commendation with Ribbon, Captain Smith has the Navy Expeditionary Medal (member landing force ashore, Yangtze River, 1924-25); the American Defense Service Medal with bronze "A" (for service in the USS *Wasp* which operated in actual or potential belligerent contact with Axis Forces in the Atlantic Ocean, September 23 - October 17, 1941); the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal; the American Area Campaign Medal and the World War II Victory Medal.

He was married to Mrs. Sophie Thompson Smith and their home of record is Timmonsville, South Carolina.