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CAPTAIN HOWARD VANIMAN HOPKINS, U.S. NAVY

Howard Vaniman Hopkins was born in Denver, Colorado, September 9, 1900, son of the late Barton A. and Gertrude W. Hopkins. He attended South Denver High School, and the University of Colorado for two years before receiving an appointment to the United States Naval Academy in 1920. He was a member of the wrestling team all four years while a midshipman. Graduated and commissioned Ensign in June, 1924, he subsequently advanced in grade to the rank of Captain to date from June 1, 1943.

After his graduation in 1924 he was attached to the USS WEST VIRGINIA until the end of 1925. Ordered to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida for flight instruction, he was designated a Naval Aviator in 1926, and when detached in the spring of 1927 he was assigned to Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet, for service with Fighting Squadron 6, Bombing Squadrons 2 and 3, successively, aboard the USS LANGLEY, USS SARATOGA, and USS LEXINGTON. In January, 1930 he returned to Pensacola, for further instruction, and later for duty there, serving until early in 1933.

Returning to duty at sea, he was assigned to the USS OKLAHOMA, and was attached to the aviation unit aboard that battleship at San Pedro, California, until July, 1936. He then reported for duty as Gunnery and Navigation Officer of Patrol Squadron 10F, with Aircraft Squadrons based at Pearl Harbor, T.H. Again reporting aboard the USS SARATOGA, he was assigned to Bombing Squadron 3 for one year, and when that squadron was transferred in 1939 to the USS RANGER of Atlantic Squadrons at Norfolk, Virginia, he continued in that duty, also later serving with Patrol Squadron 4, as Commanding Officer of Bombing Squadron 4, and as Commanding Officer of Scouting Squadron 41 based on the RANGER.

Ordered to the Navy Department, Washington, D.C. in the fall of 1941, he served in the Bureau of Aeronautics until May, 1943. The following year he was Deputy Commander of Fleet Air Wing 10 based in western Australia. From June to November, 1944 he served as Assistant Chief of Staff, Logistics Section, on the staff of Commander Aircraft, Seventh Fleet. He was awarded the Legion of Merit with combat distinguishing device, V, "For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service . . . during the period from July 4 to November 17, 1944." The citation further states; "Responsible for the planning and administering of the logistic support of Naval and Marine air units in the Southwest Pacific Area, Captain Hopkins contributed materially to the fulfillment of the needs of the Fleet aviation units and to the success of our operations in the area. . ."

He assumed command of the USS MARCUS ISLAND, and served from February to November, 1945 in that command. That vessel and her attached air squadrons participated in the assault and capture of Okinawa Gunto, March 21 to April 29, 1945. The Navy Unit Commendation awarded to that carrier escort states: ". . . In periods of crisis she carried out the missions of disabled ships in addition to her own, servicing, rearming and launching their planes. Her notable record of service and combat achievement reflects the highest credit upon her courageous officers and men and upon the U.S. Naval Service."

He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat V, also for that period of service, the citation stating that "... his leadership and resourcefulness contributed to the outstanding record achieved by his vessel and its attached aircrew in the notably high percentage of aircraft availability and the proficient teamwork of officers and crew. . . ."

Upon returning to the United States, he reported to the Naval Air Station, Corpus Christi, Texas, in December, 1945, as Prospective Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Technical Training there, but he was detached the following February, and from March to June, 1946 he was Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Technical Training Command at Norman, Oklahoma, followed by similar duty in Jacksonville, Florida, from June, 1946 to July, 1947. From August, 1947 to May, 1948, he was Chief of Staff to the Commander, Naval Air Technical Training Command, Memphis, Tennessee.

He served a year as Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Station, in Agana, Guam, and when relieved in September, 1949, he assumed command of the USS SAIPAN, aircraft carrier, attached to the Pacific Fleet, serving until the end of 1950. Reporting in the Navy Department, he served the year January, 1951-1952 in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Naval Intelligence Division, as head of a branch. He then reported for duty as Chief of Staff and Aide to Commander, Fleet Air, in Jacksonville, Florida, where he is presently serving.

In addition to the Legion of Merit and Bronze Star Medal each with Combat V, and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, Captain Hopkins has the American Defense Service Medal with bronze star; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with three bronze stars; Philippine Liberation Ribbon with bronze star; and World War II Victory Medal.

Captain Hopkins' wife is the former Elizabeth Perkins of Denver, Colorado. They now reside in Jacksonville, Florida.

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