

CAPTAIN VAN VERNON EASON, JR., U. S. NAVY

Van Vernon Eason, Jr., was born in Columbus, Mississippi, on June 27, 1919, son of Van V. and Nell C. (Vaughan) Eason. He attended Mississippi State College, from which he was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering, and was subsequently employed as an engineer by the U. S. Government. Prior to entering the Naval Service on May 11, 1940, he was a member of the Army Reserve Officers Training Corps (in college), Coast Artillery Corps for four years. An Aviation Cadet during the period May 1940 until June 1941, he was designated a Naval Aviator and commissioned Ensign, USNR, on April 3, 1941. By normal advancement and his transfer from the Naval Reserve to the U. S. Navy in 1944, he attained the rank of Captain, USN, to date from July 1, 1960.

After flight training at the Naval Air Stations, Miami and Pensacola, Florida, he was assigned from June 1941 to July 1943 as a Flight Instructor at the Naval Air Station, Corpus Christi, Texas. He then joined Torpedo Squadron TEN, based on the USS ENTERPRISE, and served as Squadron Executive Officer until August 1944. While so assigned he led the first organized night air strike to be launched from a carrier, at Truk in the Carolines in 1944, and was flight leader on the only strike of the First Battle of the Philippine Sea in June 1944. His plane was damaged, ditched, and he was picked up by the USS COGSWELL.

He is entitled to the Ribbon for the Navy Unit Commendation awarded the USS ENTERPRISE and her Air Groups for heroic service in the Pacific Area (including Truk, Marianas, Marshalls, and others in 1944). He was personally awarded the Navy Cross, Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal, with citations, in part, to follow:

Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism as a Pilot in Torpedo Squadron TEN, attached to the USS ENTERPRISE, in action against enemy Japanese forces, in the vicinity of the Marianas Islands, during the First Battle of the Philippine Sea, on June 20, 1944. An aggressive combat pilot, Lieutenant (junior grade) Eason led a flight of torpedo bombers in a daring strike against the main Japanese Fleet and, selecting an enemy carrier as his target, he pressed home fierce attacks in the face of ferocious fighter opposition and devastating antiaircraft fire from surrounding Japanese warships. Skillfully maneuvering antiaircraft fire from surrounding Japanese warships. Skillfully maneuvering his plane to attain maximum striking power, he enabled his gunner to shoot down one attacking enemy plane, and personally scored two direct hits on the enemy carrier with terrific resultant explosions, thereby assisting essentially in the probable destruction of this important unit of the Japanese Fleet...(contributing) materially to the success of our operations in this historic engagement..."

Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight as Pilot of a Torpedo Plane in Torpedo Squadron TEN, during operations against enemy Japanese shipping at Truk Atoll,

He reported to Commander Carrier Division SIXTEEN as Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans in February 1962, and on December 21, 1962 he assumed the duties of Chief of Staff and Aide to Commander Carrier Division SIXTEEN, Anti-Submarine Warfare Task Group ALFA and Hunter Killer Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet. In October 1963 he assumed command of USS PARICUTIN (AE-18), an ammunition ship with home port in Concord, California. He was detached from command of that vessel in August 1964 and assigned to the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., where he was Assistant Director for Distribution Control in the Officer Distribution Division.

In March 1966 he assumed command of the USS HORNET (CVS-12) and in March 1967 transferred to command of the USS ESSEX (CVS-9). He was ordered detached in May 1967 for duty in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

In addition to the Navy Cross, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal and Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, Captain Eason has the American Defense Service Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with five stars; American Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal, Europe Clasp; and the National Defense Service Medal with bronze star.

He is a member of Scabbard and Blade and of Sigma Chi Fraternity. His chief hobby is wood-working.

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