



Jack E. Conger, COL USMC (Ret.)
 “Smiling Jack”

Dates of Active Duty: 1941 - 1964

Total Flight Hours: 8,500

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 500

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 5,000 Prop: 3,500 VF/VA: 8,500

Combat Tours:

WWII: Four Pacific combat tours

Korea: One Korean combat tour

Total 400 combat missions

Aviation Commands:

CO, MAG-14, 2nd MAW

Combat Awards:

Navy Cross

2 Distinguished Flying Crosses

6 Air Medals

2 Purple Hearts

Summary of Significant Career Events

- (1) Winged in January 1942 just in time to join VMF-212 which was commissioned in March and soon moved up to the combat area at Efate. LtCol Harold “Indian Joe” Bauer was the CO and he honed a gaggle of raw Lieutenants into a super effective fighting force in just a few weeks of intensive air to air combat training. Our success and survival was due to Joe Bauer’s superb leadership and devotion to training his fighter pilots for the up coming aerial combat.
- (2) While flying from Henderson Field on Guadalcanal between 13 Sept. and 30 Oct. 1942, downed 10 Japanese aircraft including two in one day and received the Navy Cross for sustained heroism in aerial combat.



- (3) Flight downed three Zeros in a dog fight on 25 Oct. 1942 then when ammo was exhausted rammed a fourth one and was forced to bail out. Picked up by rescue boat that then proceeded over to pick up one of the Japanese pilots who also had bailed out. The Japanese pilot waved the rescue boat off while Jack was trying to pull him into the boat. The Japanese pilot, Petty Officer 2nd Class Shiro Ishikawa of the 2nd Kokutai, raised his pistol into Jack’s face and pulled the trigger. The gun misfired and then Ishikawa put the pistol against his own head just as Jack and one of the boat crew members clobbered him and pulled him into the boat. Ishikawa had been told American Marines cooked their prisoners and ate them and he did not relish the thought. Ishikawa learned some English while a POW and after the war worked for an American bank in Japan. He wrote and stayed in contact thanking Jack profusely for saving his life.
- (4) Invited Ishikawa to the American Fighter Aces re-union at the Nimitz Museum, Fredericksburg, Texas in 1990.
- (5) Recognized as an exceptional fighter pilot, a peerless leader and a Double Ace credited also with the sinking of three warships during his exploits in the F4F Wildcat on Guadalcanal he returned to the Pacific war zone on his third combat tour as a 23 year old Major flying the F4U Corsair. A mentor of the newer pilots and a fearless leader of squadron mates they destroyed two more Japanese war ships.
- (6) Also destroyed numerous aircraft in strafing runs against Japanese airfields which the Navy and Marine Corps did not count as aerial victories.
- (7) Born in Orient Iowa. Attended Washington High School in Sioux Falls S.D. and South Dakota School of Mines in Rapid City S.D.. Resides in Havelock, North Carolina.