



Matthias B. Gardner, Admiral, USN

Matthias Bennett Gardner was born in Washington, D. C., on November 28, 1897, son of Frank D. and Ellen Crum Gardner. He attended Tennessee Military Institute, Sweetwater, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania State College, before entering the U. S. Naval Academy from the Twenty-first District of Pennsylvania in 1915. As a Midshipman he participated in boxing and rowing and was on the staff of the *Lucky Bag* and the *Log*. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 6, 1918, with the Class of 1919, he subsequently attained the rank of Rear Admiral, to date from July 19, 1933. He served in the rank of Vice Admiral as Commander SECOND Fleet; Commander SIXTH Fleet; Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Air; DCNO (Operations) and DCNO (Plans and Policy). On August 1, 1956 he was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy and was advanced to the rank of Admiral on the basis of combat awards.

After graduation from the Naval Academy in 1918, he had brief duty in the USS *North Carolina* before being ordered to the Destroyer Force, based at Brest, France, during World War I. He later had duty in the USS *Drayton*, operating on convoy duty and remained, on board until December 1919. Three months' service in the USS *Jarvis* preceded fitting out duty in the USS *Biddle*, and service aboard her commissioning, April 22, 1919 to November 1920. During his period of service, the *Biddle* was one of the guard ships for the trans-Atlantic flight of the NC seaplanes in May 1919, and she was later attached to the U. S. Naval Detachment in Turkish Waters during the Russian Revolution.

He next served as Engineer Officer of the USS *McFarland* operating in the Near East and during the evacuation of Greek Nationals from Asia Minor in the summer of 1921. Returning to the United States in January 1922, he had flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, and on June 9, 1922 was designated Naval Aviator. The next month he reported to Commander Aircraft Squadrons, Atlantic (later Battle) Fleet, Assigned to Spotting Squadron 2 (redesignated Observation Squadron 2), attached to the USS *Aroostook*, he served with that unit until July 1924.

He had two years' duty as an Instructor at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, and in September 1926 was transferred to Kelly Field, Texas, for the course at the Advanced Air Corps Flying School. Completing instruction in March 1927, he joined Fighting Squadron 5 attached to the aircraft tender *Wright* until March 1928, and later to the carrier *Lexington*. His squadron was redesignated Bombing Squadron 1, on July 1, 1928, and a year later he was assigned to the Naval Air Station, Anacostia, D. C., where he served as Operations Officer until June 1931.

While In Washington, D. C., he carried out inverted flight tests which proved of value in determining the necessary load factors for fighter type planes. He was assisted in those experiments by Rear Admiral (Lieutenant) Aaron P. Storrs, USN, and Rear Admiral (Lieutenant) Frederick M. Trapnell, USN. Leading his two associates he developed a series of formation maneuvers which were regarded as the most excellent "back" flying ever exhibited in this country, and the three aviators who skimmed through the skies in an upright position, suddenly "turned over on their backs" and continued in flight, were named the "Three Flying Fish." The aerobatics particularly studied were the pull-out from an inverted dive, inverted snap-rolls entered at various speeds, the inverted "outside" spin and the "outside" spin.

Detached from duty at Anacostia in July 1931, he joined Fighting Squadron 6, operating from the USS *Saratoga*, and served first as Executive Officer and later in command of that squadron. From June 1933 to June 1934 he was attached, as Gunnery and Tactical Officer, to the staff of Commander Aircraft, Battle Force, USS *Saratoga*, flagship. He had a two-year tour of duty at the Naval Air Station., Pensacola, and returned to the USS *Saratoga* to serve until June 1937 as Assistant Air Officer and Carrier Representative. The latter title was the forerunner of the present Air Group Commander.

In June 1938 he returned to the United States, and served until June 1940 as Officer in Charge of the Aviation Section, Ship's Movement Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. He then went to sea again this time as Executive Officer of the USS *Wright*, and in May 1941 he joined the staff of Commander Aircraft, Scouting Force, as Chief of Staff and Aide (redesignated on April 30, 1942, Commander Patrol Wings). He was on duty in that capacity when the United States entered World War II on December 8, 1941.

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Transferring in a like duty to the staff of Commander Aircraft, South Pacific, in May 1942, he was awarded a Distinguished Service Medal "For exceptionally meritorious services..." during the period May 19 to November 21, 1942. The citation states that through his invaluable assistance to the Commander Aircraft, South Pacific Force, and his inspiration to the aircraft squadrons of the Allied Forces in that area, (he) was largely responsible for the development and expansion of shore and tender bases, the maintenance of scouting and striking flights, and the establishment of effective cooperation between those air units of the United States, Australia and New Zealand assigned to duty on the island bases..."

In December 1942 he returned to the United States to serve as Aviation Officer of the Plans Division at Headquarters of the Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet. Detached on October 21, 1943, he assumed command on November 7 of the USS *Enterprise*. Under his command, that carrier, as flagship of Commander Carrier Division 11, participated in the invasion of the Gilbert Islands, where she provided air support for the landings on Makin Island; took part in raids on Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshalls on December 4, 1943; and participated in the Marshall Islands invasion in January and February 1944, she took part in the first carrier strikes against Truk; the occupation of Emirau; strikes on the Caroline Islands; second raid against Truk, and the assault and occupation of Hollandia; and later in the capture of Saipan, the Marianas "Turkey Shoot"; and the first battle of the Philippine Sea, in June 1944.

He was awarded the Legion of Merit with Combat "V," for "exceptionally meritorious conduct...as Commanding Officer of the USS *Enterprise* during her operations against the enemy in many theaters of war in the Western Pacific... He is also entitled to the Ribbon for, and a facsimile of., the Navy Unit Commendation awarded the USS *Enterprise*.

Detached from command of the *Enterprise* on July 9, 1944, he assumed command of Carrier Division 11, and in December of that year transferred to command of Carrier Division 7. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V," for "meritorious achievement..." during operations in the Pacific War Area during March 1945. The citation continues in part: "...Ordered to take command of the fast carrier task group when the flagship of that force was put out of action by enemy air attack...(he) assumed his urgent responsibilities with resolute determination and, skillfully interposing the task group between the damaged flagship and the enemy coast, maintained vigorous offensive operations against formidable Japanese defenses until his own flagship sustained damage which deprived her of efficient communication facilities..."

Returning to the United States, he reported on May 16, 1945 as Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans, to the Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, and was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Legion of Merit. The citation states in part: "...Exercising judgment, vision and professional skill, (he) rendered outstanding service as a member of the Joint Staff

Planners in Washington and at the Conference of the United Nations Military Staffs at Potsdam..."

On October 10, 1945, in accordance with Executive Order #9635 he was designated Chief of the Strategic Plans Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department. He remained in that assignment until August 1946, when he assumed duty as Commander Naval Air Bases, Fourteenth Naval District, Pearl Harbor, T. H. He served a two year tour of duty there, and in August 1948 returned to the United States and was again assigned to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, this time as Assistant Chief of Naval Operations.

In August 1950 he was designated Commander SECOND Fleet, and on March 19, 1951 was transferred to duty as Commander SIXTH Fleet. He continued to serve in that command until May 31, 1952 when he was appointed Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Air, Navy Department. On March 10, 1953 he became Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Operations), and on June 1, 1954, assumed the duty of Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Plans and Policy). He was serving as such when relieved of all active duty pending his retirement, effective August 1, 1956.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit with Gold Star and Combat "V," and the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V," and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon (USS *Enterprise*), Admiral Gardner has the World War I Victory Medal, Destroyer Clasp (USS *Drayton*); the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; the National Defense Service Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon.

He was married to the former Helen Shippey of Neodesha, Kansas. They had two sons, Bennett and Joel Gardner.