



Fillmore B. Gilkeson, Rear Admiral, USN

Date of Designation: 27 November 1940

Combat Awards:

Silver Star
Legion of Merit with Gold Star
Distinguished Flying Cross
4 Air Medals
Purple Heart

Duty Assignment Chronology

Fillmore Bolling Gilkeson was born in Bluefield, West Virginia, on October 27, 1915, son of William E. and Elizabeth Burrell (Jones) Gilkeson. He attended Bluefield Public Schools and Woodberry Forest School at Orange, Virginia, prior to his appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy in 1933. As a Midshipman he participated in athletics (boxing and golf), was feature editor of the LOG, athletic director of REEF POINTS, and served on the Staff of the LUCKY BAG. Graduated and commissioned Ensign in the U.S. Navy on June 3, 1937, he subsequently advanced to the rank of Rear Admiral, to date from July 1, 1965.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy in June 1937, he was assigned to the USS *Ranger* (CV-4), in which he served as a junior officer until February 1940. In March of that year he reported for flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida and on November 27 of the same year was designated Naval Aviator. Detached in January 1941, he was ordered to the USS *Mississippi*, and was serving as Senior Aviator on board that battleship at the outbreak of World War II in December 1941.

From September 1942 until January 1943 he commanded Scouting Squadron 10, in the Caribbean, and for a year thereafter was Commanding Officer of Scout Observation Service Unit TWO. He was a student (operational training) from February through April 1944, at the Naval Air Station, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and in May reported for

duty as Commanding Officer of Torpedo Squadron THIRTY THREE of the USS *Sangamon*, later taking command of Air Group THIRTY-THREE. He is entitled to the Ribbons for the Presidential Unit Citation awarded the USS *Sangamon* and her Air Groups, and for the Navy Unit Commendation awarded the USS *Chenango* and attached Air Groups for heroic service in the Pacific Area in 1944 and 1945. He was personally awarded the Purple Heart Medal for wounds received in action; and the Silver Star Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with four Gold Stars, with citations to follow:

Silver Star Medal: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity as Air Group Commander, Air Group THIRTY-THREE, attached to the USS *Sangamon*, in action against enemy Japanese forces during the Okinawa Campaign, May 4, 1945. After his ship was crashed by a Japanese Kamikaze plane and set afire, Lieutenant Commander Gilkeson courageously organized air group and ship's personnel into an efficient fire-fighting team. Braving intense heat, smothering smoke and exploding ammunition, he fought the flames on the forward end of the flight deck and subsequently took his station on the hangar deck to assist in fighting the fires in that area. By his aggressive leadership and determination, he contributed materially to the saving of the *Sangamon*..."

Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Nansei Shoto Area, from March 21 to April 21, 1945. Completing his twentieth mission during this period, Lieutenant Commander Gilkeson contributed materially to the success of his squadron...."

The Air Medal and Gold Stars in lieu of the Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Air Medals were awarded for five missions each during the period March 21 to May 3, 1945, in the Nansei Shoto Area.

From December 1945 until June 1946 he was an instructor in Ordnance and Gunnery at the Naval Academy,

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after which he was a student at the Naval Postgraduate School there until June 1948, and at the California Institute of Technology from which he received the degree of Aeronautical Engineer in June 1949. He next served as Maintenance Officer and Executive Officer of Composite Squadron FIVE, the Navy's first atomic bomb squadron, then from April 1952 until November 1953 was assigned to the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.

Again at sea, he served from December 1953 until March 1955 as Executive Officer of the USS *Hancock* (CVA-19), and for the next two years commanded Air Development Squadron FIVE, the primary mission of which was to develop tactics for the delivery of atomic bombs from carrier aircraft. In July 1957 he reported to the Naval Air Test Center, Patuxent River, Maryland, where for one year he was Director of Flight Test, and for another was Coordinator of Tests. On August 22, 1959, he assumed command of the USS *Caloosahatchee* (AO-98), and on April 1, 1960, was transferred to command of the USS *Shangri La* (CVA-38).

From April 1961 to November 1962, he headed the Air Warfare Branch, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, after which he was Chief of Staff and Aide to Commander Carrier Division THREE. Returning to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations in February 1964, he served as Project Officer for Nuclear Power Study until May 1965, then became Deputy Director of Naval Warfare Analyses. His selection for the rank of Rear Admiral was approved by the President in June 1965 and in August that year he assumed command of Antisubmarine Warfare Group THREE, U.S. Pacific Fleet. In September 1966 he reported as Commander Naval Base, Subic Bay, Luzon, Philippine Islands and "for exceptionally meritorious service..." in that capacity was awarded the Legion of Merit. The citation further states in part:

In that assignment "...the several naval activities comprising the Subic Bay/Cubi Point base complex experienced unprecedented growth in response to rapidly expanding requirements in support of the SEVENTH Fleet and the continuous high levels of base loading...Rear Admiral Gilkeson was responsible, in a large measure, for ensuring that this dramatic growth was orderly and shaped responsively to the manifold needs of the operating forces supporting the U.S. effort in Southeast Asia. By his dedication to the principle of civic action and his constant personal assistance, together with his active participation and supervised distribution of Project Handclasp material, (he) has raised Filipino-American goodwill and accord in the Olongapo area to a new level..."

In July 1968 he reported as Director of the Logistic Plans Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department. He was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit for duty in that capacity from July 1968 to April 1970. The citation follows in part: "...During a period of drastic reductions in Navy funds and force levels, Rear Admiral Gilkeson demonstrated outstanding competence, resourcefulness, and imaginative direction in planning the reduction and realignment of the Navy shore support

structure, while at the same time insuring continued responsive logistic support of the operating forces..."

In June 1970 he became U. S. Defense Attache, U.S. Naval Attache and U.S. Naval Attache for Air to the United Kingdom, with headquarters in London. He reported in September 1973 as Commandant of the Eleventh Naval District, headquartered in San Diego, California and was assigned additional duty as Commander of the Naval Base, San Diego.

Rear Admiral Gilkeson has flown over 75 models of aircraft, single and multi-engined, prop and jet, land and sea. In addition to the Silver Star Medal, the Legion of Merit with Gold Star, Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with four Gold Stars, the Purple Heart Medal and Ribbons for the Presidential Unit Citation and Navy Unit Commendation, he has the American Defense Service Medal with bronze "A"; the American Campaign Medal; Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal with two operation stars; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal, Asia Clasp; the National Defense Service Medal with bronze star; and the Vietnam Service Medal. He has been awarded the National Order of Vietnam Fifth Class; the Gallantry Cross with Palm by the Republic of Vietnam; the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device and the Philippine Republic Presidential Unit Citation Badge.

He was married to the former Jeanette Graham of Palestine, Texas, and had two daughters, Mrs. Ellen Douglas (Gilkeson) Cook and Miss Patricia Graham Gilkeson.