



Robert F. Hickey, Vice Admiral, USN

A native of California, Robert Ferdinand Hickey had World War I service as a Midshipman, on board the battleship *Ohio*, in the Atlantic. Graduated from the Naval Academy in June 1921, he was assigned to the battleship *Wyoming* and was on board the *Pope* (1922-1924), station ship in the Japanese Kurile Islands during the Army Round the World Flight in 1924,

He received his "Wings" in 1925 and seven years later became Commanding Officer of the Naval Reserve Aviation Base, Floyd Bennett Field, New York. While attached to the *Ranger* (1939-1940), he had defensive action in the Atlantic and Caribbean during the Neutrality Patrols. When the United States entered World War II, he was serving as Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Station, Bermuda.

In July 1942 he was assigned to the Bureau of Aeronautics and in April 1943 became Director, Aviation Personnel Division, Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air). Under his command in 1944, the *Hancock*, ("Fighting' Hannah") lived up to her skipper's motto: "Records are made to be broken." She helped escort the stricken carrier *Franklin* to safety; was part of the Fast Carrier Task Force which rendered pre-invasion blows and gave tactical air support to troops landing on Okinawa; and brilliantly defended herself against numerous Kamikaze attacks.

After the war, he served as Assistant Naval Attache at the American Embassy, London, England and in 1947-1949 was Deputy Director of Public Relations, Navy Department. He was next in command of Fleet Air Wings, Atlantic and Fleet Air Wing FIVE, based on Norfolk, Virginia and in September

1950 became the Navy's Chief of Information. He was in command of Carrier Division FIVE during operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea and early in 1954 reported as Chief of Staff and Aide to Commander Naval Forces, Far East.

He commanded Fleet Air, Alameda (California) from January 1956 to May 1958, when he became Commander Fleet Air, Hawaii with additional duty from January 1959 as Commander Barrier, Pacific. On July 1, 1959 he was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy,

Admiral Hickey's decorations included the Legion of Merit (two awards) and the Bronze Star Medal for duty in command of the *Hancock*; and the Distinguished Service Medal for outstanding services as Commander Carrier Division FIVE in Korea. He has also been awarded the Order of Cavalier of the Crown of Italy; and the Most Exalted Order of the White Elephant, Second Class, by the Thailand Government.

PERSONAL DATA:

Born: 28 December 1897, Red Bluff, California
 Parents: Thomas Hickey and Augusta (Young) Hickey
 Wife's Maiden Name and Date of Marriage: Virginia Burnham of San Diego, California, 30 June 1928
 Children: Patricia Ann (Mrs. William B. Cook) and Robert Ashley Hickey
 Education: Etna (California) Union High School; University, of California, Berkeley, (1915-1917); U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md. (BS, 1921); Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Fla. (flight training, 1925)

PROMOTIONS:

Appointed Midshipman, 13 June 1917
 Commissioned Ensign, USN, 3 June 1921
 Lieutenant (jg), USN, 3 June 1924
 Lieutenant, USN, 10 June 1927
 Lieutenant Commander, 30 June 1937
 Commander, USN, 2 January 1942
 Captain; USN, 11 September 1942 to rank from 20 June 1942
 Rear Admiral, USN, 1 October 1947
 Transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy and advanced to the rank of Vice Admiral, 1 July 1959

MEDALS AND DECORATIONS:

Distinguished Service Medal
 Legion of Merit with Combat "V"
 Gold Star lieu 2nd Legion of Merit with Combat "V"
 Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V"
 Letter of Commendation, SecNav (Ribbon)
 Letter of Commendation, SecNav (Bronze Star lieu 2nd Ribbon)
 Navy Unit Commendation (USS *Hancock*)
 Victory Medal (World War I), Atlantic Fleet Clasp
 American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp
 American Campaign Medal
 Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal

- Continued -

MEDALS and DECORATIONS continued

World War II Victory Medal

Navy Occupation Service Medal, Asia Clasp

China Service Medal

National Defense Service Medal

Korean Service Medal

United Nations Service Medal

Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one star

Foreign: Decoration and diploma Cavalier of the Order of the Crown of Italy (Italy); Decoration and Diploma (Knight Commander) of the Most Exalted Order of the White Elephant, Second Class, (Thailand)

CITATIONS:

Distinguished Service Medal: "For exceptionally meritorious service...as Commander Carrier Division FIVE during operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from September 8, 1952 to May 2, 1953. Commanding a striking force of aircraft carriers, heavy support ships and screening vessels throughout this period, Rear Admiral Hickey directed highly effective air and sea operations against the enemy in Korea. On October 5, 1952, the successful Navy-Air Force strike which caused widespread destruction on the rail and highway systems at Kowon was directly attributable to his expert planning. An inspiring and forceful leader, he coordinated other effective Navy-Air Force strikes against vital hydroelectric plants in North Korea and maintained these installations in a non-operational status. In a spectacular air duel on November 18, 1952, in which seven enemy planes attacked three aircraft from the USS *Oriskany*, two enemy craft were shot down and probably three others without loss of any friendly aircraft. In the early fall months of 1952, he planned the shifting of a major part of the naval air effort to heavy tactical air strikes at the battle line in direct support of the ground forces, resulting in widespread damage and destruction to the enemy. By his outstanding professional skill, sound judgment and steadfast devotion to duty throughout, Rear Admiral Hickey contributed materially to the success of friendly forces in Korea..."

Legion of Merit: "For exceptionally meritorious conduct... as Commanding Officer of the USS *Hancock*, during operations against enemy Japanese forces in Mindanao, Formosa and Luzon, from November 30, 1944 to January 25, 1945. When the ship was seriously damaged in an accidental explosion of bombs, Captain Hickey handled the situation with courage and skill, enabling her to carry on and continue aggressive operations thereby contributing materially to the infliction of heavy destruction upon enemy aircraft, shipping and installations..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit. "For outstanding services to the Government of the United States as Commanding Officer of the USS *Hancock* during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Western Pacific War Area from July 1 to August 15, 1945. Demonstrating inspiring leadership and professional ability during active combat operations against enemy surface forces and the main homeland of Japan, (he) maintained the fighting efficiency of his ship at a high level and contributed materially to

her success..."

Bronze Star Medal: "For heroic service as Commanding Officer of the USS *Hancock* against enemy forces in the vicinity of the Japanese Homeland from February 10 to March 24, 1945. When the flagship of the Task Group Commander was put out of action by enemy air attacks, Captain Hickey skillfully handled his ship during the battle and took immediate action to provide air cover for the crippled vessel. While under attack by an enemy suicide bomber, he directed his crew in shooting down the plane and, almost immediately thereafter, avoided collision with a destroyer which had lost steering control and was passing dangerously close ahead..."

Letter of Commendation (SecNav): "For outstanding performance of duty as the Director of the Aviation Personnel Division in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations from August 18, 1943 to September 25, 1944..."

Letter of Commendation (SecNav): "For outstanding performance of duty as Chief of Staff and Aide to Commander Naval Forces, Far East from January 1954 to November 1955. An extremely capable and resourceful officer, he ably assisted in the development and augmentation of the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force, especially in the activation of the air arm where his vast knowledge of naval aviation was of particular value. He gave unstintingly of his time and advice to the Republic of Korea Navy during the difficult period of build-up and the transition to operations of an independent Navy. Rear Admiral Hickey was instrumental in planning for and executing the many involved tasks associated with the conversion of the Naval Air Facility at Iwakuni, Japan, to the status of a Naval Air Station. Through his understanding of complex operations involving numerous types of naval units, and by his inspiring personality and diplomacy, he rendered invaluable service to Commander Naval Forces, Far East and contributed immeasurably to the betterment of the Japanese-American relations..."

Navy Unit Commendation (USS *Hancock*): "For outstanding heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces in the air, ashore and afloat in the Pacific War Area from October 10, 1944 to August 15, 1945...Daring and dependable in combat, the *Hancock* with her gallant officers and men rendered loyal service in achieving the ultimate defeat of the Japanese Empire."