



**Harold G. Carlson, Commander, USN (Ret.)**  
 "Swede"

Date of Designation: 9 April 1943      NA # P-2056

Dates of Active Duty: 6 June 1940 - 30 June 1961

Total Flight Hours: 3,207

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 170

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 26   Prop: 3,181   VF/VA: 1,350  
 VR/VP: 248   HS/HC/HU: 2   VS: 140   VU/VFP: 140  
 VT: 1,387   Other: Private time - 150 hours including  
 47 in helicopter.

Combat Tours:

WW II: July 1944, Marianas Islands, TBM, 22 missions from USS *Nehenta Bay*.  
 Korea: Dec. 1950 - May 1951, North and South Korea off USS *Princeton* (CV-37), 61 missions (VA-195)

Aviation Commands:

CO, USS *Lunga Point* (CVE-94), Aug. 1946 - Oct. 1946  
 CO, VU-1, May 1947 - Oct. 1947  
 CO, VA-195, June 1950 - Sept. 1951

Combat Awards:

Distinguished Flying Cross (Korea)  
 4 Air Medals (1 WW II and 3 Korea)  
 Purple Heart (WW II)

**Duty Assignment Chronology**

6/40-8/42    USS *Nashville* (CL-42), Gunnery and Engineering JO, Pacific and Atlantic. Escorted *Hornet* on Doolittle Tokyo Raid.  
 9/42-10/43   Flight Training, New Orleans, Pensacola, Fort Lauderdale (N2S, NP, NS, N3N, SNJ, SNV, OS2U, TBF).



11/43-1/44    VT-20, XO, San Diego (TBM).  
 2/44-9/44    VC-11, XO, San Diego, W. Pacific. USS *Nehenta Bay* (CVE-74) (TBM, SNJ, FM-2).  
 9/44-11/44   Support Aircraft Group 6, PhibsPac, USS *Rocky Mount* (CGC). W. Pacific, Leyte landings.  
 12/44-9/45   Flight Training, Pensacola, Lake City (SNB, PV).  
 11/45-10/46   USS *Lunga Point* (CVE-94), Air Officer, Gunnery Officer, 1st Lt., XO and CO. Western Pacific, Tacoma (JRB, F6F, SNJ, TBM, F4U, R5D).  
 11/46-8/47    UTRONS West Coast, San Diego (Prospective CO); VU-1, CO; Ford Island (JD, JM, TBM, F6F, PBY, F7F, R4D).  
 9/47-9/49    NROTC, Villanova College. Assistant Professor of Naval Science (SNJ, SNB, HOS, JRB, PB-1W, TBM, F6F, C54, C47, R4D, PBM).  
 10/49-9/51    Air Group 5, San Diego; All Weather Flight School Corpus Christi and ConFair Alameda (Prosp. CO); VA-195, CO, Alameda and Korea aboard USS *Princeton* (CV-37) (AD, SNB, JRB, R4D, TBM).  
 10/51-3/54    BuAer, Washington, D. C. Was the AD/AM Class Desk Officer (AD, SNB, JRB, SNJ, F6F, F3D, C124, T28, C46, C47, R4D)  
 4/54-11/55    JUSMG, Navy Section, Staff Aviator, Madrid, Spain (R4D, SNJ, P2V, AJ).  
 11/55-11/58   BuAer GenRep East Dist, New York. Director of Engineering and Production. (Aug. 58-Jet Training, Olathe, Kansas) (C46, JRB, R5D, HOK, C131, S2F, F9F, SA16, AD, T29, P4Y, HSS, H19, UF2G, TV)  
 1/59-6/61    VAW-11, XO, NAS North Island (AD-5W, SNB, F2H, TF-1Q)  
 7/1/61        Retired from active duty

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## Summary of Significant Career Events

### (1) Support of Evacuation from Chosin Reservoir

After arrival in Korea in December of 1950, Carlson led his VA-195 pilots in supporting the U.S. ground troops, particularly the Marines, in their evacuation and march from the Chosin Reservoir to Hungnam. VA-195's close support undoubtedly saved many U.S. lives in the evacuation. On one occasion during this effort Carlson made a virtual dead stick landing on the USS *Boxer* in Wonsan Harbor after his plane was hit.

### (2) Carlson's Canyon

In March of 1951, Carlson led his squadron in destroying a 600 ft. key bridge near Kilchu in North Korea. This took a number of strikes as the bridge was rebuilt each night. Rear Admiral Ralph Ofstie, CTF 77, was so pleased with this effort that he named the target area Carlson's Canyon. James Michener's book "The Bridges at Toko-Ri" is based in large part on Carlson's Canyon.

### (3) Hwachon Dam Torpedo Strike

In May of 1951, after discussions with RADM Ralph Ofstie and staff, and Captain William Gallery, on the feasibility of using torpedoes, CAG Dick Merrick and Carlson led two divisions of VA-195 and VC-35 ADs in a torpedo strike against the Hwachon Dam near the 38th Parallel. Six pilots, including Carlson, had successful torpedo runs in spite of AA, small arms fire and strung wires. The destruction of the flood gates denied North Korea the tactical advantage of controlling the outflow from the dam. The torpedo pilots received DFCs for this effort which was the first time aerial torpedoes had been used since WW II. VA-195 renamed itself "The Dambusters."

(4) Carlson's squadron, VA-195 suffered only one loss, the least in the entire Air Group, which lost 19 pilots in Korea.

(5) In October 1993 Carlson's name was placed on the side of an AD-4 aircraft on the hangar deck of the USS *Yorktown* (museum carrier) in Charleston, SC honoring him as a representative of the AD pilots in Korea.

(6) In July of 2001 VA-195 pilots including Carlson were hosted by the Warbirds at the annual Air Venture Convention of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) at Oshkosh, WI. They were featured there and honored for their performance in Korea.

(7) The exploits of VA-195 and Carlson's performance are described in several books and periodicals as follows:

"Sea War in Korea", Cagle and Manson, U.S. Naval Institute, 1957.

"The Naval Air War in Korea", Zebra Books, R. Hallion, 1988.

"Crimson Sky", John Bruning, Brasseys, 1999. (Four chapters)

"The Hook", Tailhook Association, Spring 1984.

"Wings of Gold", Association of Naval Aviation, Summer 1994.