

COMMANDER RALPH A. EMBREE
U. S. NAVY, DECEASED

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

Ralph Arnold Embree was born in Kemmerer, Wyoming, on September 25, 1914, son of Royal Howard and Mary Wallace (Scott) Embree. He was killed in enemy action in the Pacific War Area, presumptive date of death, May 13, 1946.

Graduated from Kemmerer High School in 1931, he entered the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, on June 20, 1932, from Wyoming (at large). As a Midshipman he won his N* on the Gym Team for tumbling, was USNA sailing champion in the summer of 1935, and was awarded medals for Expert Rifleman and Expert Pistol Shot. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 4, 1936, he subsequently advanced to the rank of Commander, to date from March 15, 1944.

Upon graduation from the Naval Academy in 1936, he was assigned first to the USS MISSISSIPPI, in which he served as a Junior Officer (turret, engineering, and communications). From May 1938 to January 1939 he served in the USS CHANDLER as Assistant First Lieutenant, and later Assistant Gunnery Officer. On November 25, 1939 he reported to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, for instruction in heavier-than-air craft. He completed flight training, was designated Naval Aviator on February 7, 1940, and was ordered to Bombing Squadron Four, based on the USS RANGER. On March 15, 1941 he was transferred to Scouting Squadron 41, also of the RANGER, in which he was serving at the outbreak of the war.

He was awarded the Navy Cross "For extraordinary heroism as Acting Squadron Commander of Scouting Squadron FORTY ONE, attached to the USS RANGER during the occupation of French Morocco, November 8-11, 1942..." The citation continues: "Leading five flights of planes in vigorous dive-bombing raids against hostile warships and coastal defense batteries, Lieutenant Embree, courageously pressing home his attacks in the face of tremendous anti-aircraft fire and fierce fighter opposition, aided greatly in the infliction of severe damage upon the enemy...(and) contributed materially to the reduction of hostile resistance in the area and to the successful accomplishment of vital objectives preliminary to invasion."

In December 1942 he was ordered to the USS AIBEMARLE, and after three months' duty aboard that seaplane tender, he was ordered to the Naval Air Operational Training Command, Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida, and was assigned to the Naval Air Station, Daytona Beach, where he served for a year. When detached he had brief temporary duty at the Naval Air Station, Deland, and in June 1944, was ordered to report to Fleet Air, West Coast, San Diego, California, for assignment.

On July 13, 1944 he reported to the Fleet Air Detachment, Naval Air Station, Astoria, Oregon, for duty in command of Bombing Squadron 12, and on July 20 assumed command of that squadron. He was reported Missing in Action as of May 12, 1945, when the plane in which he was flying, a unit of Bombing Squadron 12, was hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire and he was forced to parachute over enemy-held territory on Okinawa Jima, Nansei Shoto. Death is presumed to have occurred a year and a day later.

Commander Embree has been awarded the Silver Star Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with three Gold Stars (three additional awards); and the Purple Heart Medal. Citations follow in order of action:

Silver Star Medal: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity as Commanding Officer of Bombing Squadron TWELVE attached to the USS RANDOLPH, in action against enemy Japanese forces in the vicinity of Tokyo, Japan, on February 16 and 17, 1945. Participating in the first attack by carrier based aircraft on the Tokyo area, (he) courageously led his squadron in coordinated bombing attacks on two important aircraft plants and...personally scored direct bomb hits and inflicted extensive damage on the targets..."

Air Medal: "For meritorious achievement in aerial flight as Pilot of a Fighter Plane in Air Group TWELVE...near the Japanese Empire and adjacent Island chains, from February 16, 1945 to March 23, 1945...(He) led his plane with determined aggressiveness to inflict the maximum damage on the enemy..."

The Second, Third, and Fourth Air Medals were awarded for aerial flight "from March 24, 1945 to April 17, 1945..."; "from April 18 to 28 1945" and "from May 5 to 12, 1945," respectively, during which periods he contributed to the success of our air operations in the Pacific Area by "carrying out numerous rigorous strikes against hostile shipping, airfields and installations..."

Distinguished Flying Cross: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight as Pilot of a Fighter Plane in Air Group TWELVE...from April 28, 1945 to May 4, 1945...(He) pressed home his relentless attacks with determined aggressiveness and skillfully inflicted the maximum damage on the enemy...(contributing) to the success of our operations in the Pacific Area..."

In addition to the Navy Cross, the Silver Star Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Medal with three Gold Stars, Commander Embree was entitled to the Purple Heart Medal; American Defense Service Medal; with bronze "A"; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with star; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal.