

## CAPTAIN JOHN BEHLING AZER, U. S. NAVY

John Behling Azer was born in Elgin, Illinois, on November 24, 1906, son of William J. and Wilhelmina Behling Azer. He was graduated from West Chicago Community High School, in West Chicago, Illinois, and had two years at Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, Illinois, before his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy in 1926. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 5, 1930, he subsequently advanced to the rank of Captain, to date from July 1, 1949, having served in that rank (temporary) from December 10, 1945 until December 1, 1947.

From August 1930 until March 1931 he served as Assistant First Lieutenant of the USS LEXINGTON, and after brief instruction at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, was again at sea from July 1931 until May 1934 in the USS MILWAUKEE, as Signal Officer, Watch and Division Officer, and finally Assistant Engineer Officer. He was a student at the Submarine School, U. S. Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut, during the next six months, and upon completion of the course was assigned successively to the submarines S-45, S-34 and S-31 in the capacity of First Lieutenant, Communication Officer, Navigator and Engineer Officer.

In October 1937 he returned to the Naval Academy where he served until April 1939 as an Instructor in the Department of Marine Engineering. In May of that year he joined the USS CACHELOT, in which he served as Executive Officer and Navigator until December 1940. A month later he assumed command of the USS R-19, and was Commanding Officer of that submarine at the outbreak of World War II and until she was delivered to Great Britain under Lease-Lend agreement in March 1942. He then fitted out the USS WHALE and served as her Commanding Officer from her commissioning in June 1942 until February 1943.

He was awarded the Navy Cross and Gold Star in lieu of the Second Navy Cross for distinguished service during the First and Second War Patrols of the USS WHALE in the Pacific Area. The citations follow, in part:

Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism and distinguished service in the line of his profession as Commanding Officer of the USS WHALE, while patrolling in enemy controlled waters from October 9 to November 10, 1942... (He) aggressively sought out and attacked enemy shipping, damaging a total of 18,139 tons and sinking a 9500-ton freighter. In a battle with enemy anti-submarine vessels during a four-hour depth charge attack, he handled his ship so skillfully that it received only slight damage and there was no injury to personnel..."

Gold Star in Lieu of Second Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism and exceptional achievement as Commanding Officer of the USS WHALE during action against enemy Japanese forces in the Pacific Area... With complete disregard for his own personal safety, (he) skillfully attacked several hostile ships, destroying two transports totaling 19,315 tons, and damaging a tanker of 7,500 tons and a freighter of 5,600 tons. Successfully combating stubborn counter efforts, he brought his ship safely to port without material damage, personnel injury or loss of life..."

When detached from that command in February 1943 he became Operations Officer on the Staff of Commander Submarine Squadron 10, and after serving in

that capacity for nine months, after which he returned to the United States. He fitted out the USS CAIMAN at the Electric Boat Company, Groton, Connecticut, and assumed command of that submarine at her commissioning on July 17, 1944. He commanded the CAIMAN during her first War Patrol late in 1944, then was hospitalized at the Naval Hospital, Oak Knoll, from January to August 1945.

Three months' duty as Officer in Charge of the Rest Camp, Guam, while attached to Submarine Squadron 3, preceded command of the USS PELIAS from December 1945 to May 1946, and of the USS GILMORE for a year thereafter. From June 1947 until June 1948 he served as Commander Submarine Division 42, his pennant in the USS MELREGAL. He then had shore duty at the Illinois Institute of Technology, serving for a year as Associate Professor of Naval Science and Executive Officer, and from June 1949 until September 1951 as Professor of Naval Science. He again had treatment, this time at the Naval Hospital, Great Lakes, during the remaining months of 1951.

From January to August 1952 he was a member of the General Court Martial Board at District Headquarters, Ninth Naval District, Great Lakes, Illinois, and during part of that time was Officer in Charge of the Reserve Officers Training Corps School. During the period September 1952 until October 1953 he commanded the USS MARQUETTE, and in November reported as Director of Training at District Headquarters, Fifth Naval District, Norfolk, Virginia. There he also served as Reserve Coordinator until October 1955 when he was designated Assistant Chief of Staff for Naval Reserves and Training, on the Staff of the Commandant, Fifth Naval District.

Under orders of April 4, 1957, he is now Commanding Officer of the USS GENERAL W. A. MANN (TAP-112).

In addition to the Navy Cross and Gold Star in lieu of the Second Navy Cross, Captain Azer has the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; American Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Service Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one bronze star.

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