

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

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Abbott
Robert L.

COMMANDER ROBERT L. ABBOTT, U. S. NAVY

Robert Lewis Abbott was born in Clarinda, Iowa, on September 5, 1916, son of Lewis F. and Maude E. (Daugherty) Abbott. He attended Parsons College in Fairfield, Iowa, and was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Engineering from Iowa State College at Ames, Iowa. On April 6, 1940, he enlisted in the U. S. Naval Reserve, and as Aviation Cadet had flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, where he was designated Naval Aviator and commissioned Ensign, USNR, on March 15, 1941. Through subsequent advancement and his transfer to the U. S. Navy, he attained the rank of Commander, USN, to date from July 1, 1951.

After a period of indoctrination and flight training at the Reserve Aviation Base, Kansas City, and the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, he remained at the latter station as a Flight Instructor from April 1941 until June of that year. He then reported to the Naval Air Station, Corpus Christi, Texas, where he was serving as Squadron Material Officer and Flight Instructor at the outbreak of World War II in December 1941. Detached in January 1943, he served for three months as Ground Training Officer and Flight Instructor in the Instructors' School at the Naval Air Station, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Reporting in April 1943 to the Staff of Chief, Primary Training Command, at Headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, he served as Material Officer until July 1944, after which for four months he was Flight Safety Officer on the Staff of the Chief Naval Air Primary Training Command, at Headquarters, Naval Air Station, Glenview, Illinois. In November 1944 he went to sea as Assistant Air Officer of the USS SANTEE (CVE-29), and continued duty in that capacity throughout the remainder of the war period, then served as Air Officer from October to December 1945.

He is entitled to the Ribbon for, and a facsimile of, the Presidential Unit Citation awarded the USS SANTEE and her Air Groups "For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy forces in the air, ashore and afloat..." The citation further states: "Operating in the most advanced areas, the USS SANTEE and her attached air squadrons struck with sustained fury at hostile warships, aircraft, merchant shipping and shore installations in the face of frequent and prolonged enemy air attacks. During the historic Battle for Leyte Gulf, the valiant SANTEE withstood successively the shattering explosion of a suicide plane in her flight deck and a torpedo hit in her side, stoutly conducting flight operations and fighting her antiaircraft guns throughout the period of emergency repairs. Despite the strain of constant alerts and long periods of unrelieved action, she sent out her planes to cover our landing operations and land offensives and to destroy the enemy's vital airfields and his camouflaged dispersal areas. The SANTEE's illustrious record of combat achievement reflects the highest credit upon her gallant officers and men and upon the United States Naval Service."

From December 1945 until August 1946 he served as Navigator and Air Officer of the USS SAGINAW BAY (CVE-82), while that vessel was assigned to Magic Carpet operations returning war veterans to their homelands.

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From August 1946 until July 1947 he had Flight Test Desk duty in the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., after which he had postgraduate instruction in Aeronautical Engineering at the Naval Postgraduate School, Annapolis, Maryland, and the University of Minnesota, at Minneapolis. He was awarded the degree of Master of Science in Aeronautical Engineering from the latter and detached in August 1950.

Duty as Executive Officer of Fleet Aircraft Service Squadron 119, operating from Sangley Point, Philippine Islands, from October 1950 until February 1952, was followed by service as Commanding Officer of that squadron. He returned to the United States in August 1953, and in September again was assigned to the Bureau of Aeronautics, this time as Head of the Cruise Control Branch, Power Plants Division. He remained there until October 1956, when he became Executive Officer of the Naval Air Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In addition to the Presidential Unit Citation Ribbon, Commander Abbott has the American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal, Asia Clasp; the National Defense Service Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon.

Prior to entering the Naval Service, Commander Abbott was a Structural Engineer for Clay Equipment Company in Iowa. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge, and was a Boy Scouts Executive.