

*Deceased  
30 July 1974*

## NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

REAR ADMIRAL JOHN W. AILES, III  
UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED

John William Ailes was born in Donora, Pennsylvania, on September 9, 1907, son of Herbert and Margaret Minford Ailes. Graduated from the Peabody (Pittsburgh) High School and Columbian Preparatory School, Washington, D. C., he enrolled in the U. S. Naval Reserve Force in June 1925, and was discharged to accept appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from the Fleet Naval Reserve on June 22, 1926. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 5, 1930, he subsequently advanced in rank to that of Rear Admiral, to date from March 1, 1958.

After graduation in 1930, he joined the USS NEW MEXICO, and while attached to that battleship completed preliminary flight training at the Naval Air Station, San Diego, California. From July 1931 until May 1936, he served successively in the USS PENNSYLVANIA, battleship and the destroyers DENT, CROWNINSHIELD and PHILIP, and from June 1935 in the USS ARCTIC, storeship.

In May 1936 he returned to Annapolis, for instruction in General Ordnance at the Postgraduate School. He also had Bureau of Navigation courses there, then had instruction until June 1938 at the Naval Gun Factory, Washington, D. C., and the Ford Instrument Company, Long Island City, New York. He assisted in fitting out the USS HONOLULU at the Navy Yard, New York, New York, and served in that light cruiser from her commissioning, June 15, 1938, until May 13, 1942. During that period the HONOLULU participated in action at Pearl Harbor, T. H., on December 7, 1941, and on the convoy routes to Australia and the South Pacific in the early months of 1942.

Instruction at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, from June to December 1942, preceded a tour of duty in the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., with additional duty from November 1943, as Liaison Officer between that Bureau and the Incentive Division, Navy Department. In August 1944 he assumed command of the USS CASSIN YOUNG, and for services in command of that destroyer prior to and during the Okinawa operations he was awarded the Navy Cross, the Silver Star Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, and is entitled to the Ribbon for, and a facsimile of the Navy Unit Commendation awarded the USS CASSIN YOUNG. The citations follow, in part:

Navy Cross: "For extraordinary heroism as Commanding Officer of the USS CASSIN YOUNG, in action against enemy Japanese forces off Okinawa, April 12, 1945. When the CASSIN YOUNG was subjected to a coordinated and determined attack by five enemy suicide planes while engaged in picket duty, (he) skillfully directed his vessel in destroying three of the attacking aircraft and, despite the damage sustained after one kamikaze crashed close aboard and another hit the foretop of his ship, succeeded in bringing the CASSIN YOUNG safe to a friendly port..."

Silver Star Medal: "For gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving as Commanding Officer of a United States Destroyer during operations against the enemy in the vicinity of Okinawa Jima, at night, on 29 July 1945. When the flagship of his unit was heavily damaged and sinking as a result of a suicide plane attack, he assumed command of the unit and directed the operations of his own and another destroyer with great skill and daring. In the face of additional suicide plane attacks, he successfully protected the stricken destroyer from further damage, while his ship's gunfire destroyed two enemy planes. At the same time, he directed the rescue of survivors which resulted in saving many lives..."

Bronze Star Medal: "For meritorious achievement as Commanding Officer of the USS CASSIN YOUNG during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the vicinity of Luzon, Formosa, the Ryukyus, French Indo-China, the Japanese Empire and the Bonins and Volcanoes from November 22, 1944 to March 5, 1945. Skilled in the performance of duty, (he) organized his ship to protect important heavy units of our Fleet from enemy submarine, aircraft and surface attacks, persevering in his efforts without interruption despite adverse weather conditions..."

Navy Unit Commendation - USS CASSIN YOUNG: "For outstanding heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces in the vicinity of Okinawa, from March 25 to April 12, 1945; May 30 to June 15, 1945; and July 18 to August 8, 1945...The USS CASSIN YOUNG furnished powerful fire support for our landing operations and covered our ships during retirement. While operating on a radar picket station she sent out early air warnings; rendered aid to a damaged friendly ship by recovering survivors and defeating further air attacks; provided excellent protection to friendly ships at anchor; and with her own gunfire, downed eight planes and assisted in the destruction of two others. When attacked by a suicide plane which crashed aboard on the night of July 30, she effectively controlled the spread of damage and, with only one engine operating, returned to port under her own power..."

Rear Admiral Ailes was also awarded a Purple Heart Medal for wounds received while serving in command of the CASSIN YOUNG, during the Okinawa operations.

Returning to the United States, he had brief duty in the Eleventh Naval District, San Diego, California, and in October 1945 reported for duty as Commander Destroyer Division ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT (later redesignated Destroyer Division SIXTY-TWO). In August 1946 he was ordered to the Bureau of Budget and Reports, Navy Department, and served in the Office of the Director from September 11, 1946 until December 1950.

He served as Chief of Staff and Aide and Operations Officer to Commander Cruiser Division THREE, from January 1951 until October 1952, during which period he was in the HELENA for two cruises to the Korean

combat area. For outstanding service in that assignment he was awarded a Legion of Merit and a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Bronze Star Medal. The citations follow, in part:

Legion of Merit: "For exceptionally meritorious conduct...as Chief of Staff and Aide to Commander Task Group 77.1 during operations against enemy aggressor forces in the Korean Theater from 6 June to 1 October 1952...(He) was eminently successful in discharging his many responsibilities throughout this period and rendered invaluable assistance to the Task Group Commander in the planning and execution of missions against the enemy...His outstanding professional ability, exemplary leadership and zealous devotion to duty were major factors in the success achieved by his organization in operations against the enemy..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Second Bronze Star Medal: "For meritorious service as Chief of Staff to Commander Cruiser Division THREE during operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from 18 April to 2 November 1951...Captain Ailes exhibited a keen insight into the complex techniques of modern naval warfare and rendered invaluable assistance to the Division Commander in planning interdiction, fire support and sea-air rescue missions along the greater part of the east coast of North Korea. Serving as Chief Evaluator in flag plot during actual combat with the enemy, he rendered invaluable assistance to the participating ships in the infliction of extensive damage on the hostile forces..."

For seven months he was Commanding Officer of the USS TIDEWATER (AD-31) and, reporting in May 1953 to the Navy Department he served as Naval Aide to the Under Secretary of the Navy, until September 1955. He assumed command of the USS IOWA (BB-61) in November 1955, and in January 1957 became Director of the Shore Establishment Development and Maintenance Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department. He was Navy Inspector General, Navy Department, from September 1958 to December 1961, when he reported as Commander Destroyer Flotilla SIX, later redesignated Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Flotilla SIX. He had additional duty from May 1962 as Commander Cruiser Division SIX, and from June 3 to July 14, as Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Flotilla EIGHT. On July 27, 1963 he reported as Commander Service Force, Atlantic Fleet. "For exceptionally meritorious conduct...from July 27, 1963 to June 30, 1965 as Commander Service Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet..." he was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit. The citation further states in part:

"Upon assuming command of the Service Force, Rear Admiral Ailes developed and implemented an operational concept which increased the flexibility and extent of mobile logistic support available to the Fleet from the limited and aging resources of his command. He relentlessly pursued the development of improved ships, new equipment and techniques, and the implementation of helicopter replenishment of combat forces. These efforts have contributed to economy and will significantly enhance the management and budgeting of fleet logistics in the future, thereby increasing combat readiness..."

On July 1, 1965 he was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy.

In addition to the Navy Cross, the Silver Star Medal, the Legion of Merit with Gold Star, the Bronze Star Medal with Gold Star, and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, Rear Admiral Ailes has the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal; China Service Medal; United Nations Service Medal; Korean Service Medal; and the Korean Presidential Unit Citation Badge.

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