

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER WALTER B. BAYLESS U. S. NAVY, DECEASED

Walter Burkhardt Bayless was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, son of W. R. and Mamie (Burkhart) Bayless. He attended Central High School in Knoxville, and Marion Military Institute, Marion, Alabama, prior to his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from the Second Tennessee District on June 16, 1932. As a Midshipman he participated in athletics, winning letters in football, basketball, and crew; and qualified as Expert Pistol Shot. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 4, 1936, he subsequently attained the rank of Lieutenant Commander to date from May 1, 1943.

After graduation from the Naval Academy in June 1936, he was ordered to the USS CALIFORNIA, flagship of Commander Battle Force. He served in that battleship until March 1938, and during the next year had duty aboard the USS CLAXTON, a unit of Squadron 40-T. On February 23, 1939 he reported to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, for flight instruction, and was designated Naval Aviator in February 1940.

In March 1940 he was ordered to the USS RANGER for duty with Scouting Squadron 41, based on board. He transferred to Scouting Squadron 42 in April 1941, and was serving as a pilot of that squadron when the United States entered World War II on December 8, 1941. In February 1942 he reported to the Navy Department, Washington, D. C., for duty in the Bureau of Aeronautics until October of that year. He was next ordered to Fleet Air West Coast, San Diego, California, and was assigned to Replacement Fighting Squadron Twelve.

He was officially reported missing in action as of May 4, 1943, when the plane in which he was flying was lost in the Hawaiian Islands area. In compliance with Section 5 of Public Law 490, as amended, death is presumed to have occurred a year and a day later.

Lieutenant Commander Bayless had the American Defense Service Medal and was entitled to the American Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal.

