

Biography: Rear Admiral John M. Alford

Donald R. Alford of Arkansas and Lodwick H. Alford of Georgia sent information on Admiral Alford. Donald sent a biographical sketch and Wick sent an obituary. The following is a composite of the two.

John Morris Alford was born in Galva, IL, on Apr. 13, 1915, son of Dr. John Merlin Alford and Shirley (Foote) Alford. He attended public schools in Galva and Marion Military Institute, Marion, AL, before his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD, in 1932. As a Midshipman he was a member of the Lucky Bag Staff and Midshipman Regimental Commander in 1936. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 4, 1936, he subsequently attained the rank of Rear Admiral on Oct. 1, 1963.

After graduation, he was first assigned to the USS LEXINGTON, operating with Carrier Division 1, Battle Force, in which he served two years as a junior officer. For the next year he had communication duties on the Staff of Commander Battle Force, on the USS CALIFORNIA. In 1939 he joined the USS TENNESSEE of Battleship Division 2, Battle Force, for duty in the Gunnery Department, and became Air Defense Officer of that battleship in 1940. He was on duty in that capacity, his ship at Pearl Harbor, when the Japanese attacked "Battleship Row."

For a few months in 1942 he served as Aide and Flag Lieutenant to Commander Battleship Division 2 on the USS TENNESSEE, and later that year was transferred to the USS ALABAMA for duty in the Gunnery Department. He served as Gunnery Officer of that battleship from April 1944 to the end of hostilities. During that period, the ALABAMA participated in the Gilbert Islands Operation, raids on Truk, the Marianas Operation, and the Occupation of Japan.

He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V"—"For heroic service as Gunnery Officer of the USS ALABAMA, in action against important enemy Japanese industrial installations in Hitachi, Honshu, Japan, on the night of July 17/18 1945. Maintaining the Gunnery Department of his ship at a high level of efficiency and readiness, Commander Alford contributed materially to the heavy damage inflicted on enemy installations during the bombardment despite exceedingly adverse conditions. . ."

In Aug. 1945 he had orders to additional temporary duty as Executive Officer of the 3rd Fleet Landing Force, which went ashore at the Yokosuka Naval Base on Aug. 30, 1945, to assist in preparing that base for American Navy Occupation. He was detached from the ALABAMA in Nov. 1945 for his first tour of shore duty since graduation.

After serving from Dec. 1945 to Oct. 1947 in the Bureau of Naval Personnel (Research Division), he was ordered to command the USS JAMES E. KYES. He assumed command of that destroyer in Jan. 1948, and continued as her Commanding Officer until July 1949. In Oct. 1949 he joined the Staff of Commander 6th Fleet, and served as Fleet Gunnery and Training Officer until July 1951.

He was next a student of the Armed Forces Staff College, Norfolk, VA, completing the course in Feb. 1952, after which he reported for duty in the International Affairs Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. From 1954-1955 he commanded Destroyer Division 122, and on Sept. 21, 1962, he became Commander U. S. Naval Forces, Korea, and served as such until ordered detached in Feb. 1964 for duty as Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Plans, Bureau of Naval Personnel.

After the war, he commanded a destroyer flotilla in the Atlantic and a battleship division in the Pacific, and was gunnery and readiness officer of the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean. In the mid-1960's, he directed a Navy Manpower Retention Task Force that studied ways of retaining enlisted personnel. His last assignment, before retiring from active duty in 1969, was as deputy commander of the Military Sea Transport Service.

In addition to the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V", Rear Admiral Alford has the American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal; National Defense Service Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon.

After his retirement Rear Admiral Alford served as the executive director of the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation from 1971 until shortly before his death. Shortly before his death he received the Navy's Distinguished Civilian Service Award for his work as foundation director. The foundation is a nonprofit organization whose duties included the administration of Carl Vinson Hall, a McLean home for retired service personnel, their spouses and family.

Rear Admiral Alford was married in 1948 to Mrs. Mary Anne (Carlsen) Netherwood from whom he later separated. Living in Alexandria, Virginia, she survived him as did children: John Alford III of Sterling, Stephanie Anne Gould of Florida and Glenna Maria Alford of Alexandria and stepson Douglas Blakeshaw Netherwood of Arlington, Virginia; a sister Josephine Hollister of Galva, Illinois and six grandchildren.