

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

LIEUTENANT (JG) DOUGLAS BAKER
U. S. NAVAL RESERVE, DECEASED

Douglas Baker was born in McClain County, Oklahoma, on August 27, 1921, son of Mr. and Mrs. John E. Baker. He enlisted in the U. S. Naval Reserve for four years on June 30, 1942, early in the World War II period, and on August 7, that year his rating was changed to Aviation Cadet. His enlistment was terminated so he could accept appointment as Ensign, USNR, on August 2, 1943, and on November 1, 1944, he was promoted to Lieutenant (junior grade).

Reporting in August 1943 for temporary duty involving flying at the U. S. Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, after being designated Naval Aviator and commissioned Ensign, USNR, he was detached the same day to the Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida, for further instruction. He left there on October 21 for instruction with the Carrier Qualification Training Unit, Glenview, Illinois, and a week later was sent to the Naval Air Station, San Diego, California, for further assignment by Commander Fleet Air, West Coast. On November 20, that year, he was ordered to Fighting Squadron 20, to which he reported the next day.

Lieutenant Baker, who left the farm to become one of the Navy's leading pilots in the number of enemy planes knocked down in aerial combat, failed to return from the mission on which, for the second time, he bagged four enemy aircraft in one flight. He shot down four enemy planes on October 1, 1944, when he and five other Hellcat pilots destroyed all nine of a flight of Zeros encountered over Formosa, and his last four of his credited sixteen on December 14 during a fighter sweep over Clark Field in the Philippines. He was listed as "Missing in Action" as of December 14, 1944, when the plane in which he was flying, a unit of Fighting Squadron TWENTY, failed to return from a combat mission over enemy airfields on Luzon Island, in the Philippines. In compliance with Section 5 of Public Law 490, as amended, death is presumed to have occurred on the 15th day of December 1945.

Lieutenant (jg) Baker was awarded the Silver Star Medal and a Gold Star in lieu of the Second; the Distinguished Flying Cross and Gold Stars in lieu of the Second, Third and Fourth DFCs; and the Air Medal and Gold Stars in lieu of seven additional Air Medals. He also received a Letter of Commendation with Ribbon, from the Commander Air Force, Atlantic Fleet, "For meritorious service ...as Co-pilot of a non-rigid aircraft during a trans-Atlantic flight which included the longest non-stop flight ever completed by U. S. Navy non-rigid airship..." Citations to the listed decorations follow, in part:

Silver Star Medal: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in aerial flight as Pilot of a Fighter Plane and Leader of a Section in Fighting Squadron TWENTY, attached to the USS ENTERPRISE, operating against enemy Japanese forces in the vicinity of Formosa, October 12, 1944. Assigned to a sweep in the vicinity of Formosa, Ensign Baker approached the area at high altitude and, plunging down to attack, engaged a numerically superior Japanese fighter force despite the intense fire from hostile guns and succeeded in destroying four Japanese planes..."

Gold Star in lieu of Second Silver Star Medal: "For conspicuous gallantry...in the Clark Field Area of Luzon, Philippine Islands, on December 14, 1944.

Sighting a strong force of Japanese aircraft while boldly leading his team in a vigorous pre-dawn sweep against assigned airfields in this heavily fortified area, Lieutenant (jg) Baker immediately engaged the enemy in fierce combat and, diving with unrelenting fury through an intense concentration of antiaircraft fire, blasted four hostile planes from the sky in rapid succession...(and) contributed materially to the extensive and costly damage inflicted on the enemy in this decisive engagement..."

Distinguished Flying Cross: "For distinguishing himself by heroism and extraordinary achievement in operations against the enemy while participating in aerial flight as pilot of a carrier based fighter aircraft, on strikes against enemy installations and aircraft in the Philippines. On October 15, 1944, he attacked superior numbers of enemy aircraft without regard for his own personal safety, and shot down two..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Second DFC: "...as Pilot of a carrier-based fighter airplane on strikes against enemy installations and aircraft in the Philippine Islands. On 18 October 1944 he courageously attacked superior enemy forces and shot down three aircraft..."

Gold Star in lieu of the Third DFC: "For extraordinary achievement in aerial flight as a Pilot in Fighting Squadron TWENTY,...in the Philippine Islands Area on November 11, 1944. Participating in an extremely dangerous mission over enemy-controlled territory, Lieutenant (jg) Baker courageously attacked Japanese destroyers in the face of terrific anti-aircraft fire, scoring a direct hit on one ship and damaging two others by his skillful strafing..."

Gold Star in lieu of Fourth DFC: "For heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight as Pilot of a Fighter Plane in Fighting Squadron TWENTY, attached to the USS ENTERPRISE, during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Pacific War Area from September 15 to October 12, 1944. Completing his twentieth mission during this period, Ensign Baker participated in air support missions and in strafing and rocket attacks against enemy installations and positions..."

The Air Medal and Gold Stars in lieu of additional Air Medals were awarded for meritorious achievement on (1) November 14, 1944, when he blasted one enemy plane from the skies and destroyed three on the ground; (2) November 19, 1944, when he destroyed nine enemy aircraft on the ground and damaged an additional two; (3) November 13, 1944, when he destroyed one of the enemy's grounded planes and blasted two out of the sky; (4) October 25 and 27, 1944, when he attacked a hostile destroyer and obtained devastating hits with rockets and machine guns despite intense antiaircraft fire from many units of the Jap fleet; and (5, 6, 7 and 8) for completing five missions each during the periods August 31 to September 6, September 7 to 10, September 10 to 15, and October 13 to 20, 1944, respectively.

In addition to the Silver Star Medal with Gold Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross with three Gold Stars, the Air Medal with seven Gold Stars, and the Commendation Ribbon, Lieutenant Baker was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart Medal and was entitled to the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with six bronze stars; the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with two bronze stars; and the World War II Victory Medal.

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Navy Office of Information
Biographies Branch
24 February 1960