

VICE ADMIRAL ALVA DOUGLAS BERNHARD
U.S. NAVY, RETIRED

Alva Douglas Bernhard was born in Enterprise, Pennsylvania, on March 9, 1886. He attended public schools in Lawrence, Kansas, and the University of Kansas at Lawrence, before his appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from Kansas in 1905. Graduated in June 1909, he served the two years at sea then required by law before he was commissioned Ensign in June 1911 and subsequently attained the rank of Admiral on September 19, 1942, to rank from November 23, 1941. He was transferred to the Retired List of the Navy in the rank of Vice Admiral on November 1, 1946.

After graduation in 1909, he joined the USS KANSAS and served in that battleship until July 1914, when he was assigned duty under instruction at the Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, Rhode Island. Completing the course in September 1914, he served for a year in the USS BALCH, and in September 1915 reported for duty at the Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. While in that duty he devised a firing lock which he named the "Mark XIV", and used on all calibers of naval rifles above four inches.

In May 1917, at the outbreak of World War I he was assigned additional duty as aide to the Commandant of the Washington Navy Yard and continued in similar duty on the staff when the latter was assigned additional duty in connection with a U.S. Mission to Russia. This group was headed by the Honorable Elihu Root, then Secretary of State, and visited all Russian Naval Bases in the Arctic Ocean, Baltic Sea and Black Sea. The mission was in Sevastopol, Headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet, when that fleet revolted. After his return to the United States he served as aide and disbursing officer to a special Russian diplomatic mission headed by Vice Admiral Koltchak, who had commanded the Russian Black Sea Fleet at the time of the revolt.

In September 1917 he was assigned duty as Senior Staff Officer to the Commander Squadron 1, Battleship Force 1, Atlantic Fleet. He served in that assignment until May 1918 when he was transferred to duty as gunnery officer of the USS KANSAS, engaged in escorting convoys in the North Atlantic. From August 1919 until February 1920 he served in the USS NEW MEXICO, flagship of the Pacific Fleet. The following year he successively commanded the destroyers BAILEY, RADFORD, and the DENT. In January 1921 he reported for duty in the Bureau of Ordnance, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.

From April 1924 until October 1926, he commanded the USS LITCHFIELD, which became the flagship of Destroyer Squadron 12, Pacific Fleet, and twice won the battle efficiency pennant for destroyer

squadrons of the United States Fleet. Detached from that command in October 1926 he was ordered to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, for flight training. Designated naval aviator, August 30, 1927, he remained at Pensacola until November 1927. On December 5, 1927, he assumed command of the USS AROOSTOOK, in which command he served until July 1929. He then reported for duty in command of the Naval Air Station, Coco Solo, Canal Zone, and in April 1931 was assigned duty in command of Aircraft Squadrons and attending craft based on that naval air station. In July his title was changed to Commander, Aircraft Squadrons and attending craft, Fleet Air Base, Coco Solo, with additional duty as Commanding Officer of the Fleet Air Base.

In June 1932 he assumed duty as Commander, Patrol Squadron 9, attached to the USS ARGONNE. From April 1933 until June 1934 he served as executive officer of the aircraft carrier LEXINGTON. The following three years he was head of the Plans and Administration Section of the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D.C. In June 1937 he reported for duty as Chief of Staff and Aide to the Commander, Aircraft, Base Force, later redesignated Scouting Force, serving consecutively under Admirals Ernest J. King, and Charles A. Blakely, in the flagships WRIGHT and MEMPHIS.

On June 17, 1939, Vice Admiral Bernhard assumed command of the USS LEXINGTON. After his return to the United States, he was ordered in August 1940 to Corpus Christi, Texas, as prospective Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Station to be established there. In that assignment he was responsible for the planning, constructing, organizing and operating of the Navy's newest and largest air station. Detached during the early months of World War II he was assigned in April 1942 duty as Commander, Patrol Wings, Atlantic Fleet. He expanded that organization to cover the entire Atlantic Ocean in combating the German submarine menace, and participated in the occupation of Northwest Africa by establishing a Patrol Wing in that area.

After brief duty as Commander, Aircraft, Atlantic Fleet, he was transferred in March 1943 to duty as Commander Task Force 22, which operated in the North Atlantic and with the British Home Fleet based at Scapa Flow. Transferred to the Pacific area he reported in October 1943 to the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, T.H. He participated in the Gilberts campaign as aviation advisor on the staff of Commander, Fifth Fleet. In the Marshall campaign, during the occupation period, he commanded Garrison Forces, Kwajalein Atoll, Marshalls Sub Area and later Marshalls-Gilberts area, comprising 2,250,000 square miles, and was responsible for its defense and development. He was Deputy Military Governor of the area for Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, who was then Military Governor of the Pacific Ocean Area.

He instituted and made effective the first U.S. Civil Government in conquered Japanese territory, and performed air command functions for all Naval and Marine units in the Gilberts, Marshalls and Marianas, including the assignment of personnel and distribution of aircraft supplies and services. He was awarded the Legion of Merit with Combat "V" for "exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States as Atoll Commander of Kwajalein from February 5 to October 1, 1944; and as Commander, Marshall Islands Sub-Area, from May 1 to October 1, 1944. An inspiring leader and brilliant organizer, (he) contributed materially to the successful initial occupation, organization, and development of major bases of the Marshall Islands, and subsequently planned and executed the efficient neutralization and control of twenty-two outlying enemy-held atolls...."

On January 5, 1945, he assumed command of Naval Air Bases, Eleventh Naval District, San Diego, California. In July 1946 he was ordered relieved of all active duty pending his retirement on November 1, 1946.

In addition to the Legion of Merit with Combat "V", Vice Admiral Bernhard has the Victory Medal, Escort Clasp (USS KANSAS); the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp (USS LEXINGTON); the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with one star; the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal with three stars; the American Campaign Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal.

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