

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

REAR ADMIRAL JOHN S. CHRISTIANSEN, UNITED STATES NAVY

John Saabye Christiansen was born in London, England, on June 8, 1923. He enlisted in the U. S. Naval Reserve on February 25, 1941 and had "boot" training at the Naval Training Station, Norfolk, Virginia. During the period June to September 1941, he attended Aviation Machinist's Mate Hydraulic Mechanic School at Norfolk, after which he served as a Mechanic with Patrol Squadron SEVENTY-FOUR. Assigned in February 1942 to Fighting Squadron SEVENTY-FOUR, he served as Plane Captain with that squadron until June of that year and the next month joined Headquarters Squadron ELEVEN as Crew Chief.

Ordered to Pre-Flight School at the University of Georgia at Athens, he was a student there from October to December 1942, then had flight training at the Naval Air Stations, Pensacola and Jacksonville, Florida. He was designated Naval Aviator and commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Naval Reserve on September 1, 1943. Advancing progressively in rank, he subsequently attained that of Rear Admiral; to date from June 1, 1971, having transferred from the Naval Reserve to the U. S. Navy on November 9, 1953.

After receiving his "Wings" in 1943, he joined Fighting Squadron SIXTEEN, based on the USS LEXINGTON, and "for heroism and extraordinary achievement...during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the vicinity of the Marianas Islands, June 12 and 19, 1944..." he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He was also awarded Gold Stars in lieu of the Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Air Medals for completing thirty-five missions from March 18 to July 6, 1944 and is entitled to the Ribbon for and a facsimile of the Presidential Unit Citation awarded the USS LEXINGTON.

In July 1944 he joined Bomber Fighting Squadron SIXTEEN. He was awarded the Air Medal "for meritorious achievement...during operations against enemy forces in the Japanese Homeland from July 10 to 28, 1945..." and the Navy Cross "for extraordinary heroism...in action against enemy Japanese forces at Honshu, Japan, July 18, 1945..." He was also awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Eighth Air Medal for completing his fortieth mission over the Japanese Home Islands.

From September to November 1945, he was assigned to the Instrument School, Atlanta, Georgia, after which he served as an Instructor with Squadron TWO-E at the Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Kingsville, Texas. Released from active duty, he attended Florida Southern College at Lakeland and Stetson University, DeLand, Florida, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Laws. In 1950 he was admitted to the Florida Bar.

Returning to active naval service in February 1951, he reported as Operations Officer with Fighter Squadron SEVEN HUNDRED FORTY-TWO. In January 1953 he became Flight Test Officer in the Office of the Bureau of Aeronautics Representative, Dallas, Texas, where he remained until June 1955. Completing instruction at the General Line School, Monterey, California, in December 1955, he next served as Maintenance Officer with Experimental Squadron FOUR. From January to June 1958 he attended the Armed Forces Staff College, Norfolk, Virginia, after which he was attached to Fleet Air, Jacksonville, headquartered at the Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida, for training.

In October 1958 he assumed command of Fighter Squadron ELEVEN and after the decommissioning of that squadron in February 1959 reported for training as Prospective Commanding Officer with Fighter Squadron ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY FOUR. He became Commanding Officer of Fighter Squadron THIRTY-TWO, which was deployed to the Mediterranean, and in October 1961 was detached for duty as Assistant for Legal Matters in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air), Navy Department, Washington, D. C. From February 1963 to July 1964 he was in command of Carrier Air Wing SIX, which had two Mediterranean deployments on board the USS ENTERPRISE, after which he had instruction at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island.

He became Commander Ready Attack Carrier Air Wing FOUR in June 1965 and during the period August 1967 to October 1968 commanded the USS TAPPAHANNOCK (AO-43), which deployed to Western Pacific. In November 1968 he assumed command of the USS CONSTELLATION (CVA-64), which also participated in a Western Pacific cruise, and "for exceptionally meritorious conduct...as Commanding Officer, USS CONSTELLATION (CVA-64), Commander Task Group 77.7, 77.3 and 71.0 from November 27, 1968 to January 23, 1969 and September 12, 1969 to January 23, 1970..." he was awarded the Legion of Merit with Combat "V". He is also entitled to the Ribbon for and a facsimile of the Meritorious Unit Commendation awarded the USS CONSTELLATION.

From January to October 1970 he headed the Aviation Plans Branch, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, after which he served as Deputy Director of the National Military Command Center, J-3, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D. C. He was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit for "...his analytical evaluation of the operational information and assessment of politico-military situations (which) greatly enhanced the capability of the National Command Authorities in their planning and execution of actions concerning vital national and international matters..."

He assumed command of Carrier Division SEVEN in February 1972 and "for exceptionally meritorious conduct...from June 1972 to February 1973 during intensive combat operations in Southeast Asia as Commander Carrier Division SEVEN, Commander Task Groups 77.6 and

77.8 and for designated periods as Commander Task Group 77.0..." he was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Third Legion of Merit. The citation further states in part:

"As Yankee Station Commander during the most critical eight months of the long Vietnam conflict, Rear Admiral Christiansen demonstrated a complete depth of aerial strike warfare knowledge and a thorough comprehension of the complicated Southeast Asia rules of engagement while providing superb direction to the record number of ships and aircraft comprising Task Force 77..."

In April 1973 he reported as Director of the Aviation Plans and Requirements Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department and in November of that year became Assistant Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air Warfare).

In addition to the Navy Cross, the Legion of Merit with two Gold Stars and Combat "V", the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with seven Gold Stars, the Presidential Unit Citation Ribbon, and the Meritorious Unit Commendation Ribbon, Rear Admiral Christiansen has the Good Conduct Medal (for enlisted service); China Service Medal; 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 with bronze star; Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; Vietnam Service Medal with six stars; Philippine Defense Ribbon; Philippine Liberation Ribbon and the Philippine Independence Ribbon. He also has the National Order of Vietnam (Fifth Class) Cross with Palm from the Republic of Vietnam; Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Meritorious Unit Citation (Gallantry Cross) and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device.