

CAPTAIN HAL K. EDWARDS
UNITED STATES NAVY

Hal Knox Edwards was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, on October 2, 1908, son of Hal K. Edwards, Sr., and Mrs. (Mollie Gallagher) Edwards. He graduated from St. Paul High School in 1925 and in 1929 received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis. He also had instruction in law for one year. He enlisted as a Seamna Second Class in the U. S. Naval Reserve on April 1, 1927, and had primary flight training at Great Lakes, Illinois, in August and September of that year.

During the period September 1927-March 1928 he was on inactive duty, followed by active duty in connection with flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida. He returned to inactive status in July 1928, and in May 1929 was commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Naval Reserve. He was designated Naval Aviator in September of the same year. Advancing progressively in rank, he subsequently attained that of Captain, to date from July 1, 1949, having served in that rank (temporary) from May 3 to December 1, 1947. He was transferred from the Naval Reserve to the Regular Navy on January 1, 1939.

Upon receiving his commission in 1929, he joined Scouting Squadron TWO, attached to the USS SARATOGA, to serve as Assistant Engineer Officer until July 1930. He again had a period of inactive duty which extended to May 1936, during which time he was engaged in newspaper work in Minnesota and California, and had duty with the Organized Reserve at the Naval Air Stations, Minneapolis and Long Beach.

Ordered into active Naval service, he was assigned to the Naval Air Station, Long Beach, California, for duty in connection with training and drilling Naval Reserves. In October 1936 he transferred to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, where he served as an Instructor and as Education and Material Officer. He remained there until April 1941 and the next month joined the USS MARYLAND as Senior Naval Aviator with Observation Squadron FOUR. He was on board the MARYLAND berthed at Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, when the Japanese attacked the Naval Base there, December 7, 1941. After the attack, he participated in aircraft searches for the enemy fleet in OS2U aircraft.

Late in December 1941 he joined Utility Squadron ONE based at Pearl Harbor, and from September 1942 until April 1943 was in command of that squadron. While attached to that squadron, he was engaged in search operations, air-sea rescue operations and the usual utility services. He next put into commission and commanded Utility Squadron NINE, consisting of fifty multi and single engine land planes and amphibians. The squadron proceeded to the South Pacific in May 1943, bringing the first PV-1's to the area. In January 1944 he assumed additional duty as Commander Utility Squadrons, South Pacific.

Under his command, Utility Squadron NINE operated in the Guadalcanal-New Hebrides area, participating in combat air patrols and searches from the Ellice Islands to Tarawa, including single plane searches from Guadalcanal to thirty miles from the main enemy airbase at Kahili, Bougainville Island. The squadron also engaged in air-sea rescue, medical and food services to friendly natives on outlying islands, and tow target services of all types to all allied forces in the area. The squadron was commended by the Senior Navy, Marine, Army and New Zealand officers in the area for its outstanding service.

He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal "for meritorious achievement in connection with operations against the enemy...at Pearl Harbor and at Espiritu Santo, from December 1941 to February 1945..." The citation continues in part: "By his initiative, determination and outstanding leadership, (he) contributed materially to the increased efficiency and high standards attained in the services rendered the Fleet by the utility wing. He worked untiringly in rendering invaluable antiaircraft training, radar tracking, fighter director, photographic and other utility aircraft services to Fleet, Marine and Army units in urgent need of these services..."

In February 1945 he reported as Executive Officer on board the USS KADASHAN BAY. Following the cessation of hostilities in August 1945, that aircraft carrier escort was engaged on "Magic Carpet" operations -- returning veterans of the Pacific to the United States. He was in command of the KADASHAN BAY, February-June 1946, during the period she was undergoing inactivation at the South Boston (Massachusetts) Navy Yard. He next had instruction at the Naval School, General Line, Newport, Rhode Island, and in June 1947 became Head of the Technical Training and Airborne Electronics Section, Aviation Training Branch, Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air), Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

From August 1950 until November 1952, he was Deputy Commander 1500th Air Transport Wing, Pacific Division, Military Air Transport Service, after which he served as Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Station, Denver, Colorado. In July 1953 he became Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Station, St. Louis, Missouri, and in June 1955 reported as U. S. Naval Attache and U. S. Naval Attache for Air, Tangier, Morocco, his present assignment.

In addition to the Bronze Star Medal, Captain Edwards has the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with star; the World War II Victory Medal; the Navy Occupation Service Medal, Asia Clasp; the China Service Medal; and the National Defense Service Medal.

Captain Edwards hobbies are oil painting, writing, education, fishing and hunting. While attending the University of Minnesota and after graduation, he participated in amateur boxing for several years. For three years he played indoor (small field) polo.

NAVY Biographies Branch, OI-450
25 July 1956