

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

CAPTAIN CLAUDE P. EKAS, JR., UNITED STATES NAVY

Claude Philip Ekas, Jr., was born in Duncan, Oklahoma, on April 16, 1926, son of Claude P. and Daisy (Hain) Ekas. He attended Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College at College Station, prior to entering the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, on appointment from the State of Texas in 1944. Graduated with the Class of 1948 on June 6, 1947, he was commissioned Ensign and subsequently advanced in rank to that of Captain, to date from July 1, 1968. His selection for the rank of Rear Admiral was approved by the President on January 30, 1974.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy in 1947, he reported on board the USS OGLETHORPE (AKA-100) and in August 1948 transferred to the USS NAVASOTA (AO-106). Detached from that oiler in February 1949, he next had flight training at the Naval Air Stations, Pensacola, Florida and Corpus Christi, Texas. He was designated Naval Aviator on August 3, 1950 and the next month joined Fleet Aircraft Service Squadron SEVEN. From December 1950 to March 1953 he served with Attack Squadron FIFTY-FIVE and in that assignment had two Korean deployments participating in eighty-eight missions. He was awarded the Air Medal and Gold Stars in lieu of the Second, Third and Fourth Air Medals for twenty missions each over an active combat area in Korea from June 30, 1951 to November 23, 1952. He was also awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Fifth Air Medal and cited as follows:

"For meritorious achievement...as Pilot of an Attack Plane in Attack Squadron FIFTY-FIVE, based on board the USS ESSEX during operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea on October 20, 1952. While performing a rescue mission over a friendly pilot shot down in the Hwach'on-ni area, (he) carried out repeated low-level attacks against an enemy position in the face of intense hostile small-arms fire to divert fire from the stricken airman. Although the rudder controls of his plane were shot out during the course of the attack, he skillfully maneuvered the damaged aircraft and continued to press home his attacks on the objective until a helicopter arrived and the downed pilot was recovered. By his marked courage, skilled airmanship and selfless devotion to duty, Lieutenant, Junior Grade, Ekas contributed directly to the return of the airman to friendly territory..."

In addition, he is entitled to the Ribbon for the Navy Unit Commendation awarded the USS ESSEX.

In March 1953 he joined Air Development Squadron FOUR and while in that assignment participated in air-to-air missile development. He was detached in July 1953 for instruction at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, from which he received the degree of Bachelor of Science in aeronautical engineering. From August 1955 to June 1956 he continued instruction at Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, receiving the degree of Master of Science. Following a

Captain Ekas is a member of the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences.

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