

## Getting to Know . . .

*Those who have read the past several issues of the quarterly have read some of the work of the subject of this Getting to Know... Those who were members back in the early days of the association will remember his President's Precept that graced the front page of the quarterly for many years.*

*If you have not read the following you might want to read them in addition to this article.*

*Papa Struck It Rich-But Then Summer 2000, #49, page 18*

*Eureka: Proving An Ancestor In Wake County, NC Spring 2000 #48, page 58*

*It s Our 13<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Winter 2000 #47, page 47*

*When the Association was organized he answered the call and became our first president, and chairman of the board. When we needed help editing the quarterly he answered the call with an article each time.*

### BIOGRAPHY

of

#### LODWICK HOUSTON ALFORD

Captain Alford was born 1914 in Georgia, grew up and attended the public schools in Sylvester, Worth County of that state.

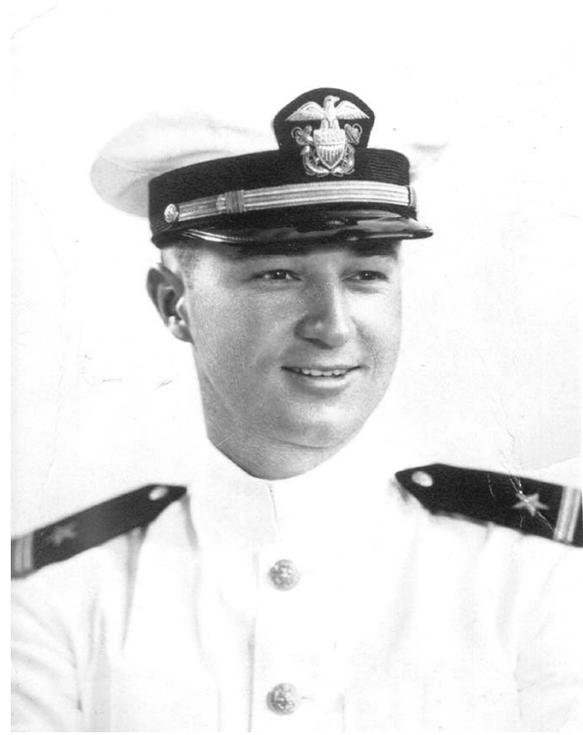


In 1932 he enlisted in the Navy and served in two battleships before he was appointed in 1934 to the US Naval Academy by the Secretary of the Navy. He entered and graduated with the Class of 1938.

Commissioned ensign in 1938 he was assigned briefly to the light cruiser HONOLULU before reporting to the new light cruiser PHOENIX for a two year tour of duty. After a brief assignment to the

Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida he was ordered to the Asiatic Fleet. Upon arrival in Manila, P.I. he was assigned to the old four stack destroyer STEWART reporting on board in late December 1940. He was gunnery officer of that ship then anchored peacefully in the harbor of Tarakan on the east coast of the island of Borneo when hostilities started with Japan early on the morning of 8 December, 1941.

In a wild-melee night battle with Japanese forces landing on the south coast of the island of Bali early on 20 February, 1942, STEWART was superficially damaged. Proceeding to



the Dutch naval base at Surabaya, Java for quick repairs, the ship entered a floating dry dock only to keel over at about a 40 degree angle which did considerably more damage than the enemy shells and requiring months to repair. Because of the imminent capture of the city by the enemy, the ship had to be abandoned to avoid the crew being made prisoners of war. The ship was later raised, repaired by the Japanese and served in their navy for the remainder of the war. At the end

of the war her Japanese skipper committed hara-kiri and the ship was found anchored near Hiroshima, again abandoned but afloat. Ex-STEWART was recovered by the US Navy, repaired, recommissioned and brought home to San Francisco only to be sunk for target practice a few months later.

Ltjg Alford escaped from Surabaya on board the sistership PARROTT and later from Java on the yacht/gunboat



ISABEL. After a harrowing voyage in the Indian Ocean, she narrowly avoided overwhelming enemy forces and arrived at Fremantle, West Australia in early March, 1942. Later that year Mr. Alford was promoted to full lieutenant and reassigned to the staff of Commander Patrol Wing Ten, with HQ in Perth, West Australia. Lieutenant Alford was awarded the Bronze Star Medal

with the Combat V device authorized for combat service in the Asiatic Fleet.

In early 1943 he returned to the states for a glorious reunion in San Francisco with his bride of only two months when he left her two years and two months earlier. Lieutenant Alford was then assigned to the new light cruiser MOBILE as assistant gunnery officer. The ship participated in the raids on Wake and Marcus Islands, the Gilberts-Tarawa campaign, the Solomons and the Marshalls campaigns. In the Tarawa assault his ship was located just a few hundred yards off the beach at Betio Island and he witnessed the terrible carnage of the marines before Betio was taken. Indeed the six inch guns of his ship MOBILE proved to be ineffective against the concrete defenses and battleships with bigger guns had to be brought in. In the Solomons campaign near Guadalcanal his ship engaged enemy aircraft in an all-night battle and as air defense officer Lieutenant Alford was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat V authorized for effective defense characterized by fire discipline.

In the spring of 1944 Lieutenant Alford was again returned to the United States where he was promoted to lieutenant commander and reassigned to the new construction aircraft carrier BENNINGTON as gunnery officer. The ship was then building in the New York Naval Shipyard and after completion of fitting out and shakedown cruise the ship joined the Pacific Fleet in early 1945. BENNINGTON participated in the Iwo Jima and Okinawa campaigns characterized by fierce kamikazi aircraft attacks upon the carriers. All the carriers were hit except the BENNINGTON and Lieutenant Commander Alford was again awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat V device authorized for effective defense in shooting down several enemy planes. While aboard BENNINGTON his only son Kirkland was born in May 1945.

Returning home in mid-1945 he attended a short course at the Naval War College, Newport, RI. In early 1946 he was promoted to the rank of commander and reassigned as personnel officer for the Commander Destroyer Force, Atlantic Fleet homeported at Portland, Maine but shortly changed to Newport, Rhode Island. In mid-1947 Commander Alford was reassigned to the Fleet Training Group at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. As damage control officer he assisted in the shakedown training of new ships and refresher training of ships completing shipyard overhauls. In the summer of 1949 he was ordered to Washington, DC for duty in the Navy Department Bureau of Naval Personnel. As officer detail for destroyers and small combatant ships, his responsibility was keeping the ships manned by right numbers of competent officers. Upon the outbreak of the Korean War in mid-1950, the Pacific Fleet was almost doubled requiring hundreds of ships coming out of mothballs and recall to active duty of thousands of reserve officers. Amid the doubled workload, eighteen hour days and sleepless nights, his only daughter Andrea was born to him and wife Katherine.

In 1952 Commander Alford was ordered to command of the Pacific Fleet escort destroyer RENSHAW (DDE 499) homeported at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Deploying to Task Force 77 in the Far East, the ship participated in attacks on the Korean peninsula, shore bombardment at Wonsan and plane guarding for a British Royal Navy aircraft carrier. Returning to Hawaii RENSHAW participated in the 1954 atomic bomb tests including the first hydrogen bomb at Bikini Atoll. For service as captain of RENSHAW, Commander Alford was again awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat V device.

Returning to Washington, DC in the summer of 1954, Commander Alford was assigned to the Pentagon in the readiness and training section of the Office of the Chief of

Naval Operations. In 1956 he was directed to attend the year course at the National War College, also in Washington. Upon completion of the course he was promoted to captain and reassigned as assistant chief of staff and operations officer of the Commander Destroyer Force, Atlantic Fleet, homeported at Newport, Rhode Island. In this capacity he planned and executed for the US Navy, the grand opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway to Navy ships, attended by President Eisenhower and Queen Elizabeth. Subsequently he commanded Destroyer Division 202 homeported in Newport, RI which consisted of four destroyers engaged in anti-submarine hunter/killer training operations in the Atlantic and Mediterranean.

Returning to Newport Captain Alford took command of the 18,000 ton destroyer repair ship YOSEMITE, cruising to Norfolk, Charleston, Jacksonville, Key West, Guantanamo Bay and Bermuda. In 1961 he returned to the Pentagon in Washington and directed the Reserve Fleet for the office of the Chief of Naval Operations. In this capacity he disposed of surplus ships-some sold for scrap, some given to states or cities as museums such as USS ALABAMA at Mobile, AL and USS NORTH CAROLINA at Wilmington, NC. At one time it was no idle boast that he had disposed of more battleships than the Japanese did at Pearl Harbor.

On completing his Masters Degree in International Affairs at the George Washington University, Washington in 1963, Captain Alford returned to his beloved deep blue sea as Commander Destroyer Squadron 22 consisting of eight destroyers homeported at Norfolk, VA. Operations were almost entirely in the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean Sea with many exotic ports of call in France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Gibraltar and North Africa. It was the crowning sea duty assignment of his career with spouse Katherine joining at some ports for official rounds of receptions, parties and entertainments.

But alas, there was keen competition for these choice sea duty assignments and inevitably he had to give way to another aspirant bucking for promotion to admiral flag rank. In 1964 Captain Alford returned to the Pentagon for the last time in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs. It was an unhappy time of trying to convince Secretary McNamara and his whiz kids that Vietnam was no way to fight a war. In 1967 and not having been selected for admiral he decided to hang up his suit, cash in his chips, sell the farm, retire or however one describes the act of getting the hell out of there. It appeared it would only get worse. It did. On 1 October, 1967 Captain Alford retired from active duty after twenty-nine years commissioned service, two years enlisted service and four years at the Naval Academy,

totaling thirty-five years in the Navy.

On retirement Captain Alford went with Diners Club, Travel Division and set up a franchised travel agency in downtown Washington just a few blocks from the White House. The agency was an immediate success but after four years and increasing illness of close relatives down in Georgia, it was decided to sell interest in the travel agency and return to his native state. In 1973 Captain Alford and wife Katherine moved from their home of twenty years in Chevy Chase, Maryland to their newly built home "Laughing Place" just one block from his beloved ocean on Sea Island, near St. Simons and Brunswick on the coast of Georgia.

In retirement Captain Alford indulged in less than satisfying game of golf but soon found it interfered with his surf fishing and gave up the golf. A great event of the Alford's was the acquisition in early 1978 of a 38 ft. sailboat which was named GANYMEDE. Long cruises of three or more months were made on both coasts of Florida, two voyages up the east coast to Newport, RI for the America's Cup races, two voyages to the Bahamas and numerous short trips. But the illness of wife Katherine curtailed anymore long voyages. After her death in 1993, lack of available crewmen and increasing age further reduced sailing. With lack of use and increased docking and maintenance costs, the boat was disposed of in 1999. Sadness and tears!

In 1994 Captain Alford married a high school classmate and sweetheart Frances DuPriest Park who had been a widow for thirty years back in the old home town for both of us, Sylvester, GA. Those who have met her can attest she is a magnificent and gracious lady, elegant, patrician, and beautiful. Captain and Frances Alford continue in retirement reveling in the joys and heartaches of their children. He has two grandsons and two granddaughters. She has one granddaughter and two grandsons. They are members of the St. Simons United Methodist Church where he teaches the Men's Bible Class. Captain Alford is a member of the Retired Officers Association, US Naval Academy Alumni, George Washington University Alumni, The New York Yacht Club, The Alford American Family Association, the High Family Association, the National Genealogical Society, the North Carolina Genealogical Society, the Georgia Genealogical and the Wake County(NC) Genealogical Society, the Antique Automobile Club of America, the Civil War Round Table of Coastal Georgia and the Mercedes-Benz Club of America.

Peace!