



UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

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Pride & Tradition

Class Genealogy

USNA Class of 1963

Roger Mehle

My father, **Roger W. Mehle** was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on October 16, 1915. He died on August 30, 1997. A 1933 graduate of Cincinnati's Walnut High School, he was appointed to the Naval Academy in 1933 and commissioned as an ensign in June of 1937. After serving a junior officer tour on the battleship New Mexico, he reported to flight training at Pensacola in July of 1939. In the Fall of 1940, he reported to Fighting Squadron Six, flying F-3Fs off the USS Enterprise (CV-6). He was at sea on the Enterprise when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. In the immediate aftermath of Pearl Harbor, he flew the F-4F Wildcat in fierce action over the Marshall and Gilbert Islands and was promoted to Executive Officer of Fighting Six. He received his first Distinguished Flying Cross from Admiral Chester Nimitz, CINCPAC, on the flight deck of Enterprise for his part in those campaigns. My father is third from the right in ranks in the first picture (after award of the DFC) and fourth from the right in the second (before award) See photos. Halsey was aboard, but Nimitz conferred decorations on my father and several others that day.



Roger Mehle third from right



Roger Mehle fourth from right

A remark that Nimitz made to my father foreshadowing the Battle of Midway -- which the rank and file did not know was coming -- is often cited in historical accounts of the event -- "I think you'll have a chance to earn another medal in a couple of days." At the Battle of Midway, he shot down his fifth enemy aircraft, thus becoming one of the Navy's first World War II "aces". In the Spring of 1944, returning from flight instructor duty in Florida, he reported for a second combat tour in the Pacific as Commander, Air Group 28, and Commanding Officer, Fighting Squadron 28, flying F-6F Hellcats off the USS Monterey (CVL 26). He participated in wide ranging combat operations, both air-to-air and air-to-ground, over Tinian, the Marianas, the Philippine Sea, Wake Island, the Carolines, the Philippines, and Formosa. He was awarded the Silver Star and a second Distinguished Flying Cross for these actions. Ultimately, he earned the designation of "double ace", with 13½ air victories, two additional probable victories, 24 aircraft destroyed on the ground, and thousands of tons of enemy shipping sunk. In early 1945, he was appointed project officer of the fighter design branch of the Bureau of Aeronautics, and participated in the development and introduction of jet fighter aircraft of various configurations into Naval Aviation. In 1955, having served as Executive Officer of the USS Coral Sea (CVA 43), he was promoted to captain, and in 1957 took command of the USS Cape Esperance (CVU 88) in the Pacific. In 1960, he assumed command of the USS Saratoga (CVA 60), cruising the Atlantic and Mediterranean. Promoted to rear admiral in 1964, he commanded Carrier Divisions One and Five in the Pacific in 1967, and served as Commander, Attack Carrier Striking Force (CTF-77), embarked on the USS Forrestal (CVA 59), which conducted the Navy's strike operations against military targets in North and South Viet Nam. In 1968, Rear Admiral Mehle was assigned as Commander, Fleet Air Norfolk, and subsequently commanded the Naval Safety Center until his retirement from active duty in 1970.