

Bruce Van Voorhis

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Bruce Avery Van Voorhis (January 29, 1908 - July 6, 1943) was a United States Navy aviator who was shot down in the Pacific theater during World War II. For his action on July 6, 1943, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

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Biography

Van Voorhis was born on January 29, 1908 in Aberdeen, Washington and grew up in Nevada. He was appointed to the United States Naval Academy in June 1925.

Following graduation from the Academy on June 6, 1929, Ensign Van Voorhis reported for duty in the battleship USS *Mississippi* (BB-41). That assignment lasted until November 1930 when he transferred to the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida for aviation training.

He received his wings on September 3, 1931 and was assigned to the USS *Maryland* as a member of Observation Squadron 4B (VO-4B). In June 1934, he transferred to Bombing Squadron 5B on board the aircraft carrier USS *Ranger* (CV-4), and soon thereafter, to VB-2B attached to USS *Saratoga* (CV-3). From July 1935 until May 1937, he served in the Panama Canal Zone and flew patrols from Coco Solo with Patrol Squadron 2F (VP-2F). The following

June, Van Voorhis returned to carrier-based aviation and served first in USS *Enterprise* (CV-6), then in USS *Yorktown* (CV-5), and finally back to *Enterprise*. In June 1940, Van Voorhis joined the aviation unit assigned to the light cruiser USS *Honolulu* (CL-48) where he served for a year. In July 1941, he reported for duty at the Naval Air Station, Anacostia, where he served until November 1942.

Bruce Avery Van Voorhis



Medal of Honor

Born	January 29, 1908 Aberdeen, Washington
Died	July 6, 1943 (aged 35) Over the Solomon Islands
Place of burial	Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery St. Louis County, Missouri
Allegiance	United States of America
Service/branch	United States Navy
Years of service	1929 - 1943
Rank	Commander
Commands held	Bombing Squadron 102
Battles/wars	World War II
Awards	Medal of Honor

In December 1942, Van Voorhis, a Lieutenant Commander since July, assumed command of VP-14, but soon thereafter took command of VB-102. While serving in that capacity, LCDR Van Voorhis was killed near Hare Island of the Kapingamarangi Atoll, the southernmost of the Eastern Caroline Islands. After a 700-mile flight alone, LCDR Van Voorhis launched successive bombing and strafing attacks on the enemy ground installations. During his attack, he succeeded in destroying a radio station, anti-aircraft emplacements, and at least one airborne fighter as well as three others on the water. However, the strength of Japanese aerial opposition eventually forced Van Voorhis lower and lower until the anti-aircraft barrage, the fighters, or perhaps his own bomb blasts, caused the aircraft to crash. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

Van Voorhis is buried in the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis County, Missouri.^[1] He has a headstone at Arlington National Cemetery which reads "In Memory of Bruce Van Voorhis".^[2]

Medal of Honor citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as Squadron Commander of Bombing Squadron 102 and as Plane Commander of a PB4Y-I Patrol Bomber operating against the enemy on Japanese-held Greenwich Island during the battle of the Solomon Islands, July 6, 1943. Fully aware of the limited chance of surviving an urgent mission, voluntarily undertaken to prevent a surprise Japanese attack against our forces, Lt. Comdr. Van Voorhis took off in total darkness on a perilous 700-mile flight without escort or support. Successful in reaching his objective despite treacherous and varying winds, low visibility and difficult terrain, he fought a lone but relentless battle under fierce anti-aircraft fire and overwhelming aerial opposition. Forced lower and lower by pursuing planes, he coolly persisted in his mission of destruction. Abandoning all chance of a safe return he executed 6 bold ground-level attacks to demolish the enemy's vital radio station, installations, anti-aircraft guns and crews with bombs and machine gun fire, and to destroy 1 fighter plane in the air and 3 on the water. Caught in his own bomb blast, Lt. Comdr. Van Voorhis crashed into the lagoon off the beach, sacrificing himself in a single-handed fight against almost insuperable odds, to make a distinctive contribution to our continued offensive in driving the Japanese from the Solomons and, by his superb daring, courage and resoluteness of purpose, enhanced the finest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.

Namesakes and honors

The U.S. Navy Dealey-class destroyer escort USS *Van Voorhis* (DE-1028) was named in honor of LCDR Van Voorhis. The *Van Voorhis* was commissioned on April 22, 1957; she was decommissioned on July 1, 1972.

The airfield at Naval Air Station Fallon is also named in his honor.

Van Voorhis Elementary School in Fort Knox, Kentucky is named after Van Voorhis.

There is also a United States Naval Sea Cadet Corps unit under his name the Van Voorhis squadron in Las Vegas, NV.

See also

- List of Medal of Honor recipients

Notes

- ↑ "Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery - Burial & Memorials" (<http://www.cem.va.gov/CEM/cems/nchp/jeffersonbarracks.asp>) . United States Department of Veterans Affairs. <http://www.cem.va.gov/CEM/cems/nchp/jeffersonbarracks.asp>. Retrieved 2007-05-09.
- ↑ "Photo of Grave site of MOH Recipient Bruce Van Voorhis" (http://www.homeofheroes.com/gravesites/arlington/van_voorhis_bruce.html) . HomeofHeroes.com. http://www.homeofheroes.com/gravesites/arlington/van_voorhis_bruce.html. Retrieved 2007-05-09.

References

This article incorporates text from the public domain Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships.

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- ""The airfield at Fallon was named for Lt. Commander Bruce Van Voorhis, Nevada's only Medal of Honor recipient", " (<http://www.fallon.navy.mil/history.asp>) . *History*. NAS Fallon, United States Navy. <http://www.fallon.navy.mil/history.asp>. Retrieved June 18, 2006.
- "Bruce Avery Van Voorhis, Commander, United States Navy" (<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/bavanvoorhis.htm>) . Arlington National Cemetery. <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/bavanvoorhis.htm>. Retrieved 2007-05-09.

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