

First Gunnery Officer

Lt. Commander L. H. Alford was born in Sylvester, Georgia, in 1914. Enlisting in the Navy in 1933 he served two years on the Battleships MIS-81881PM and IDAH.

After attendance at the Naval Academy Preparatory School, he entered the Naval Academy, graduating in 1938. His first commissioned service was on the USS BONGOLLE, after which he was assigned to the USS PHOENIX. From there he went to the China Station aboard the USS STEWART, four stacker DD, as Gunnery Officer and First Lt.

"I went through the Dutch East Indies campaign unscathed, although the STEWART did not. She was damaged and had to be destroyed to prevent capture. This was in February, 1942.

"Those were the days before survivors were sent home and given 30 days leave. Instead, I was given another chance to hit the Japs aboard the USS PARKOTT, another four-stacker DD, and shortly thereafter, aboard the USS ISABEL.

"In March, 1942, we withdrew to Western Australia from Java via the ISABEL, with the Japs snapping at our heels."

He was then assigned to the Staff of Comdr FleetAirWing 10, serving as Wing Secretary and Communications Officer until December, 1942. Finally a most welcome set of orders came - to return to the States, where he arrived 7, January, 1943, and joined his wife, whom, just two years and two months previously he had left as a bride of three months.

His last previous duty was Assistant Gunnery Officer on the USS MOBILE.



Lt. Comdr. Alford

New Gunnery Officer Takes Over

Lieutenant Commander W. D. Baker, USN, recently made head of the BENNINGTON's Gunnery Department had a hand in making the remarkable record of the original CV carrier, the USS TENNESSEE, serving aboard during her ruggedest days.

Born far from the sea at Alliance, Nebraska, in 1917, he was graduated from the Naval Academy in the Class of 1940. His first assignment to sea duty took him to an old battle wagon, the USS TENNESSEE, where he served in the Communications and Engineering Departments.

In October of 1942 Lieutenant Commander Baker was ordered to the USS ESSEX, the original first line fast carrier and one destined to play a large part in the defeat of the Japs. As "W" Division Officer he participated in raids on Marcus, Wake, Kamoharui, Eniwetok, Truk, Saipan, Tinian, Rabaul and other history-making action. In the year and a half he was aboard the ESSEX she came through untouched by enemy action.

Reporting to the BENNINGTON detail in April, 1944, Lieutenant Commander Baker's capable handling of the Assistant Gunnery Officer's job has resulted in his promotion to the head of this important Department.

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Lt. Comdr. Baker