

# AVIATION WALL OF HONOR



## **Lieutenant Commander Albert Jokela USNR (Retired) Navy Fighter Pilot WWII**

Albert (Abby) Jokela was born in Negaunee, Michigan in 1920. He was an outstanding basketball player in high school and also at Northern Michigan College of Education. After completing Sig Wilson's CPT flying school, he became a member of the Wildcat Squadron. Further training was at Glenview,

Illinois and Dallas, Texas before acceptance into the Navy Aviation Cadet Flight Program in Corpus Christi, Texas, where he won his wings of gold in November 1941.

Most of his naval career was as a Grumman Wildcat Fighter Pilot with tours in the Pacific Ocean area. He was the first pilot to land aboard the U.S.S. Corregidor, a brand new carrier, and he was also the first pilot on the carrier to shoot down an enemy airplane.

He saw action in the campaigns at Tinian, Guam, and Hollandia. He also participated in strikes against enemy-held positions in the Gilberts, Marshalls, and Admiralty Islands.

The destruction of a Japanese plane, which he intercepted while flying a combat air patrol near Saipan, earned him an Air Medal. A citation signed by Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz USN praised him for his skillful airmanship and fearless devotion to duty. His air victory came after he dove into a group of enemy torpedo and bomber planes which were attempting to attack

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our task force. He jumped on the tail of an enemy torpedo plane while it was making its final run on a U.S. vessel and sent it crashing into the sea in flames.

Subsequent to his active duty in the Navy, in 1946 he returned to civilian life entering the University of Michigan under the G.I. Bill and graduating in 1949 with a degree in aeronautical engineering. He then worked for aircraft companies (Douglas and Northrop) in Engineering Flight Testing on various aircraft, among them are the Northrop F5A Freedom Fighter, Douglas A4D Skyhawk, and the DC-8.

The next part of his career (1964) came as Aerospace Engineer with the Air Force Systems Command, Foreign Technology Division, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton, Ohio, for four years. His responsibility was the analysis of aircraft performance and capabilities of selected enemy fighters. He made several trips to the Pentagon, Washington, DC to brief the Air Force on those aircraft.

He then joined the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in 1968 in Seattle, Washington, as Flight Test Engineer in the regulatory certification of transport aircraft for airlines, general aviation aircraft, and helicopters. This involved being in the cockpit as FAA flight analyst to monitor and approve the conduct and acceptability of the required testing (everything from a Piper Cub to a Boeing 747).

After 12 years in Seattle, he spent the remaining eight years at the Long Beach, California FAA office for certification flight testing of primarily the Douglas DC-9, DC-10, and DC-10 Tanker.

It was during the latter period, at a Flight Test Symposium, that he met and became a friend of the Chief Flight Test Engineer of the Finnish Air Force, Col. Kauko Vilpponen, who

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was one of the group involved in choosing the F-18 for the Finnish Air Force.

Abby is now fully retired and lives with his wife Betty in Irvine, California. Their two sons and three daughters also reside in the Golden Bear State.

TJ Mudge, Apr. 2005