

Francis Edward Nuessle was born in Washburn, North Dakota, on January 23, 1911, the son of William L. and Emma Nuessle. He attended the University of North Dakota for one term and entered the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, on appointment from his native state. He was graduated and commissioned as an Ensign, U.S. Navy, on June 2, 1932.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy, he served for two years in the aircraft carrier SARATOGA, performing various divisional duties as a junior officer. He was then ordered to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, where he completed flight training and was designated a Naval Aviator in November 1935.

During the next four years, from November 1935 until August 1939, he served in various fighter bomber and bomber squadrons operating from the aircraft carriers Ranger, Lexington and Saratoga. Thereafter, during the period September 1939 to June 1941 while attached to the Naval Aircraft Factory, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he participated in developmental and flight test operations as a test pilot and project engineer.

In July 1941 he took command of the seaplane tender GANNET, which participated in operations of the U.S. Naval Support Forces in the North Atlantic, Newfoundland and Greenland prior to the outbreak of World War II in December 1941. At the time of Pearl Harbor, GANNET was operating from Bermuda, tending seaplanes engaged in anti-submarine warfare, ocean patrol and rescue operations. He continued in command until the ship was sunk by an enemy submarine in the North Atlantic in June 1942.

"For heroic achievement as Commanding Officer of USS GANNETT when that vessel was torpedoed and sunk by an enemy submarine in the vicinity of Bermuda on June 7, 1942 . . ." he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. The citation further states: "Realizing that his ship was sinking too rapidly to transmit a radio message or lower the lifeboats to the water, Lieutenant Nuessle directed abandon ship operations with exceptional skill, instructing survivors to cling together on three rafts which had been thrown clear, and, by his prompt action and sound judgment, was instrumental in saving the lives of sixty-two of his seventy-seven crew members. His initiative and courage throughout, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service." Combat "V" was authorized.

For the next two years, he commanded seaplane and patrol bomber squadrons, VP-31 and VB-105, during intensive anti-submarine operations over the North Atlantic, operating from various bases on the Atlantic Coast, Bermuda, Newfoundland, Greenland and Western England. As Commander Patrol Air Group ONE, under Fleet Air Wing SEVEN, he participated in submarine blockade operations in the Bay of Biscay. Prior to the Normandy invasion in June 1944, he was assigned to the Staff of the Commander, U.S. Naval Task Force taking part in "Operation Overlord." His duties there were Assistant Air Officer for coordination of invasion operations of the Allied Tactical Air Forces with those of the Naval Task Force.

For service in World War II he also was awarded Air Medals with citation, in part, as follows:

Rear Admiral FRANCIS E. NUESSLE COMMANDER TASK GROUP BRAVO



"For meritorious achievement in aerial flight as pilot of PB4Y-1 Bomber in Patrol Bombing Squadron One Hundred Five, engaged in anti-submarine patrol in the Bay of Biscay and English Channel Areas, from October 1943 to May 1944. A skilled and intrepid airman, Commander Nuessle participated in numerous vital missions over enemy-infested waters and . . . was responsible in large measure for the outstanding record of his gallant crew whose combined efforts aided in bringing about the defeat of the U-Boat in the Battle of the Atlantic . . ."

After his return to the United States, subsequent to the invasion operations in Normandy, he served in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations from January 1945 until June 1947, with duty in the Aviation Plans Division. He next served from June 1947 until March 1949 as Executive Officer of USS PRINCETON, which operated off the West Coast and in Hawaiian and Far Eastern waters. He commanded PRINCETON during her decommissioning at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard from March to June 1949.

He attended the Air War College at the U.S. Air Force Base, Montgomery, Alabama, from July 1949 until June 1950, then served again in the Aviations Plans Division of the

Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. From July 1952 until July 1954 he was Air Officer of the Operational Development Force, and in this position coordinated the operational evaluation of various aircraft and aviation equipment and supervised the development of tactics for their employment.

He was a student at the National War College, Washington, D.C., in 1954-55, after which from July 1955 until June 1957 he served as Chief of Staff to Commander Striking Force, Southern Europe. On September 30, 1957, he assumed command of the newly-converted attack carrier USS MIDWAY, deployed in the Pacific, and upon detachment in June 1958 was ordered to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, to be Assistant for Joint Matters to the Director of the Strategic Plans Division. Prior to reporting as Commander Carrier Division FOURTEEN he was Chief of Staff to Commander Carrier Division TWO.

In July 1960 the President approved his selection to the rank of Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy. On January 25, 1961, at ceremonies in USS WASP at the Boston Naval Shipyard, he assumed that rank and took command of Carrier Division FOURTEEN and Antisubmarine Defense Group BRAVO.