

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

RETURN TO NAVAL AVIATION HISTORY
OP-05D2

CAPTAIN MICHAEL JOHN ESTOCIN, UNITED STATES NAVY

27 APR 1931 Born in Turtle Creek, Pa.
1954 Graduated, State Teachers College, Slippery
Rock, Pa.
12 JUN 1954 Enlisted USNR
28 SEP 1955 Commissioned Ensign
26 APR 1967 Missing in Action
10 NOV 1977 Presumed Killed in Action

SHIPS AND STATIONS

	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
NAS Chase Field, Beeville, Texas	28 SEP 55	16 MAR 56
Attack Squadron 56	16 MAR 56	30 NOV 59
Attack Squadron 126	1 DEC 59	22 SEP 61
Attack Squadron 125	26 SEP 61	31 DEC 62
Fleet Anti-air Warfare Training Center, San Diego, Calif.	1 JAN 63	9 APR 63
USS RANGER (CVA-61)	9 APR 63	10 JUN 65
Attack Squadron 125	11 JUN 65	30 NOV 65
Attack Squadron 192 embarked in USS TICONDEROGA (CVA-14)	3 DEC 65	26 APR 67

MEDALS AND AWARDS

Navy Unit Commendation awarded USS TICONDEROGA for the period
28 October 1966 to 21 May 1967
Vietnam Service Medal (with three bronze stars)
Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation (Gallantry Cross
with Palm)
Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon
National Defense Service Medal

NEXT OF KIN

Wife: Mrs. Quay M. Estocin of La Jolla, Calif.

Children:

Kathryn A. Estocin, La Jolla, Calif
Mary J. Estocin, "
Susan M. Estocin, "

Sisters:

Mrs. Florence (Estocin) Smith, Turtle Creek, Pa.
Mrs. Margaret Ann (Estocin) Sarsfield, Fairfax, Va.
Mrs. Joan (Estocin) Bastos, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Brothers:

Mr. James Estocin, Longwood, Fla.
Mr. John Estocin, Turtle Creek, Pa.

CVW-19
1967

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- 13 MAR: Completed 29 consecutive days of combat operations.
- 17 MAR
TO
- 26 MAR: In port, Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines.
- 29 MAR: Commenced fourth line period in combat zone.
- 7 APR: A4C aircraft from VA-195 suffered damage from enemy fire over North Vietnam and caught fire. The pilot, CDR C. E. HATHAWAY, ejected safely over water and was rescued by helo.
- 12 APR: A4E aircraft from VA-192 sustained damage from enemy fire while on a strike flight over North Vietnam. On return to the ship, the engine flamed out and the pilot, LCDR G. W. SHATTUCK, ejected safely and was recovered by helo.
- 23 APR: CDR C. E. HATHAWAY, CO of VA-195 completed his 300th combat mission in support of U. S. Operations in Southeast Asia. A record for Naval Aviators.
- 25 APR: A4E from VA-192 suffered severe damage when struck by enemy fire over North Vietnam. The pilot, LCDR F. J. ALMBERG managed to maintain control of the aircraft until over the water. He ejected and was rescued by helo.
- 26 APR: A4E aircraft from VA-192 downed by SAM over North Vietnam. The aircraft entered clouds after pilot reported he was hit. The pilot, LCDR M. J. ESTOCIN is presently listed as captured.
- 26 APR: ⁴⁶⁷ A4E aircraft from VA-192 received heavy damage by anti-aircraft fire over North Vietnam. When the aircraft became uncontrollable the pilot, LTJG J. W. CAIN ejected safely. He landed in the mouth of Haiphong Harbor and was rescued by a Navy helo while under intense enemy fire.))
- 27 APR: Completed 30 consecutive days of combat operations.
- 29 APR
TO
- 1 MAY: In port, Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines.
- 4 MAY
TO
- 8 MAY: In port, Hong Kong, B. C. C.
- 13 MAY
TO
- 18 MAY: in Port, Yokosuka, Japan.

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NARRATIVE

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For Air Wing NINETEEN, 1967 began with their return to Yankee Station to commence combat operations for the second time during this WESTPAC deployment.

During this period, the weather was extremely poor precluding any major strikes. The Air Wing concentrated on coastal and armed recce flights over North Vietnam and provided support for allied units in the northern section of South Vietnam.

On 5 JAN an A4 Skyhawk piloted by LCDR Richard A. STRATTON, suffered damage on pull-out from a rocket attack over North Vietnam. The pilot ejected from the stricken aircraft and was taken prisoner. The next day, LCDR R. D. MULLEN flying a Crusader, was downed by enemy defenses and was also captured. LTJG M. E. MADSEN was lost when his A1H Skyraider stalled on landing approach to the ship and crashed into the sea.

The Tico Team left the line on 4 FEB after completing 2,881 combat sorties in 32 days.

After a six day period in Subic Bay, P. I., the TICONDEROGA returned to Yankee Station on 15 February. Bad weather still hampered operations but Air Wing NINETEEN pilots took advantage of every break in the weather to hammer away at communist supply lines. On one such strike, CDR E. M. MOORE, flying an A4 Skyhawk, was forced to eject over North Vietnam when his aircraft was hit by two surface-to-air missiles. CDR MOORE was seen to land safely and is listed as captured.

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LT R. L. MILLER, was lost at sea when he evidently became disoriented during a turn in dense haze. His F8 Crusader was last seen in a steep dive and it crashed into the sea.

Upon completion of this 29 day line period, the Air Wing NINETEEN Tigers had amassed a total of 2,961 combat sorties when they departed for Subic Bay, P. I., on 15 March.

The TICONDEROGA sailed from Subic after 8 days of upkeep and maximum liberty. The Tico Tiger Team arrived on Yankee Station on 29 March and maximum effort was put forth for the weather over North Vietnam had cleared. This break in the weather enabled Air Wing NINETEEN pilots to strike heavy blows to the lucrative targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas. During this operating period, which lasted 30 days, they conducted 3,150 sorties against the communist forces. Their targets included the Van Diem Vehicle Depot in Hanoi, the Haiphong Power Plants and the Haiphong Cement Plant. Also struck was the Haiphong Petroleum Facility.

Many Heroic deeds were performed during this final line period. A few which deserve mention are described below.

CDR C. E. HATHAWAY, CO of VA-195 became the first Navy Pilot to complete 300 missions in Southeast Asia.

LCDR C. E. BARNETT took a hit in the cockpit area of his A4 Skyhawk and although severely injured in the legs, managed to land his aircraft safely on the USS HANCOCK.

LTJG J. W. CAIN lost control of his A4 Skyhawk after it sustained extensive damage from enemy anti-aircraft fire. Forced to eject, he

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landed in the water in the mouth of Haiphong Harbor and was immediately taken under small arms fire. After spending 20 minutes in the water he was rescued by a Navy Helo. They received intense mortar and anti-aircraft fire. Two surface-to-air missiles were fired by the enemy but missed.

On 20 April and again 26 April, LCDR M. J. ESTOCIN's heroic performance prompted a recommendation that he be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The proposed citation reads as follows:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, while participating in aerial combat flight as a pilot of a light jet attack aircraft attached to and serving with Attack Squadron ONE NINE TWO in USS TICONDEROGA (CVA-14). On 20 April 1967, Lieutenant Commander ESTOCIN lead a three plane group of Anti-Surface-to-Air Missile equipped aircraft in support of a coordinated strike by Attack Carrier Air Wings from USS TICONDEROGA and USS KITTY HAWK against two important Thermal Power Plants in Haiphong, North Vietnam. Lieutenant Commander ESTOCIN provided continuous warning to the Strike Group Leaders of the Surface-to-Air Missile threats, and personally neutralized three Surface-to-Air Missile Sites. After evading several Surface-to-Air Missiles, his aircraft was heavily damaged by an exploding missile. Realizing the necessity for providing SHRIKE support for the strike group approaching the target, despite full knowledge of the serious damage to his aircraft and with complete disregard for his own personal safety, he reentered the target area and relentlessly prosecuted a SHRIKE attack in the face of intense anti-aircraft fire. No further emissions from this site were detected following his attack. With less than five minutes fuel remaining Lieutenant Commander ESTOCIN departed the target area and commenced inflight refueling, which continued for over 100 miles to TICONDEROGA. Further evidence of his intrepidity in dire peril was demonstrated when on the final approach, three miles aft of the ship, he disengaged from the tanker, extended the landing gear by emergency means, and executed a precise approach with not enough fuel for a second approach. Upon landing his aircraft burst into flames. With the imminent danger of explosion from fuel and 20MM ammunition, Lieutenant Commander ESTOCIN secured the engine and vacated the aircraft without assistance. On 26 April 1967, Lieutenant Commander ESTOCIN led a two plane SHRIKE group in support of a coordinated strike against the vital POL facilities in Haiphong, North Vietnam. Preceding the strike group into the target area, he commenced a missile attack on a threatening SAM site. During the attack, his aircraft was

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seriously damaged by an exploding SAM. He then launched his remaining SHRIKE missiles from his burning aircraft. Despite his courageous efforts to reach the safety of the sea, the aircraft went out of control and was last seen entering an undercast cloud layer over North Vietnam. Lieutenant Commander ESTOCIN's conspicuous gallantry, dedicated leadership and intrepidity in the face of the gravest personal danger ensured successful completion of these major strike efforts against the enemy. His heroism reflects the highest credit upon the United States Naval Service."

When the TICONDEROGA left the line on 27 April she completed combat operations for the cruise that had begun in October 1966. During the four periods they served on Yankee Station, Air Wing NINETEEN pilots has completed a record 11,672 combat sorties.

In recognition of their accomplishments in achieving this record and for individual performance on numerous occasions, these men were awarded a total of: 3 Silver Stars, 1 Legion of Merit, 14 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 1 Bronze Star, 578 Air Medals (442 Gold Stars and 77 Silver Stars in lieu of previous medals), 46 Navy Commendation Medals (with Combat "V"), 3 Purple Hearts and 3 Navy Achievement Medals. The Republic of Vietnam presented the following awards: 4 Navy Distinguished Service Orders Second Class, 19 Gallantry Crosses and 9 Air Gallantry Medals with Bronze Wings. In addition, 32 pilots completed over 200 combat missions.

After short in-port periods in Hong Kong, B. C. C. and Yokosuka, Japan the TICONDEROGA departed the Western Pacific area on 19 May 1967. Air Wing NINETEEN arrived at its home station, NAS Lemoore, Calif., on 29 May accompanied by VA's 192 and 195. VF-191 and VF-194 returned to NAS Miramar, California and VA-52 to NAS ALAMEDA, California. All Air Wing Detachments reported to their parent squadrons.

After a 30 day leave period, Air Wing NINETEEN began an extensive training period in order to maintain its' combat effectiveness.

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On 1 July, CDR Phillip R. CRAVEN relieved CAPT BILLY PHILLIPS as Commander Attack Carrier Air Wing NINETEEN. Also on this date VA-52 was detached from the Air Wing and VA-23 was welcomed aboard.

VA-192 became the first operational squadron to receive the new A4F Skyhawks when the aircraft arrived on 6 July. Shortly afterward, VA-23 also received a full complement of the new aircraft.

The Navy's Commendation Medal was awarded to the USS TICONDEROGA and Air Wing NINETEEN on 13 July 1967.

From 3 September to 16 September, the Air Wing was deployed to MCAS Yuma, Arizona for intensive training all aspects of conventional and nuclear ordnance delivery. The fighter squadrons performed extensive air-to-air gunnery and missile training.

The Wing worked a short carrier qualification period aboard TICONDEROGA on the 20th and 21st of SEPT. On the first day, CDR P. R. CRAVEN made the first operational landing in one of the new A4F Skyhawks.

During the periods 7 November to 17 November and 28 November to 4 December the TICO Tiger team continued its' training in carrier qualifications, build-up landings and cyclic operations. Included in the latter period were operation Blue Lotus and the Operational Readiness Exercise. Upon completion of these exercises the Air Wing squadrons finished their preparations for the upcoming deployment.

CDR P. R. CRAVEN received word of his promotion to CAPTAIN, USN with a date of rank of 1 December 1967. The promotion makes him the only operational commander of this rank in a combat status.

The TICONDEROGA, with Air Wing NINETEEN embarked, departed San Diego on 28 December for its' fourth combat cruise in Southeast Asia.

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