



## MARITIME PATROL AND RECONNAISSANCE FORCE HALL OF HONOR

### CAPT Arnold J. Isbell

United States Navy

Captain Arnold J. Isbell, born on September 22, 1899 in Quimby, Iowa, entered the Naval Academy in July 1917 and graduated with the Class of 1921. Isbell served successive tours of duty with the ships USS MELVILLE (AD-2), USS BATH (AK-4), and the fast minelayers USS INGRAHAM (DM-9) and USS BURNS (DM-11) before beginning flight training at NAS Pensacola, Florida, in June of 1923.

Isbell served in the Aviation Ordnance Section of the Bureau of Ordnance (BuOrd) in Washington before reporting to Newport News, VA, in September of 1933 to participate in the shakedown of the Navy's first aircraft carrier to be built as such from the keel up, USS RANGER (CV-4). Isbell subsequently flew as Executive Officer of VP-7F based with aircraft tender USS WRIGHT (AV-1) from June 1936 to June 1937. He then returned to NAS Pensacola to command one of the five aviation training squadrons, VN-4D8. While at Pensacola, he won the coveted Schiff Trophy for displaying maximum safety in aircraft operation.

In the early summer of 1939, Lieutenant Commander Isbell assumed command of VP-11 (later redesignated VP-54). The German invasion of Poland in September 1939 found VP-54 based at NAS Norfolk, VA, engaged in biennial maintenance of its dozen PBV-2 Flying Boats. Eight days later, a detachment of six planes departed Norfolk and arrived at Newport, RI, their assigned base. In November 1939, the entire squadron resumed operations to relieve VP-53 and assume duties on the Middle Atlantic Patrol.

Isbell then served successive staff tours for Commander, Patrol Wing Support Force (16 April-2 October 1941); then as Chief of Staff and aide for Rear Admirals McWhorter and Bernhard, Commander, Patrol Wings, Atlantic Fleet (3 October 1941-11 June 1942), before assuming command of NAS Sitka, Alaska, on 5 June 1942. Promoted to Captain during his time in the Aleutians, Isbell then returned briefly to the Bureau of Ordnance before assuming command of the escort carrier USS CARD (CVE-11) on 17 April 1943.

For the next year, CARD served as an essential lifeline from the Atlantic to North Africa. Under Isbell's leadership, the ship sought out enemy submarines with relentless determination, mounting vigorous offensives and striking with devastating coordinated action that ultimately destroyed eight U-boats between 7 August and 31 October 1943.

Detached from CARD on 9 March 1944, Isbell served in the 10th Fleet, a ship-less "fleet" set up to research and develop tactics for anti-submarine warfare. Following this tour, which lasted into 1945, Isbell was slated to receive command of a fast carrier. In March 1945, orders directed him to relieve Captain Thomas S. Combs as commanding officer of USS YORKTOWN (CV-10). However, Captain Isbell perished when a Japanese plane attacked USS FRANKLIN (CV-13), the carrier in which he was embarked as a passenger off Kyushu on 19 March 1945.