



Kenneth Talbot Sanders

July 6, 1919 - August 31, 2014

Cmdr. Kenneth T. Sanders (1919-2014), pilot US Navy (retired), passed away peacefully on August 31, 2014 in Pensacola, FL. He was born in San Francisco as a 5th generation Californian whose family had migrated to CA in the late 1770's as part of the first overland expedition to the small hamlet of San Diego commanded by Juan Bautista de Anza travelling across the desert from Mission San Javier near Tuscon.

Kenneth grew up on a farm near Ceres, CA, and was a star athlete for his local high school and later for Saint Mary's College in the Bay Area. He caught the winning touchdown pass in a late 1930's football game when Saint Mary's beat the east coast power house Fordham University at the old Polo Grounds – this college win was still remembered by members of a pro-football team (Philadelphia Eagles) in the late 1940's after the war. He also was a star first baseman in the old Pacific Coast semi-pro baseball league. He played for his father's team – the Modesto Reds – during the late 1930's and early 1940's before the war.

After attaining his Bachelor of Science degree in June 1941, Kenneth joined the U.S. Navy and received his wings and commission in 1942 in Jacksonville, FL. He was carrier certified and served with distinction throughout WWII and in the Korean conflict. He flew the Torpedo Bomber Avenger as part of the Special Task Air Group (STAG-1) which deployed the first every smart weapons (Target Drone – Raytheon or TDR-1) used in warfare against Japanese positions in Bougainville and Rebaul, flying out of a small airfield on

Banika Island in the Solomon Island chain during late summer, 1944. These were remotely guided twin-engine drones which were radio controlled from a chase plane (a modified Avenger) flying along side until nearing the target when the chase plane switched on an early forward-looking TV camera behind a transparent nose cone and used TV visual guidance for the final assault as the chase plane fell back to avoid ground fire. These drones were able to make target corrections until moment of impact and each carried either a one or two thousand pound bomb slung underneath the drone. He is credited with two hits on Japanese positions with these smart weapons – one of which in Rabaul resulted in a large secondary explosion. Anyone who visits the Naval Aviation Museum at the Pensacola Naval Air Station should go the WWII portion of the museum where they have one of these TDR's on display. Kenneth was also trained in multi-engine planes and flew the Navy's version of the B-24 or Privateer (PB4Y-2) out of Henderson Field on Guadalcanal among other pacific island airfields (approximately 700 hours in these planes), flying long, single plane patrol missions over the Pacific because Adm. Halsey in those days was worried about another Pearl Harbor. Later in his career in the late 1950's and early 1960's, he flew Willy Victors (heavily modified from Boeing Super Constellations into radar picket planes) from Argentia, Newfoundland over the north Atlantic as part of the continuous, early warning barrier demanded by President Eisenhower who did not trust the Soviet bloc. He had somewhat more than 180 barriers to his credit totaling in the 3000 hour range flying time. He was known as "zero-zero Sanders" at the Argentia Naval Air Station due to his ability to manually land the Willy Victors in near zero visibility and ceiling using voice and radar guidance from the airfield tower. Not many pilots attempted such landings.

Upon retirement in the mid-1960's, Kenneth worked for the U.S. Navy in Washington, D.C. as a contractor doing quality control work during development of air-to-air missiles for Navy aircraft used in the Vietnam conflict. Anyone familiar with this period of time remembers that missile development required a steep learning curve as technology-of-its-day was not

always reliable. He retired from the Navy in 1978 and settled in Pensacola, FL with many other Navy personnel of his era.

In early 1942, he married the love of his life, Ingrid Johanna Bondeson, of Turlock, CA. A blond, blue-eyed Swedish beauty (she was a May Fair Queen in Turlock during the late 1930's) who walked across the basketball floor before a high school game between Ceres and Turlock and Dad was captivated. They were married in Jacksonville, FL after he received his Navy wings and commission. They had two children: a girl Karin (deceased) and a son Stanley (Laramie, WY). After 52 years together, his beloved wife died in Pensacola and is buried in Turlock. He is survived by his son, and two granddaughters: Ingrid Still of Mobile, AL, and Elin Koko of Orlando, FL. Kenneth Sanders was one of the greatest generation and embodied their moral, spiritual and work ethics. He is fondly remembered by family, many friends, and the local community. He will be buried in Turlock Memorial Park, Turlock, CA, on September 12, 2014 with a 1:00 PM graveside service. All are welcome to attend and there will be a reception afterwards.

Tribute Wall



“ *Kenneth Talbot Sanders*

January 28, 2023 at 09:01 AM



“ *Sharing in your sorrow over the loss of your daughter*

Malin - September 10, 2014 at 12:00 AM



“ *Ingrid and my dad (Oke Bondeson) were sister and brother. We grew up in Minnesota. The Sanders' family grew up traveling with the Navy. But even at that, we had many, many visits over the years. I was so fortunate to be able to know and love my uncle, aunt and cousins. I cherish the many wonderful memories. We were very close. Uncle Ken walked me down the aisle when I got married, 35 years ago! He was and always will be so very special to me. I will miss him deeply and tenderly.*

Lois Hesselroth - September 08, 2014 at 12:00 AM