



A Salute to Bill Couchon Navy, WWII



*Presented by
Pearson Wood, 2nd Vice Commander
American Legion Post 67
Cary, North Carolina
September 11, 2007*

William Richard Couchon was born April 2, 1923, in Plainfield, Connecticut. He was raised in West Warwick, Rhode Island, to age fifteen when his mother died in 1938, then he went back to Plainfield to live with his grandparents. Not wishing to be a burden to his grandparents, Bill wanted to be independent so he got written permission from his father to join the Navy. He joined the Navy on December 3, 1940; Bill was seventeen years old. He was sent to Newport, Rhode Island, for training.

After training, Bill was ordered to Brooklyn, New York, for the commissioning of the USS North Carolina on April 9, 1941. Bill was one of the original crew of approximately 800 sailors assigned to the battleship. He spent much of his Navy career, from January 1941 until August 1943 on the USS North Carolina. The ship was also called "Showboat - BB55." This 35,000 ton ship took part in almost fifty naval engagements and

lost only nine men killed and forty-four wounded in action.

First Class Petty Officer Bill Couchon next served on an aircraft carrier, the USS Hornet (CV12), starting in November 1943 when it was commissioned. This ship was also called "Grey Ghost."

Perhaps some of the best evidence of someone's accomplishments in a war comes with their acquirement of medals, a belonging which Bill does not lack. The government granted him the following medals:

- Asiatic Pacific with fifteen stars combined with service with the USS North Carolina and the USS Hornet
- Philippine Liberation with two stars
- American Campaign
- Victory Medal
- Good Conduct with one star

The Navy also awarded Bill the Presidential Unit Citation, it reads as follows:

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to the

USS HORNET

And her attached Air Groups participating in the following operations:

March 29 to May 1, 1944, Palau, Hollandia, Truk; June 11 to August 5, 1944, Marirans, Bonins, Yap; September 6 to 24, Philippines, Palau: AG-2 (VF-2, VB-2, VT-2, Part of VFN-76).

October 10 to November 22, 1944, Ryukyus, Formosa, Philippines, Luzon; December 14-16, 1944, Luzon; January 3 to 22, 1945, Philippines, Formosa, China Sea, Ryukyus: AG-11 (VF-11, VT-11).

February 16 to June 10, 1945, Japan, Bonins, Ryukyus: AG-17 (VF-17, VBF-17, VT-17).

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

“For extraordinary heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces in the air, ashore and afloat in the Pacific War Area from March 29, 1944, to June 10, 1945. Operating continuously in the most forward areas, the USS HORNET and her air groups struck crushing blows toward annihilating Japanese fighting power; they provided air cover for our amphibious forces; they fiercely countered the enemy’s aerial attacks and destroyed his planes; and they inflicted terrible losses on the Japanese in Fleet and merchant marine units sunk or damaged. Daring and dependable in combat, the HORNET with her gallant officers and men rendered loyal service in achieving the ultimate defeat of the Japanese Empire.”

**For the President,
James Forestal (signed)
Secretary of the Navy**

The above information about William R. Couchon covers only a part of his Navy service. He had many more experiences.

Once the Navy discharged Bill, he needed to find a way to return to his former civilian life. He found stability with his wife, Ruth, whom he had married on September 12, 1943, just before he was part of the commissioning of the USS Hornet. A daughter (Ruth) born on Father’s Day in 1944 also brought out a new sense of responsibility. The marriage further produced three sons (Robert, William Jr., Jack).

Bill and Ruth became leaders of a fine family which also produced grandchildren and great grandchildren.



Bill Couchon, the American Legion Post 67, Cary, North Carolina, salutes you, and thanks you, for your service to God and Country!

**USS
North Carolina
BB-55**



**USS
Hornet
CV-12**

