

## A BIOGRAPHY OF REAR ADMIRAL SHIRLEY S. MILLER, USN (RETIRED)

*By his son, Robert G. Miller*



*CAPT Miller receives the Legion of Merit*

My father, Shirley, was a southerner, born in Eustis, Florida, on February 21, 1907. He died on November 29, 1967. He married my mother, Mary Giffen, on May 29, 1935. My mother was a northerner, born in Saratoga Springs, New York. Shirley had graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1927. My mother's father became Vice Admiral Robert C. ("Ike") Giffen. The Navy was a point of commonality as between my southern father and northern mother.

Shirley and Mary had four children—Robert Giffen Miller (who became a lawyer), James Rush Miller (who himself became a Naval officer), Sally Miller Keehn (a novelist), and John Hodgman Miller (an entrepreneur brokering high tech products). All four are married, their children number ten, and their grandchildren, so far, eight.

Shirley (known as "Steamship" at the Naval Academy), was a man of many talents. Aside from his Navy career, which I describe below, he had an artistic/musical side. He wrote

short stories, reflecting his southern roots, for the Naval Academy literary magazine while a midshipman. He wrote songs, in particular "The Old Prospector", equating flying through the clouds with discovering gold, both "hard" gold and spiritual gold. He also played, and sang to, guitar throughout his life. For this, as well as for his strictly Navy talents, he became widely appreciated among his peers in the Navy. A favorite song he played was his rollicking version of "Chattanooga Choo Choo".

### **Man of the sea and of the air.**

As for his varied Navy talents, Shirley was first a man of the sea and air. From 1927 to 1940, he had various assignments ashore and at sea, within the continental U.S. and outside, and at school. As to the last item, he got an M.S. in Aeronautical Engineering from the California Institute of Technology in 1937. His areas of responsibility during this 1927-40

period included ordnance and gunnery, engineering, and materiel assignments in ship board and naval aviation activities.

From 1940-41, he was Executive Officer and Navigator aboard the USS [BALCH](#) (DD 363), Pacific Fleet.

### **Commander of ships at sea**

In 1945-46, Shirley was Commanding Officer of the aircraft carrier, the USS [GUADALCANAL](#) (CVE 60).

In 1953-54, he was Commanding Officer of the aircraft carrier, the USS [BATAAN](#) (CVL 29). He was also, in 1953-54, Officer-in-Tactical-Command of the UN Task Unit in the Yellow Sea, interdicting Communist forces operating in Western Korea.

### **War effort in the air**

From 1941-43, Shirley was head of the armament branch of the Research, Development and Engineering Division of the Bureau of Aeronautics in Washington, D.C. He was responsible for design, testing and engineering correction of deficiencies of aircraft armament.

In 1943-45, he was Operations Officer and Commander of the Air Support Unit, on the Staff of the Amphibious Group Commander, of the Pacific Fleet. In this position, Shirley planned, and supervised execution of air support operations, for the Roi-Namur-Kwajalein and Guam campaigns, and planned such operations for the Leyte, and Lingayen, amphibious campaigns. Shirley received the Legion of Merit and two Bronze Stars.

### **High level staff assignments.**

In 1946-47, Shirley was Head of the Executive Office of the Office of the Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics. He reported directly to the Deputy and Chief of the Bureau. He also prepared administrative plans, policies and procedures for Bureau and field activities.

In 1946-50, Shirley was Assistant Chief of Staff, Plans, to the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, London, England. He prepared estimates, plans and implementing orders for the use of naval forces and facilities in most of the Eastern hemisphere, and maintained planning liaison and coordination with naval force commanders and staffs.

From 1954-56, Shirley was Assistant Director of the Joint Strategic Plans Group, Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C. He participated in preparing plans, studies and reports for submission to the Joint Chiefs.

### **High level teaching**

From 1951-53, Shirley was head of the Command and Staff Department, Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island. He developed and administered the program, and taught courses.

### **Post-Navy civilian work**

From 1956-1967, Shirley was an Operations Evaluator with Martin-Marietta, Baltimore, MD. He was responsible for conduct and coordination of operations analysis affecting weapons systems of all services, particularly those systems involving aircraft, missiles, anti-submarine warfare and space systems (both NASA and U.S. Air Force).

### **An intellectual**

In 1951, before assuming the Naval War College command described above, Shirley took Strategy and Tactics at the Naval War College, Newport, RI in 1951. Over the course of his career, he also (1) attended the Optical School, in the Naval Gun Factory, Washington, D.C., (2) took a lecture course in Nuclear Physics, in Washington, D.C., (3) took Public Speaking, at George Washington University, Washington, D.C., (4) attended the Special Weapons Orientation Course at Sandia Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and (5) attended Aviation and Ground School at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida.

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