

Draper Kauffman

02-17-2015 by Harry Zirkelbach

Everything I knew about Draper Lawrence Kauffman was legendary. Heard from others at gatherings of Navy military personnel, por read in various Explosive Ordnance publications. In every line, he was legend.

Born August 1911, died 68 years later. His father became a Navy Admiral, as did Draper.

It did not begin well. A Naval Academy graduate in 1933, he was denied an assignment on Active Duty. poor eyesight. In those peace-time years the military budget did not allow for retention of all Annapolis and West Point four year graduates, so commission was denied for slights that did not prevent initial admission.

Early in WWII, Draper began driving an Ambulance in France, was captured by Germans on the fall of the French Army. Later repatriated. The oath, he would never fight against the Germans. In London he joined the British Navy forces , supporting their Bomb an Mine Disposal efforts.

Retuned to Washington D.C. Dec 1941 he was commissioned into the Navy Reserve, given the task of training Navy personnel in Bomb Disposal duties. The first class, all chosen by Draper, began Jan 23, 1942. He remained at the school until May 1943. Upon leaving there, he established the Navy Underwater Demolition School in Little Creek Virginia.

Immediately after Pearl Harbor, Draper was flown there with a team to lead in the disposal of unexploded Japanese munitions that did not detonate in the Pearl Harbor raid. And to make an analysis and report on the munitions he Japanese had, and how they might be disposed, as well as a thorough studying of the Japanese ordnance. Draper was awarded one of the few Navy Crosses for his effort.

Later in the Mariana invasion, Draper commanded the Underwater Demolitions Teams, preceding the actual invasion by several days. Here too, Draper was awarded the Navy Cross.

Directly or indirectly Draper was involved in every Naval Invasion of Japan.

After the war Draper had many assignment. In the second from last, he became the 44th Commandant of the Naval Academy, the very place he had been denied a Active Duty thirty years earlier.

His final assignment was Commander Ninth Naval District from which he retired in 1973. Admiral Kauffman died on a trip to Europe in 1979
He was 68.

