

Native Son Jack Conger



CAPTAIN JACK E. CONGER was awarded the NAVY CROSS in November 1943 for shooting down eight enemy planes. In addition, after his ammunition had been exhausted during one aerial battle, he rammed an enemy plane so it crashed

Armistice Day, 1944, he was skip-bombing a Jap destroyer with other members of the Death Dealers. His thousand-pounder made a direct hit and sank the already damaged enemy tin-can. During six weeks of the Guadal-canal campaign, Conger participated in the sinking of two other enemy destroyers.

Not one to rest, let alone upon his laurels, has added adventure after adventure to his already full though short life. In April 1944 he had a forced landing off Rabaul but was picked up by a Dumbo forty-five minutes later. In July of last year he crash-landed at Espiritu, and his plane rolled about 200 yards down the field. Then his landing gear collapsed and the plane skidded to a stop and had to be junked, but the pilot was uninjured.

LT. COL. JACK CONGER FORMERLY OF ORIENT TO COMMAND MARINE UNIT

By Mrs. Clare Jay, Orient, December 31

Lt. Col. Jack E. Conger, formerly of Orient, holder of the Navy Cross for Action at Guadalcanal and the Marine Corp's 23rd. ranking World War II air ace, has been appointed commanding officer of the Marine Air Reserve unit at Buckley Field, in Denver.

FINE STUDENT

Jack's scholastic standing in metallurgy and engineering at the South Dakota School of Mines at Rapid City admitted him to the marine air corps a month before he was 20 - a month before he was eligible. He was sent overseas the first time April 7, 1942 the day after he was 21.

In Oct. 1942, a bullet knocked off his shoes and no others were available. So the young officer wore tennis shoes until he reached the U.S. eight months to a day after he had left it. He even had awakened to find shrapnel by his bed.

Major Conger brought back his ship - first a Grumman and then a Corsair looking like the top of a pepper shaker. Now he is credited with at least 10 enemy planes destroyed over the Solomons.

ORIENT BOY ACHIEVES FAME

Jack E. Conger was born April 6, 1921 in Orient, Iowa. He attended South Dakota School of Mines, Rapid City, South Dakota and entered flight training in July 1941 in the last class of Marine Cadets. Upon completion in January 1942, he was deployed to Hawaii for further transfer to the South Pacific with VMF-212. He served on Guadalcanal with both VMF-212 and VMF-221. He returned to the United States in December 1942 and returned to the Pacific Theater in October 1943 as a member of VMF-114. The squadron was deployed to Hawaii, Midway, Espiritu Santo, Green Island, and Peleliu. Colonel Conger served in the Marine Corps for 23 years and retired in 1964.

Tally Record: 30½ Kills, 1½ Destroyers.

On October 25, 1942 four F4s led by Conger sank two Japanese destroyers off Savo Island and upon returning to Guadalcanal engaged several Zeros. Conger shot down one and ran out of ammo. On his next pass, he rammed another Zero which crashed but Conger had to bail out landing in the water about three miles off shore. A Higgins boat picked him up but as they were trying to rescue a Zero pilot who was close by he tried to shoot Conger but the pistol was wet and misfired. Conger hit him with a boat hook and he was the first Japanese pilot captured at Guadalcanal.



COLONEL JACK E. CONGER, USMC

Jack E. Conger

THANK - YOU
TO FRANK AUGUSTINE
For the model Corsair Airplane
and the extensive Biographical
research on Jack Conger

