

# VJ-2 AVENGERS

THIS LITTLE-KNOWN US NAVY UTILITY SQUADRON WOULD GO TO WAR WITH GRUMMAN DUCKS, AVENGERS, AND MARTIN MARAUDERS TO PERFORM A VARIETY OF IMPORTANT ROLES. THE AUTHOR'S FATHER WAS A PHOTOGRAPHER WITH THE UNIT AND MANY OF THESE SHOTS HAVE NOT BEEN PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED

BY LEE SCALES

**N**avy Utility Squadron Two (VJ-2) was reformed on 1 November 1943 at Vernalis Naval Air Station, San Joaquin County in California but due to over-crowding the squadron was moved to Naval Auxiliary Air Station Arcata located in California's Humboldt County. My father was Photographers Mate James Scales and

he was assigned to this squadron.

Six Grumman TBF-1 Avengers were assigned to VJ-2 while at NAAS Arcata and they were utilized for pilots and maintenance crews to begin their training on the torpedo-bomber. Pilots new to the Avenger were trained with the pilot's handbook,

latest technical orders, long range navigation, formation flight, and low-speed target towing. Upon completion of training in April 1944, VJ-2 received orders to deploy to the South Pacific.

VJ-2 TBF-1s during an early morning flight off the coast of northern California.

The squadron was flown to Naval Air Station Alameda (the controlling base for Arcata and other fields) and loaded aboard the USS *Nehenta Bay* (CVE-74) for transport to Pearl Harbor. The ship was a *Casablanca*



WWII VJ-2 Insignia. Squadron members stated the safety pin was added to "keep the diaper closed because of all the crappy missions we were assigned."

A well-worn TBF-1C running up its R-2600 at NAAS Arcata against a magnificent cloud build-up. Please see the sidebar to learn of the importance of Arcata in developing anti-fog measures.