

Lee W. Lanzen



Lee W. Lanzen was born August 7, 1921, In Mansfield, Ohio. He was working for F.W. Woodworth in Cleveland, Ohio when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7th 1941. In early 1942, Lee and four of his good friends decided to enlist. Lee was told he could join the Naval Air corps without a college degree if his could pass the intelligence test and the physical – which he did. He was 20-years old.

There was going to be a short delay before Lee could start the Navy flying program. So he was instructed to take a civilian pilot training course at Western Reserve University. He had ground school on the campus in the morning and flight training in the afternoon at Horn's Flying School at Chagrin Falls

Airport. His first solo was in a Piper J-3 Cub. It was on campus where Lee Lanzen met his future wife, Evelyn.

Next Cadet Lanzen was sent to the University of Iowa at Iowa City for Navy Preflight Training. He was quartered on campus in Quadrangle Hall. The cadet regimen was calisthenics after breakfast followed by sports and hand-to-hand combat training. Before lunch was close order drill or long hikes and classroom studies rounded out the cadet's day.

Following preflight training, he was sent to Olathe, Kansas for Primary Flight Training. His second solo was in a Stearman bi-plane. He also flew the N3N on wheels. He went to the Corpus Christie, Texas Naval Air Station for Advance Flight Training, where he flew the N3N on floats. He also flew the OS3W observation plane, used primarily to spot landing of shells from cruisers and battleships.

On August 15, 1943, Lanzen was commissioned an Ensign and received his wings of gold, certifying him as a Naval Aviator. September 1, 1943, he passed the test in Instrument flying and qualified to fly single-engine aircraft on instruments and then spent the next three months in Atlanta, Georgia, training to become an Instrument Flight Instructor.

His next posting was with VF-5 Squadron in Jacksonville, Florida. Lee taught instrument flying to fighter pilots in an SNJ, a 550-horsepower trainer, in which Lee logged about 1,000 hours of flight time. He then logged about 125 hours in the F4U Corsair, with a 2,000-horsepower engine that flew 400 miles per hour. In June 1944, he and Evelyn were married. His squadron was preparing to board a carrier to join the fleet when the war ended. In 1946, he was discharged as a U.S.N.R. Lieutenant

(JG). He said the Corsair was the most exciting plane he had ever flown.

After his discharge, Lee and Evelyn settled in Lyndhurst, Ohio. Lee taught flying at Horn's Flying School in Chagrin Falls, where his first solo took place, and completed his degree in Business at Western Reserve University. Lee and Evelyn's first son, Gary, was born in August of 1946, followed by their daughter, Gail, in November of 1947 and then their second son, Lee, in August of 1954.

Lee W. Lanzen died on June 20, 2016 at the age of 94.