Harry Lewis Cole, Jr. Biography

Pre-WSC Background

Harry Lewis Cole, Jr. was born on August 22, 1920, in Pullman, Washington to Harry Lewis Cole, Sr. and Ida Carrie Conard Cole.[1] Harry Cole, Sr. served as a lieutenant in the Army Air Corps during World War I before taking a position as an associate professor of chemistry at Washington State College (WSC) in 1917.[2] Cole, Sr. and Ida had two other sons, Wallis, born in 1922, and Golden, born in 1931.[3] Cole, Jr. grew up in Pullman, graduating from Pullman High School in 1938 and enrolling in Washington State College (WSC) as a business administration major that fall.

WSC Experience

While at WSC, Cole was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon.[4] He wanted to fly like his father before him, so he enrolled in the Civilian Pilots Training Program (CPTP), where he flew a J-3 Piper Club.[5] The CPTP program began in 1938, using as a model various training programs set up throughout Europe as a way to build up national air forces in preparation for potential war. President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved the CPT plan to train 20,000 civilian

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[1] C. James Quann, *WSU Military Veterans: Heroes and Legends* (Spokane, Washington: Tornado Creek Publications, 2005), 176; "Harry Lewis Cole, Jr.," *Ancestry.com,* https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/161493057/person/372105290933/facts?_phsrc=ixh596&_phstart=successSource (Accessed July 28, 2019).

[2] Newspaper clipping, *The Washington State Evergreen,* May 5, 1944, Box 1, Folder 19, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc.

[3] "Harry L Cole in the 1940 United States Federal Census," *Ancestry.com,* https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=2442&h=64927409&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=ixh602&_phstart=successSource.

[4] "Harry Cole in the U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-1999," *Ancestry.com,* https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=1265&h=241683922&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=ixh604&_phstart=successSource.

[5] "LT Harry L Cole, Jr., USN, DFC, KIA," *Smithsonian Air and Space Museum,* Honored by Mr. Golden C. Cole, https://airandspace.si.edu/support/wall-of-honor/lt-harry-l-cole-jr-usn-dfc-kia.

pilots per year in order to have a reserve of capable air men.[6] In an article about the CPTP program published in *The Evergreen* on January 19, 1942, Cole, by then a flight instructor at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida for the United States Navy, acknowledged the effectiveness of the early training men received while in college. He stated that the CPTP graduate "has the jump on the other cadets here at this base. Not only does it decrease his training time by about 1 ½ months, but it endows him with basic knowledge of the airplane and principles of flight. It has more than proved its worth as far as I am concerned."[7] Cole received his private pilot's license in early 1940, then completed advanced training in a Ryan monoplane at Felts Field, Spokane, Washington.[8]

Cole married Hilda Ruth Hungate, a nurse from Pullman, on October 22, 1942 at St. James Episcopal Church in Pullman.[9] In what was described as "an impressive double-ring ceremony," the service included candlelight and "beautiful bouquets of yellow and white chrysanthemums" as a backdrop, while the bride wore a "black tailored suit with…black accessories and a corsage of lavender orchids."[10] Wallis Cole served as his brother's best man, while Miss Helen Christian performed the duties of the maid of honor. A wedding breakfast was held at the Washington Hotel in Pullman after the service.[11]

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[6] "Civilian Pilot Training Program," *National Museum of the US Air Force,* May 4, 2015, https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Visit/Museum-Exhibits/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/196137/civilian-pilot-training-program/.

[7] "Enlisted Men Praise CPT Air Training," *The Evergreen,* January 19, 1942, WSU 1, WSU Publications: Evergreens http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupubslist.htm at Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[8] "LT Harry L Cole, Jr., USN, DFC, KIA," *Smithsonian Air and Space Museum,* Honored by Mr. Golden C. Cole, https://airandspace.si.edu/support/wall-of-honor/lt-harry-l-cole-jr-usn-dfc-kia.

[9] "Washington, Marriage Records, 1854-2013 for Harry Lewis Cole," *Ancestry.com,* https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/2378/45654_B282589-00605?.

[10] "Miss Hungate Weds Lieut. Harry Cole In Impressive Church Ceremony," Newspaper clipping, Box 1, Folder 19, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc.

[11] Ibid.

Wartime Service and Death

Cole enlisted in the United States Naval Reserve in Seattle, Washington on April 7, 1941.[12] He received his commission as a lieutenant, junior grade and served for more than two years as an instructor at Pensacola Naval Air Station before being transferred as a fighter pilot to Astoria, Oregon.[13] Harry Cole, Sr. was ordered to active duty in late July, 1941; he was sent to Pearson Field in Vancouver, Washington. He had previously served as president of the state reserve officers' association and had been notified by Governor Arthur B. Langlie of his appointment as district commissioner of the seventh district of the state emergency committee.[14] In 1944 he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel, and he served in North Africa and Europe for the duration of the war. Cole, Jr.'s younger brother, Wallis, a 1943 graduate of WSC's forestry program, enlisted in the Army and was a second lieutenant in the Infantry.[15]

A newspaper clipping shows Cole, Jr. was not content in his role as a flight instructor in Pensacola, as he remarked that he'd rather "just fly and let someone else take care of the teaching."[16] After the United States' entry into World War II, Cole stated that the CPTP program should cease as "all efforts now should be directed towards building up our army and navy air forces."[17] By late 1943, Cole achieved the rank of first lieutenant and he transferred to a fighter

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[12] "U.S. World War II Navy Muster Rolls, 1938-1949 for Harry Lewis Cole," *Ancestry.com,* https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/1143/32863_255983-00258?pid=52911123&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?.

[13] Newspaper clipping, Box 1, Folder 19, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc.

[14] "Army Calls Four College Staff Men," *Washington State Evergreen,* August 20, 1941, WSU 1, WSU Publications: Evergreens http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupubslist.htm at Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[15] Newspaper clipping, *The Evergreen,* May 5, 1944, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc.

[16] Newspaper clipping, Box 1, Folder 19, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc.

[17] Newspaper clipping, letter from Harry Lewis Cole, Jr., Box 1, Folder 19, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC) http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc.

group of FM II's (Wildcats), assigned to the USS *Kitkun Bay* (CVE 71), an escort carrier.[18] On May 31, 1944, the *Kitkun Bay* began serving as escort to the bombardment and transport units of the Fifth Fleet Task Group 52.17 to Saipan.[19]

The American invasion of Saipan, the largest island in the Northern Marianas in the western Pacific Ocean, claimed the lives of 55,000 soldiers and civilians in just over three weeks' time in the summer of 1944.[20] Before the U.S. Marines traversed the unforgiving topography and "tactical nightmare" of the island itself, the *Kitkun Bay* began bombing and strafing enemy positions in the Marianas.[21] Planes from the carrier shot down their first enemy aircraft on June 13, 1944, and from that point they alternated flying support missions for the Saipan landings and providing air cover for ships east of the island.[22] On June 17, 1944 the main Japanese fleet headed toward a showdown in the Marianas and U.S. carriers deployed to meet them. Eight enemy planes came down in their attempts to attack the *Kitkun Bay's* formation on the 17th.[23] Cole, now a division leader of a Fighter Wing Group, requested permission for his division to participate in a mission that necessitated his first night carrier landing upon its completion. The fighter pilots helped scatter the Japanese attack but Cole was wounded in the

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[18] "LT Harry L Cole, Jr., USN, DFC, KIA," *Smithsonian Air and Space Museum,* Honored by Mr. Golden C. Cole, https://airandspace.si.edu/support/wall-of-honor/lt-harry-l-cole-jr-usn-dfc-kia.

[19] "USS Kitkun Bay (CVE 71)," *bosamar.com,* http://www.bosamar.com/pages/cve71 (Accessed July 29, 2019).

[20] Jeff Kingston, "Battle of Saipan: a brutal invasion that claimed 55,000 lives," *The Japan Times,* July 5, 2014, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/07/05/national/history/battle-saipan-brutal-invasion-claimed-55000-lives/#.XT9gtehKiUk (Accessed July 29, 2019).

[21] Ibid.; "USS Kitkun Bay (CVE 71)," *bosamar.com,* http://www.bosamar.com/pages/cve71 (Accessed July 29, 2019).

[22] "USS Kitkun Bay (CVE 71)," *bosamar.com,* http://www.bosamar.com/pages/cve71 (Accessed July 29, 2019).

[23] Ibid.

process. Without radio contact, he attempted to land his damaged plane on the *Kitkun Bay* under cover of darkness.[24] His body was never found.

Postwar Legacy

Cole posthumously received the Purple Heart and Distinguished Flying Cross, with the latter award citing his "courageous conduct in defense of his Carrier Division."[25] He is memorialized at Tablets of the Missing, Honolulu Memorial, within the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific near Honolulu, Hawaii as well as Willamette National Cemetery in Portland, Oregon.[26] His father survived the war and died in 1971, five years after his wife Ida's death; they are both buried at Willamette National Cemetery.[27] His brother, Wallis, also lived through the war and died in 2009.[28] Cole's wife, Hilda, continued with her nursing career until her retirement in the 1970s. She remarried, had a son, and lived in St. Thomas for ten years after her retirement until moving back to the U.S. in 1987. In her later years, she spent her time becoming an accomplished artist, painting flowers and landscapes. She passed away in Houston,

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[24] "LT Harry L Cole, Jr., USN, DFC, KIA," *Smithsonian Air and Space Museum,* Honored by Mr. Golden C. Cole, https://airandspace.si.edu/support/wall-of-honor/lt-harry-l-cole-jr-usn-dfc-kia; Distinguished Flying Cross citation for Lieutenant Harry Lewis Cole, Jr, United States Naval Reserve, Box 1, Folder 5, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[25] Distinguished Flying Cross citation for Lieutenant Harry Lewis Cole, Jr, United States Naval Reserve, Box 1, Folder 5, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[26] "Harry L Cole," *HonorStates.org,* https://www.honorstates.org/index.php?id=122995 (Accessed July 29, 2019); "Harry L Cole Jr in the U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current," *Ancestry.com,* https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=60525&h=3559865&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=ixh616&_phstart=successSource (Accessed July 29, 2019).

[27] "Harry Lewis Cole Sr in the U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current," *Ancestry.com,* https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?viewrecord=1&r=an&db=FindAGraveUS&indiv=try&h=3559866 (Accessed July 29, 2019).

[28] "Wallace (sic) Wood Cole," *Ancestry.com,* https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/119448837/person/130187082569/facts?_phsrc=ixh627&_phstart=successSource (Accessed July 30, 2019).

Texas on January 3, 2018, and is buried in her family's plot at the Colfax Cemetery in Colfax, Washington.[29]

[29] "Hilda Ruth King, 1920-2019, Obituary," *Bruningfuneralhome.com,* https://www.bruningfuneralhome.com/obituary/4517631 (Accessed July 30, 2019).