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### **Crommelin Retains 'Bulldog Tenacity' Of Wartime**

To some observers the actions of Capt. John G. Crommelin, jr., may appear to be those of a man hell-bent to enjoy the role of martyr.

His friends—and he has many in the Navy—reject this idea. One of them said his present course stems from his “bulldog tenacity” to fight for what he believes to be right for the Navy and for the country.

At the white brick Georgetown home where he lives, Capt. Crommelin, 47-year old Navy aviator was told yesterday afternoon that Admiral [Louis] Denfield, chief of Naval Operations, had been directed to prefer charges against him.

“That means court-martial,” Capt. Crommelin remarked in a matter-of-fact manner. “I’m not surprised.”

#### **Prefers to Tell Congress.**

He was asked if he welcomed this development.

“I don’t welcome a general court-martial,” he replied. “It would be much better, in the interest of the country’s defense, to be called before congress. It is fundamental for the people and Congress to know the situation in the Department of Defense.”

The court-martial he regarded as “incidental” to his general objective. Asked just how he would state that objective, he thought a minute and then. Wrinkling his brow under his sandy hair, he answered slowly:

My basic objective is to get the security of the United States back on the rails and to awaken the American people to the necessity of their taking a more active interest in the defense establishment.”

His slow, almost halting, speech—it may be the result of the strain of the recent days—gives no indication of the man of action. His friends will tell you of that part of his career, which has been a distinguished one, and relate incidents to show you he is one of the “hottest” pilots in naval aviation.

#### **Survived Sinking, Burns.**

In 1943, Capt. Crommelin was chief of staff to Rear Admiral Henry M. Mullinix aboard the carrier Liscome Bay. It is no part of the job of a top staff officer to fly a fighter plane, but in the landing on Tarawa, Capt. Crommelin took a fighter and joined in raking that island with his fire.

In November, 1943, the Liscome Bay was torpedoed and sunk. Admiral Mullinix was lost. Capt. Crommelin crawled out of a hawserhole. He was burned, but he was saved. He spent a period in a hospital at Pearl Harbor and then returned to duty.

One friend—he said he disagreed with Capt. Crommelin’s views, had argued with him for months, but felt Capt. Crommelin should have the right to state his opinions—said that, if the captain had only kept quiet, he would have been an admiral shortly. He said Capt. Crommelin’s name was high on the list of captains.

But Capt. Crommelin emphasized he is not keeping quiet.

Sitting in an arm chair in the attractive living room of his home at 1513 Thirtieth street N.W., he discussed the train of explosive events that he touched off. A bulginh brief case and an additional pile of papers were beside him.

He is tall and his well-knit figure recalls his service with the Annapolis varsity boxing squad for three years. He spoke quietly. He put on glasses to read a paragraph from one of the documents taken from the brief case. Then off would come the glasses to be waved in his hand to emphasize the point. His long upper lip never lost its severity in a smile.

He was disinclined to talk about himself. He spoke instead of his aims. It was a conversation carried on between telephone calls, the return of a small daughter from school who was sent off again to dancing school, visitors at the door and cameramen coming to film Capt. Crommelin for the newsreel and television.

### **Capt. Kane is Counsel.**

But if Capt. Crommelin would not talk about himself, his long-time friend and Annapolis classmate, Capt. Joseph L. Kane, would. Capt. Kane has been asked by Capt. Crommelin to act as his counsel in facing the charges to be filed against him. Capt. Kane was already on the job yesterday afternoon.

Capt. Crommelin admitted he gave to reporters "confidential" official correspondence in which three top admirals expressed concern about the Navy's moral and the Navy's position under unification of the armed services. This action of Capt. Crommelin led to his suspension from duties and the restriction of his movements.

Capt. Kane was asked: "What makes Capt. Crommelin tick?"

"He is an expert on morale: It has been his major interest for a number of years," was the ready answer. "Morale is the main thing in conflict <sup>1</sup>. Capt. Crommelin has studied the campaigns of the past war and in earlier history to learn what part morale has played.

"He looked to his men to see what made them tick. He extended his interest to their families. This accounts for his success as a leader. He has had equal success with his senior officers."

The subject of Cedric R. Worth came up. Mr. Worth admitted before the House Armed Services Committee in August that he was the author of the anonymous document that led to the investigation into the Air Force procurement of the B-36 bomber.

Later, on September 10 Capt. Crommelin came out with a statement saying the furor over the B-36s came partly from an attempt to keep military policy makers from "emasculating the offensive potential of the United States Navy."

He told of meeting last May with Mr. Worth and others when the Worth document was discussed. He praised Mr. Worth's character.

Ten days later, before a Navy board of inquiry, Capt. Crommelin said: "Although I had nothing to do with the preparation of the document, it is my firm conviction that Cedric Worth was prompted by the highest motives of patriotism and selflessness in whatever action he took to help point out the dangers of the original Tydings bill (for the unification of the armed forces). It is my firm belief that when this entire investigation is completed, Cedric Worth will be vindicated in the eyes of the American people."

### **Sees Two Accomplishments.**

Capt. Kane was asked about justification of Capt. Crommelin's support of a man who attacked the characters of two high Government officials in an anonymous document, later conceding there was no support for the charges.

Capt. Kane said Capt. Crommelin held that what Mr. Worth had done had accomplished two things:

1. Taken some of the most objectionable features out of the Tydings Act.

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<sup>1</sup> Morale was listed as one of the primary duties of a commanding officer.

2. Given the Navy's point of view a hearing on Capitol Hill and before the American people.

Capt. Kane continued:

"Capt. Crommelin had taken an oath to defend his country against domestic enemies as well as foreign enemies. He felt he could no longer work under the conditions he was forced to work under. His conscience would not permit it."

Capt. Kane described his friend as tenacious in attaining his end—a quality he exhibited in the war—and of unswerving purpose. This also applied to the "Green Bowl" episode.

Capt. Crommelin touched off an investigation of the Green Bowl two years ago by testifying before a Congressional committee that a Navy society named the Green Bowl had "grown vicious with the years." It was said that its members had the inside track for promotions and high-ranking jobs.

The Green Bowl was started in 1907 at the Naval Academy, a bowl containing strong drink presumably being the focus of meetings.

### **Navy Investigates.**

The upshot of the investigation was a Navy announcement that the organization had ceased to exist in 1944 but that, anyway, it was banned forever. The Navy said that there was no evidence the organization had the influence attributed to it for advancing its members but there had been an "adverse effect to a limited degree on service morale because of the fear of the potentialities of an alleged self-serving secret society."

Capt. Kane said neither Capt. Crommelin nor he had been Green Bowl members.

Capt. Crommelin was asked for a succinct statement of his position in the unification of the armed services dispute. He read this from the statement he issued September 10:

"The B-36 controversy and the recently cancelled carrier contract (the one for the supercarrier [U.S.S. United States {CV-58}]) are mere superficial manifestations of the real cause for disagreements between the armed services. The basic contention, in my opinion, lies within the area of the general staff concept and will never be resolved until it is thoroughly threshed out in conformity with the principles of democracy—equal representation and expression from the three services—before the Congress of the United States.

### **Cannot Lend Support.**

"The Navy cannot support an organization whose methods and principles violate the Navy's concept of the Navy man's oath.

"I am convinced that many naval officers find it most difficult to support conscientiously, and with a deep sense of devotion to duty, the present organization principles of the armed services, for they are dominated by the general staff with the two-to-one vote system in the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"I can certify that the general staff concept is absolutely foreign to the principles on which the Navy has functioned so successfully from the conclusion of World War I to the conclusion of World War II.

When Capt. Crommelin issued that September 10 statement, he said: "I'm finished. This means my naval career. But I hope this will blow the whole thing open and bring on another Congressional investigation."

### **Apparently Advanced.**

Not only did this not finish Capt. Crommelin, but the sequel came close to being advancement to a job of greater responsibilities.

He had been a member of the staff of the Joint Chief of Staffs, working on secret war plans of all three services. On September 15 he was reassigned and made director of naval aviation personnel, a post vacated before by Rear Admiral F.W. McMahon. It appeared—for a few hours—that the Navy was taking care of its own and that Capt. Crommelin was getting a better assignment.

Then Navy Secretary Matthews took a hand. He announced the transfer of Capt. Crommelin to the office of Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Air. Instead of taking the place of a rear admiral, Capt. Crommelin's assignment was under Rear Admiral E.A. Cruse in the air warfare division.

Came a lull. Then the step that really appears to have jeopardized Capt. Crommelin's career came late Monday. He turned over to the three press associations the letter to Mr. Matthews from Vice Admiral Gerald F. Bogan, expressing concern about Navy morale as a result of the workings of unification, with indorsements by Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Pacific Fleet commander, and Admiral Denfield.

There were two days of mystery as to the identity of the person who had made the documents public.

#### **Makes Admission.**

Wednesday night, Capt. Crommelin made admitted he was the man. He said that he had asked that his name be withheld in connection with the publication of the documents "to prevent any diversion of the attention of the American people of the true import" of the letter and indorsements.

Capt. Crommelin said yesterday he obtained his copy of the letter "from an officer with authority to give it, and I had authority to receive it." He said in his statement of Wednesday night, however, that his action may have been a technical violation of a regulation, "but it had to be done."

Capt. Crommelin's biography issued by the Navy runs for four pages of single-spaced copy. Its length is the result of his citations. There are four:

1. A Letter of Commendation praising him for his actions as air officer of the carrier Enterprise [CV-6] in the Battle of Santa Cruz, October 28, 1942.
2. A Presidential Unit Citation for the aggressive spirit and distinguished achievement of the Enterprise.

#### **Legion of Merit.**

3. The Legion of Merit (with Combat "V"), citing his material contributions, professional skill and devotion to duty as chief of staff of a Carrier Task Group Commander in operations against the Japanese in 1944.

4. The Gold Star in lieu of a second Legion of Merit praising his training for combat of all Navy squadrons and pilots on the West Coast from August 12, 1944, to July 24, 1945.

Capt. Crommelin was born in Montgomery, Ala., October 2, 1902. He attended the University of Virginia before his appointment to the Naval Academy from which he was graduated in 1923.

The first assignment afloat was on the battleship West Virginia, when it was commissioned in 1923. Later he went to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola, Fla., and completed flight training in November, 1926. He has served in naval aviation since.

He served aboard carriers and twice returned for duty at Pensacola. In May, 1940, he was assigned to duty in the Bureau of Aeronautics here, serving for two years, then joining the Enterprise as air officer in June, 1942. The Enterprise saw plenty of service from Guadalcanal to the Battle of Rennel Island in January, 1943.

### **Commanded [USS] Saipan.**

Later he was assigned to be chief of staff to Admiral Mullinix and was aboard the Liscome Bay when she was torpedoed and sunk in the Gilbert Islands area [supporting the invasion of Tarawa Island]. There followed his duty as director of training on the West Coast.

He commanded the carrier Saipan [CVL-48] from her commissioning in July, 1946, to September, 1947, when he became chief of staff to the commander, Operational Development Force, Atlantic Fleet. These were important assignments. He then attended the Naval War College at Newport, R.I., and later the National War College here.

The officers the Navy assigns to these service colleges are unusually highly regarded and believed to be headed for an admiral's flag.

The Crommelin family is an old one in Alabama, and the family plantation is at Harrogate Springs between Montgomery and Wetumpka. Both of Capt. Crommelin's grandfathers served in the Confederate Army.

### **Two Brothers Killed.**

Capt. Crommelin was married in 1930, to Miss Lillian Eoff Landis of Findlay, Ohio. They have three children, daughters 8 and 4 years old, and a son, 6 months old.

Five Crommelin brothers went through Annapolis and served in the Navy. Capt. John G. Crommelin, jr., is the oldest.

Capt. Henry Crommelin, of the Annapolis class of 1925, is the only one who did not become a flyer. Lt. Comdr. Quentin C. Crommelin, the youngest, was graduated from Annapolis in 1941.

Two of the brothers were killed in action. They were Comdr. Charles L. Crommelin, class of 1931, who was killed off Okinawa, and Lt. Comdr. Richard G. Crommelin, class of 1938, who was killed off the coast of Japan.

