



### **LCDR CALVIN L. LARSEN, USN, Ret.**

Calvin Luther Larsen joined the Navy from the family farm and ranch in North Eastern Montana on March 9, 1945 at age 17. After Recruit Training in San Diego and a short spell driving aircraft fueling trucks on Naval Air Station North Island he was transferred to Sangley Point in the Philippine Islands on the troop ship USS Admiral W. S. Simms, AP-127 in October 1945.

At Sangley Point he became a striker in the photo lab. He was given personal training in aerial photography from the PBY aircraft of Fleet Air Wing Ten. The mission objective was to make aerial photographs of the many light houses in the Philippine Islands showing the damage these structures received during World War II. He was advanced to PHOM3C in the spring of 1946. He was transferred to the USS Tarawa, CV-40, in September 1946. There he was assigned to the SB2C Squadron VA-1A. The Tarawa continued on a Western Pacific cruise to Japan and China during which he did a lot of aerial photography from the SB2C. The communists were just taking over in China and the Tarawa brought back two squadrons of U. S. Marine Corps aircraft from China to Pearl Harbor. Larsen was promoted to PHOM2C prior to arriving at Pearl Harbor

In April 1947 he went to Pensacola, FL where he graduated from the Navy Photo Basic "A" School and then went on leave to Montana where he married his wife Carol on November 9, 1947. She had been one year behind him in High School. Carol and he then went back to Pensacola where he went on to Camera Repair School and graduated from there in March, 1948. Their son Bruce was born in August 1948. He was kept at Camera Repair School in Pensacola as an instructor and made Photographers Mate First Class in 1949. In later years Larsen would do two more three year tours of instructor duty at Pensacola

teaching in the Advanced "B" School and the Motion Picture "C" School. During these tours he also taught in flight aerial mapping and oblique aerial photography in the SNB aircraft.

In 1950 the Korean War began and Larsen joined the Pacific Fleet Combat Camera Group in 1951 working first out of Tokyo, then Atsugi, Japan. In addition to doing combat photography as a crew chief in Korea, usually with the Marines, he did special assignments in Thailand, French Indo China, the Philippine Islands and Taiwan. He also rode the USS Doyle, DMS-34 from Subic Bay to Pearl Harbor shooting scenes that were later used in the film, The Caine Mutiny. He was advanced to Chief Photographers Mate in November, 1952. In 1953 he photographed the Korean Truce Talks, the POW Prisoner Exchanges and the signing of the armistice on July 27, 1952 at Panmonjom on the border between South and North Korea.

Then it was back to Pensacola for another tour of instructor duty in September 1953. In 1956 he volunteered and was accepted for the Antarctic wintering over party for Deep Freeze II and the International Geophysical Year. He went south on the USS Glacier. He had five photographers in Antarctica including one who wintered over with him at Little America. He was a driver and photographer on the first tractor train to Byrd Station. The photographs that he made on that trip were used to illustrate the article, "Across the Frozen Desert to Byrd Station" published in the September 1957 issue of National Geographic Magazine. He also did a lot of aerial photography from the Otters and R4D aircraft operating out of Little America. Later the U. S. Geological Survey office named a mountain, Mt. Calvin, in the Everett Range for him in recognition of the work Larsen had done in Antarctica when he wintered at Little America in 1956 and 1957. His wife Carol gave birth to their daughter Sonya in Montana in November, 1956 when Calvin was wintering at Little America.

Then it was to the Fleet Air Photo Lab and VFP-61 at NAS, Miramar, California. In 1958 he attended the Course on Advanced Chemical Technology at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York. Later that year the first E8 list came out on a Friday and there were four Chief Photographers, including Calvin Larsen, on it. Monday morning he became the Leading Chief of the VFP-61 Photo Department. In 1959 it was back to Pensacola for his third tour of instructor duty. In 1960 he was selected for E9, and became the Command Master Chief at NATTU Pensacola and was the command training supervisor having seventy plus instructors and four photographic schools under his supervision. In late 1961 he was on the list that came out of those selected as Navy Photo Officers. On January 2, 1962 he was sworn in as a commissioned naval officer. He received orders to VAP-62 at NAS, Jacksonville, FL.

On arriving in Jacksonville he was put into flight status as a RA-3B navigator trainee. 200 in-flight hours of training were required in the RA-3B to qualify for the Naval Flight Officer wings. He was soon wearing those wings and in the

spring of 1963 he went on the photo detachment to Rota, Spain and spent the summer of 1963 doing photo mapping and reconnaissance in Europe and Africa. They flew the RA-3B out of Norway, England, Spain, Sicily, Italy, Morocco and Libya doing photo reconnaissance and mapping. In 1963-1965 he was involved in extensive mapping for the US Geological Survey in the US. Considerable work was also done on Cuba during this time.

After another three rewarding years of flying he was promoted to LT and transferred to the Naval Photographic Center in Washington, DC where he assumed duties as Assistant Head of the Still Picture Department. In 1967 he became the Head, Still Picture Department. One significant event during his time in that position was that the Navy issued U. S. Navy Photography Technical Bulletin (NAVAIR 10-1TB-51) dated January 1, 1968 which Larsen wrote. That bulletin established the use of 35mm Kodachrome as the film to be used for documentary purposes by US Navy Photographers world wide.

From Washington DC he received orders to Naval Station, Rota, Spain where he took over the photo facility there in June, 1969. That facility provided photographic laboratory support to navy organizations throughout the Mediterranean area. He also made many photographs of Russian submarines and their other naval vessels as they passed through the Strait of Gibraltar making their way to and from Russia. This was pleasant duty, and it enabled Carol, him and their daughter Sonya to travel in Spain and Europe. They enjoyed that, especially one 18 day trip to England in June 1971. After they had lived in Spain for over three years he retired from the Navy on October 1, 1972 with the rank of Lt Commander with nearly 28 years of active duty behind him.

His second 28 years in photography started upon his retirement. After getting to the US they bought a home near Port Angeles, Washington. Here he was able to pursue his interests in nature photography both in the Olympic National Park and on the waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Pacific Coast. In 1973 and 74 he taught courses in nature photography at Peninsula College in Port Angeles. He also had articles on photography with his accompanying photos published in the Sunday Seattle Times and in a slick Northwest magazine called Pacific Search during this period.

He then researched photo agencies who hold and market a photographers work. The most reputable agency he found was Photo Researchers, Inc. in New York City. In early 1975 he wrote to the then head of that organization, Jane S. Kinne, telling her of his background, his hopes and his plans. She responded telling him that they were not taking on any new photographers just then but that they had an interest in his nature photography and asked him for 200 samples of his photography so that they might review his work. He sent those photographs to them and she responded with a signed contract needing only his signature. This contract gave Photo Researchers exclusive right to sell the reproduction rights to his work. They would pay him 50% of the gross price that

they received for the sale. He signed the contract and Photo Researchers have now sent him checks on a quarterly basis for over 28 years. He has never missed receiving their quarterly check.

After getting the Photo Researchers contract the Larsen's started chasing birds nation wide. They sold their home in Port Angeles and were living full time in a 36' fifth wheel RV. They spent winters in the south where there were lots of migrating birds in places like Texas, Louisiana, the Florida Everglades and the West Coast of Florida. They also wintered in Arizona and once in California where he did scenic and wildlife photography. Often an RV park was a good bird location so he would set up a blind there. Their summers were spent in Washington, Montana and as far as a thousand miles north in Canada. It takes a week to get a on a first name basis with a bird so this means of traveling was perfect. They stopped at many National Wildlife Refuges and National Parks to do scenic and wildlife photography.

Larsen bought his first Nikon in Tokyo in 1952 and he continued using the Nikon cameras and Kodachrome film in his nature photography. After 1975 he went through pairs of the Nikon F2, F3 and finally the F4. The 400mm f2.8 Nikkor was his basic close up lens for birds. He also carried a f2.8 80-200mm, a f2.8 35-70mm and then a macro lens for close ups of butterflies, flowers and insects.

In 1988 he lost the ability to focus the telephoto lenses and this was just before the auto-focus professional cameras came out so he ended his bird and wild life photography and went back into aerial photography as he had done in the navy. He had the F4 Nikons then and when the F5 came out he bought one of those. The F5 is a fantastic aerial camera. It has an outstanding light metering system, high shutter speeds and a superb lens focusing system. It would shoot up to 8 frames a second and would rewind an exposed roll of film in four seconds. For hand held aerial photos he liked using a minimum shutter speed of ten times the focal length of the lens in use. So when shooting with a 300mm you need a minimum shutter speed of 1/3,000 of a second. Film used in aials was the 35mm Kodachrome PKL 200. A beautiful film.

In 1989 they had a home built and were again living in a conventional manner in Port Angeles, WA. His photo line was Aerial Photography West of the Mississippi. They traveled by car and stayed in motels. He made aerial photos of lakes, rivers, oil wells, harbor, refineries, industry, bridges, dams, high ways, city sky lines, geographic features like volcanoes and craters in addition to the gold and copper mines in the west. For instance, the Kennicott Copper Mine in Utah is the largest man made hole on earth. In addition to photographing that he made aerial photos of every dam on the Colorado, Columbia and Snake Rivers. Features like the Barranger Crater in Arizona and ocean shipping in the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico were also shot.

Things changed forever on 9/11 and since that day air controllers will not permit aircraft to fly anywhere near targets such as bridges, refineries and dams. Consequently, Larsen has ended his career in aerial photography, has sold his cameras and lenses. His agency in New York continues to market his photographs from earlier days.

In addition to sales in the USA, sales are also regularly made to publishers in Japan, Germany and England by Photo Researchers agencies abroad. There have also been sales in France, Poland, Brazil, Australia and other countries. Most of my photos sold by Photo Researchers are published in books by such publishers as Chanticleer Press, McGraw-Hill, Prentice Hall and particularly in text books and he also has regular sales to magazines such as National Wildlife, Audubon Magazine and Discover Magazine.

Calvin Larsen and his wife Carol have recently celebrated their 57th anniversary. This marriage has produced two truly fine children, Bruce and Sonya. They in turn each have two children with Bruce & Diane's sons in Montana having produced five beautiful great grandchildren. Bruce and Diane's sons, our two grandsons, are now in Iraq with the Montana National Guard. Sonya and her husband Gregg live here in Port Angeles where he continues as a model husband, father and Son in Law. Our two grand daughters in law in Montana, Becky and Danelle, continue setting their fine examples as mothers of their precious children. Sonya's two children live in this area. Erin is in Tacoma with Target Stores where she has excelled. Son Ryan is a computer genius who attends the local college in addition to working in the computer field. He and a partner will be opening a computer business in this area in January.