

Commander Mack Wright, USN(Ret)

(A Mustang in the League of the Least Likely)

On the cool day of March 11, 1923, a child was born to Effie Esther and Seth Wright in the farming community of Jay, Florida. Mack was the third child of a family of twelve children. Early in life, he demonstrated his ability to make choices. He was named "McClenny", but by youthful fiat, he referred to himself as "Mack", and Mack became his legal name. As the oldest boy in a farm family during the depression, he undertook various tasks of daily farm life. Picking cotton early in the morning - when the dew was still on the plants - and "looking at the south-end of a north-bound mule", as he walked behind a hand plow were just a few of his activities. This was sufficient motivation for him to seek another occupation. He set his face toward working at a "filling station" in Milton, Florida.

One day in Jay, he saw a pretty, eight year old girl, with long curly hair, wearing a blue coat, and his life took a serendipitous turn. The meeting dramatically changed his life and he decided that she was going to be his wife. While attending a county fair, a few years later, he saw her again and followed her around the fair. This time, she asked her cousin to tell him that she wanted his photograph. So, Mack gave her one.

WWII was declared in 1941. Mack interrupted high school and convinced his dad to help him enlist in the United States Navy. He trained in San Diego, California and was assigned to the Pacific theater. He became a photographer's mate and attained the rank of PH1 in less than four years. After serving overseas continuously for about 39 months, he came home and married the, now grown up, long curly haired little girl (Eula Merle Cooley) with whom he had kept in contact for years by speedy U.S. mail. He trained at the Naval School of Photography (NATTU) in Pensacola, Florida and attained the rank of chief petty officer before he was entitled to wear two hash marks - one for each four years of service. Prior to the ceremony, he sewed on the second hash mark, because he didn't want to stand with other men who had been in service for many more years than he, before receiving a similar promotion. As an instructor at the school, he assisted in the organization of the PH(B) course of advanced training. He left NATTU in 1952 and served aboard the USS Kenneth Whiting (AV-4) in the Korean area. In 1955, he reported to NAS Memphis as a technical writer for the photographic mate training manual. Shortly thereafter, he completed the Electronic Officer School, NATTU

Memphis, and was appointed a warrant officer photographer, then he served with the Heavy Photographic Squadron 61 (VAP-61) and (VAP-62) in various capacities, among which, was photographic officer aboard the USS Essex (CVA-9) until 1961. Mack went to the South Pole with the Antarctic Development Squadron (VXE-6), was promoted from warrant officer II to Lieutenant, and served as a Limited Duty Officer (LDO). Upon his return, he was assigned to Naval Photographic Interpretation and Naval Reconnaissance and Technical Support Centers in Washington, D.C. during the "Cuban Missile Crisis". From this assignment, Mack served with the Light Photographic Squadron 62 (VFP-62) where he was promoted to Lieutenant Commander. In 1967, he served with Fleet Air Jacksonville, Florida and Heavy Photographic Squadron (VAP-62) and from there, he was assigned to Guam with photographic duties in Korea and Vietnam, until 1969, when he was appointed Director of the NATTU, Pensacola, Florida where he was promoted to Commander.

He always spoke admirably and highly of both his superior officers and the persons who worked with him during his many tours of service. In 1979, Mack received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost while attending services at Antioch the Apostolic Church that was founded by his son, Bishop, Chester Mack Wright, in Arnold, Maryland. He accepted GOD's calling into the evangelistic ministry and established the Ekklesia Revival Center, during which time, he and his wife lived a number of years in their HMC motor home that he referred to as his "Home Missions Church". He returned to Florida and was promoted to pastor of the First Pentecostal Church of Jay, Florida. He thanks Rev. Paul Welch and other church board members for entrusting him and commissioning him as a Minister of the Gospel.