

*A Legacy of Courage:*

# THE STORY OF ARTHUR VAN HAREN, JR.

Arizona WWII Ace Fighter Pilot



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ARTHUR VAN HAREN, JR.**  
Arizona WWII Ace Fighter Pilot

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Special thanks to the Van Haren and Halvorson families for sharing  
their memories, photographs, scrapbooks and  
the personal diary of Arthur Van Haren Jr.



Arthur Van Haren Jr. in his F6F Hellcat, 1943.  
Official U.S. Navy Photograph

## PREFACE

*Latino Perspectives Magazine* and Phoenix College's Raul H. Castro Institute have forged a partnership to research, publish and disseminate the life stories of notable Latinos in Arizona. Through this joint effort we have published six books: *The Faces of Post 41*; *Nurturing Tradition, Fostering Change*; *Not So Easy: Tucson's 13th Infantry Battalion Marine Reserves*; and *Arizona Latina Trailblazers Vol. I, II & III*.

To date, over 2,500 copies of these books have been donated to public libraries and high schools in the state. Digital versions of these resources have been contributed to the Arizona Memory Project (<http://azmemory.lib.az.us>) where they are accessed on average 300 times each month by users all over the world. It is our hope the stories we have documented will inspire a new generation of leaders to serve our country and our state.

*A Legacy of Courage: The Story of Arthur Van Haren Jr.* is the latest addition to this collection.

Phoenix, Arizona  
Veterans Day 2012

**Raul H. Castro Institute**  
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**Latino**  
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# NAVY'S "FIGHTING TWO" ADDED TO GREATNESS AT MANILA

Many of the veteran Navy pilots who took part in the first Manila raid flew their first combat missions in the Gilbert Islands less than a year ago. But in the months since Tarawa some terrific records have been compiled by Navy fliers. The hottest fighter squadron in the Pacific right now is "Fighting Two." From Makin to Manila, Fighting Two shot down 261 Japanese planes at a loss of only three pilots, destroyed approximately 200 more on the ground, battered or sunk some 50,000 tons of shipping, collected 117 major

decorations. Among the squadron's 50-odd pilots, 28 have shot down at least five Japanese planes. Twenty-six of these aces are shown here.

When Fighting Two left Quonset Point, R.I. last year a Wave ensign named Marie Thompson, up to see her boyfriend off, kissed all 36 of the original pilots goodby. If Ensign Thompson is still willing, she will have a chance to kiss Fighting Squadron Two again. This month the 32 members who have survived a year of tough, dangerous war are coming home on leave.

COMMANDER J. D. ARNOLD LED FIGHTING TWO'S GROUP



Lieut. Landis Doner, named "Blood," has eight Japs, two DFCs, Air Medal.



Lieut. Roy Yorik, an undertaker, got six Jap planes, was operations officer.



Lieut. Arthur Van Haren Jr., downed nine, holds two DFCs, Air Medal.



Lieut. Lloyd Barnard has eight, five in one day over Volcano Islands.



Ensign Ross Robinson, handsome man in squadron, shot down five.



Lieut. Richard Griffin has shot down eight, holds two DFCs, Air Medal.



Ensign Leroy Robinson, only 20, has five to his credit, four in one day.



Lieut. (j. g.) Earling Zaeske, called "Zesk," shot down five, holds DFC.



Ensign Kenneth Lake, "The Kid," has six, one a four-engined bomber.



Lieut. (j. g.) C. H. Carroll has six, DFC, Air Medals, Purple Heart.



Lieut. (j. g.) John Wolf has downed seven, holds DFC, four Air Medals.



Lieut. (j. g.) John Banks, squadron crowner, got eight Japs, two DFCs.



Lieut. (j. g.) Clyde Spittler, ex-farm boy, has a total of five Jap planes.



Lieut. (j. g.) Eugene D. Redmond, a policeman's son, has nine planes.



Lieut. (j. g.) F. T. Gabriel, nicknamed "Supermouse," has eight.



Lieut. (j. g.) E. C. Hargreaves, minister's son, downed eight in 10 days.



Lieut. (j. g.) Merriwell Vineyard, once with RCAF in Malta, has six.



Lieut. (j. g.) Byron M. Johnson, who would like to be a writer, has eight.



Ensign Richard Blydes, "Razor," has five, DFC, three Air Medals.



Lieut. (j. g.) W. A. Skon, "Butch" O'Hare's last wingman, has seven.

# FOREWORD BY ERIC J. HALVORSON

When the Raul H. Castro Institute and Latino Perspectives Magazine asked if I would contribute a foreword for this booklet, I accepted with great honor and family pride. Arthur Van Haren, Jr. (aka "Tata") was my grandfather and my hero. As his oldest grandchild, I began to explore my Tata's WWII service record several years after he died in 1992. It's been both my passion and hobby, and what I found is that he was a very special combat veteran and native son of Arizona.

Born into a pioneer Mexican American family with deep Arizona roots dating back to the late 1800's, my Tata went on to become our state's top WWII fighter pilot ace. He was issued several awards, including the Distinguished Flying Cross, a very prestigious U.S. Naval aviator medal. One of the things that is so amazing about my Tata's story is that he is one of only a handful of Mexican American fighter pilot "aces." In that era, they did not put Mexicans in cockpits; they were typically assigned to mopping

the decks of ships. Nonetheless, my Tata's Mexican American heritage was very important to him and he truly embraced it every day. Born in the small mining town of Superior and raised in Phoenix, he never forgot where he came from.

My Tata's war experiences during his service in the Pacific Theater deeply impacted him. The ravages of war, such as the taking of innocent Japanese lives on the ground, dogfights with enemy pilots and the loss of squadron buddies who did not always come back from flight missions off the USS Enterprise would haunt him the rest of his life. Although he was very appreciative of the recognition he received for his military accomplishments back home in Phoenix, my Tata dealt with personal guilt and remorse for decades.

In the end, my Tata overcame all of life's obstacles and curve balls. My Tata and my hero, U.S.N. Lt. Arthur Van Haren, Jr., "fought the good fight" and in the end, won all of his battles in life.

Lieut. Arthur Van Haren Jr. and members of VF-2 Squad featured in Life Magazine, Oct. 23, 1944.



Arthur Van Haren Jr. (photographer unknown)

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# INTRODUCTION

When Arthur Van Haren, Jr. passed away in 1992, his family began to look through his belongings. His son Peter came across a small diary in a strongbox. He opened the book and out poured Arthur's



Formal portrait of Arthur Van Haren Jr. in U.S. Naval Dress White uniform.

feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and elation during his service in the Pacific as a Navy pilot. It was the voice of a 23-year-old man, far from his new wife and baby, facing the dangers of war. A voice that none of his children had ever heard.

*June 12, 1944: "If ever my life seems boring later on, all I have to do is think back over the last two days. I've had enough excitement to last two lifetimes! I took off today and almost immediately my plane started throwing oil and then started smoking to high heaven. I had a 500 lb. bomb and that worried me to no end 'cause I couldn't get rid of it. The ship told me to land anyway: so I did and my old luck held right out. Just as I hit the deck the engine burst into flames but I wasted no time getting out of the darn thing. The boys ganged two more this morning and I wasn't on that hop. I got over the target later in the afternoon and the A.A. (Anti-Aircraft artillery) is still pretty rough. They hit Dennis Floyd head on. He came down in flames. He was a real fellow. They always seem to get it. It doesn't seem quite fair. He had a baby he never even got to see. What a lousy racket this is!"*

Arthur wrote this entry during the Invasion of the Mariana Islands, where

his squadron, the VF-2 "Fighting Rippers," shot down a total of 26 Japanese planes. Arthur was among a group of 50 fighter pilots who were based mainly off the USS Hornet—and out of that group 27 earned the title of ace pilot, shooting down five or more enemy planes. Arthur, a Phoenix native of Mexican and Dutch ancestry, had nine confirmed "kills" and three unconfirmed. The press and fellow Phoenixians hailed him as a war hero and Arizona's top Naval fighter pilot ace.

Arthur joined the ranks of the few Mexican American men from Phoenix to be given public acclaim as decorated war heroes, although many from the city's Mexican community served in World War II with distinction. Other young men who received public recognition included Valdemar Córdova, a Purple Heart winner who flew a B-17 with the 8th Air Force over Germany and was taken prisoner of war for over a year; and Silvestre Herrera, who earned the rare Congressional Medal of Honor for capturing eight German soldiers, then firing on the enemy for his platoon while severely wounded in a 1945 battle in France.

But Arthur was not comfortable with the title of "hero," and the medals that came with it. Eventually, he threw away those medals, and told few stories about his time in the Pacific. He focused on his career as a lawyer, providing service to the local community and especially to those who were in need. He helped many in Phoenix, especially those from the Mexican American community, in which he had deep roots.



Personal diary of Arthur Van Haren Jr. written during his service as a Naval pilot in the Pacific.

## THE VAN HARENS: A PIONEER ARIZONA FAMILY

The Phoenix Van Haren family story begins in Territorial Arizona and the Mexican state of Sonora, with a Dutch immigrant named Peter Van Haren. As a boy of nine, Peter arrived in the United States from Holland in 1847. During the Civil War, he joined the Union Army and served in the 1st Regiment California Volunteer Cavalry. This regiment served in the Arizona and New Mexico territories until 1866.



Arthur Van Haren Sr.

Peter left the Union Army and a year later married Francesca Morales in Chihuahua, Mexico. They lived in the Arizona Territory in Adamsville, Pima County, where he farmed.

After Francesca's death in 1872, Peter moved north to Florence, Ariz. Two years later he married Dolores Granillo, whose family originated in Sonora. He worked in various mines in the region and eventually the Van Harens settled in Sonora. Peter continued mining and raised five children with Dolores. The family eventually moved north again, and Dolores gave birth to her seventh child, Arthur Sr., in Florence in 1895. After Peter's death, Dolores settled in Phoenix and raised her children alone while working as a laundress. The Van Harens joined the growing Mexican American community of Phoenix, which in earlier years had composed about half of the city's population. During the time Arthur Sr. grew up and started his own family, the number of Phoenicians of Mexican descent



Mexican American Chamber of Commerce, 1940s. Arthur Van Haren Sr., seated first row, far right. (Image courtesy of Frank Barrios/photographer unknown.)

hovered around 10-15 percent of the total population. Phoenicians of Mexican descent, along with Blacks, Asians, and Native Americans, experienced growing prejudice and discrimination. Most resided in separate neighborhoods from Anglos, encountered growing segregation practices in public places, and had little voice in the political development of the city. The Mexican American community included a small middle class, which Arthur Van Haren Sr. would soon join.

Arthur Sr. grew up in a poor family, but improved his circumstances through

hard work and an outgoing personality. He found work as a delivery boy for local department stores, while beginning his sports career as a member of the Arizona Braves baseball team in 1915. Two years later, Arthur met and married Rose Valenzuela of Superior, Ariz., and followed in his father's military footsteps by joining the Army during World War I. While serving in the 89th Army Division, he was shot and wounded, partially disabling his arm. Arthur was awarded the Purple Heart, and returned to Phoenix to his wife and new daughter, Virginia. The family

moved to Superior, Ariz., where he found work in a mercantile store. His son Arthur Jr. was born in Superior in 1920. The family then moved back to Phoenix where Arthur Sr. attended Lamson Business College and learned accounting, eventually securing a job with the Arizona Brewing Company as a comptroller and office manager.

Arthur and Rose served as important role models to their two children. He and Rose were among the founding members of the Immaculate Heart Church in 1928. Rose assisted with fund raising efforts for community projects through the Friendly House and Las Damas organization, and participated in church activities. In spite of his injured arm, Arthur Sr. continued his sports career as an umpire, calling more than 4,000 baseball and softball games in professional leagues, high schools and colleges. He called games for the famous 1940s women's softball team, the A-1 Queens, on which future state governor Rose Mofford played. He also served as ring announcer at Phoenix Madison Square Garden from 1926 to 1952. This career led to his induction into the Arizona Sports Hall of Fame.



Cartoon by Ray Artigue depicting the sports career of Art Van Haren Sr. (newspaper unknown)

## ARTHUR VAN HAREN JR. IN EARLY PHOENIX

The only son of Arthur Sr. and Rose Van Haren, Arthur Jr. grew up during the 1920s and 1930s in Phoenix, then a small city of 50,000 with a vibrant downtown surrounded by fields of cotton and citrus groves. During his childhood, new "skyscrapers" appeared, such as the twelve-story Luhrs Tower and the sixteen-story Hotel Westward Ho. The brand new Union Station welcomed travelers from across the country on Southern Pacific trains, and the first commercial airlines flew in to Sky Harbor Airport. Phoenicians shopped at the big department stores like Korricks, Boston Store, and Sears and Roebuck. Children visited the arcade at Joyland, swam at the Riverside pool, and enjoyed air-conditioned movies at theatres like the Orpheum, Rialto and the Fox. They attended a variety of grade schools, but after eighth grade all young people entered Phoenix Union High School—the only secondary school in town until North High opened in 1938.

During this time period, unless one could "pass" as Euro American, a

Phoenician of Mexican descent generally lived in a different world. Most children attended primarily Mexican American churches and schools. They often played sports, swam or joined clubs exclusively with other Mexican American children. Restaurants, pools,



Arthur Van Haren Jr. at age 2.

and most movie theatres practiced segregation, which impacted those of Mexican descent as well as Phoenix's small African American community. Two Spanish-language newspapers, *El Sol* and *El Mensajero*, provided the latest news and commentary. In the early 1930s, the Great Depression brought hard times to Phoenix families, especially minority families. The Friendly House,



Arthur Van Haren Jr. at age 4.

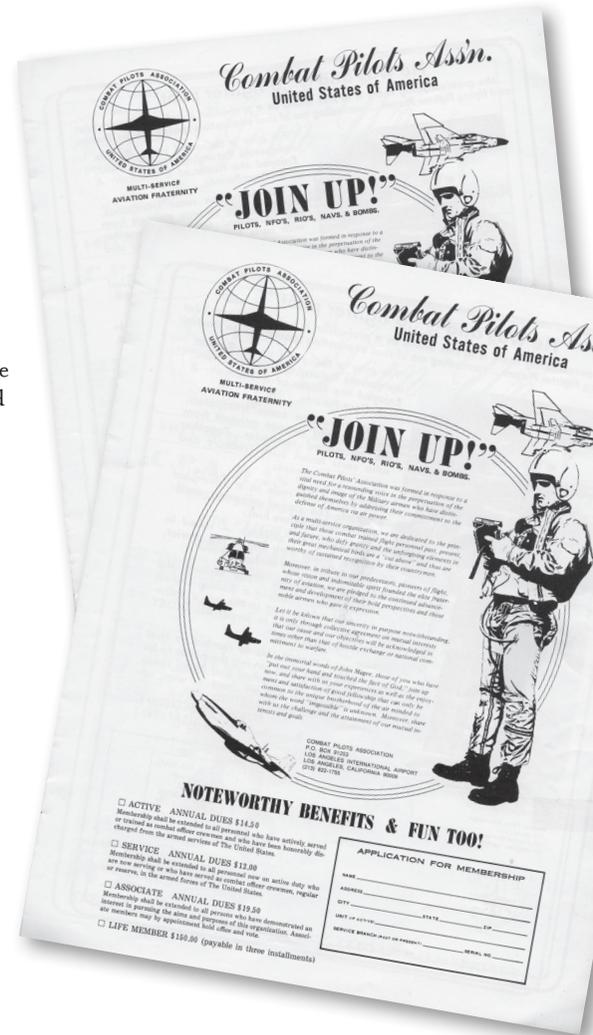
opened in 1922, provided Mexican American families with language and job training classes, along with New Deal economic assistance programs.

Most people of Mexican descent lived south of Van Buren Street, the common line of racial division in early Phoenix. The majority lived south of the Southern Pacific railroad in *barrios* like Grant Park and Golden Gate. Only a handful of middle-class Mexican Americans resided north of this line, mainly in the Garfield neighborhood near 7th and Roosevelt streets. In the 1920s, the Van Harens moved to a home north of McDowell Road. The family's Dutch surname may have allowed them access to a home usually off limits to minorities due to race-restrictive housing covenants.

Arthur attended Monroe Elementary School and then Phoenix Union High School (PUHS). Gregarious and talented like his father, Arthur Jr. had a natural athletic ability, earning honors at PUHS as an All-State quarterback and All-State catcher in baseball. Arthur's son Daniel recalls, "He was a Mexican growing up with a non-Mexican name and I don't think it was necessarily that he shied away from being a Mexican, but I think he decided that he was going to

be something a little bit more than just another Mexican kid." Arthur was a star athlete and was drafted by the New York Yankees to play baseball. Unfortunately, he blew out his knee playing football before he could join them.

After graduating from Phoenix Union High School, Arthur enrolled at the University of Arizona. And in 1938, he attended on an athletic scholarship where he played baseball as a catcher and joined the football team. However, in three years the course of his life would change, as a world war gained momentum and Arizona's young men and women began to consider their part in the conflict.



## SERVICE TO COUNTRY: THE MAKING OF A NAVAL AVIATION ACE

During World War II, between 375,000 and 500,000 Mexican Americans across the nation served in the armed forces. A month after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Phoenix newspaper *El Mensajero* declared:



Lieut. Arthur Van Haren Jr. and parents Rose and Arthur Van Haren Sr., 1942.

“The Spanish Americans and citizens of Mexico were an element of great energy and aid in the last war with Germany, and now we should show that we are of the same disposition, ready to sacrifice all that we possess, even the precious blood of our sons, to the end that the nation reaches a decisive victory.” Arthur Van Haren Jr. would be among many from Phoenix to join military service.

Arthur originally intended to join the Army, but instead chose the Navy, enlisting in June of 1941. He had already joined the ROTC at the University of Arizona. He later told his children that he had an interest in the cavalry but “couldn’t find boots that fit.” Little did he know where his Navy career would take him. Once in the Navy, Arthur chose pilot training, an unusual path for Mexican Americans, since few became pilots or even served as air crew during the Second World War. Although he had never flown, he thought he might enjoy the challenge, and it seemed to fit his competitive and “daredevil” personality.

He traveled to Long Beach, California for preliminary flight school, and enjoyed the social scene while stationed there. A blind date would change his life forever. This particular date took him to the Palladium Club in Los Angeles with a buddy and their two dates. Daniel remembers how his mother, Elizabeth Yates, met Arthur: “The person that she was set up with—she didn’t really like very much and wound up liking my dad quite a bit better. I’m not quite sure who it was that set it up. My dad obviously was very gregarious and outgoing and my mom was very introverted and not outgoing. So they were, I guess, a match made in heaven.” Elizabeth, born in Los Angeles, was a budding fashion model and worked at an Eastman Kodak factory.

Arthur transferred to Jacksonville, Fla. in mid-1941 to begin pilot training, and his relationship with Elizabeth flourished despite the distance. They decided to get married, and Elizabeth traveled with Arthur Sr. and Rose to Florida in March of 1942. His daughter Diane recalls, “They were just very, very in love. Now, were my grandparents thrilled that he was marrying a *gringa*, as you say? No, because she was the first one in the family—they were not thrilled—and it took a while for them to accept her... They were very



Elizabeth and Arthur Van Haren Jr. at the Earl Carrol Theatre Restaurant in Hollywood, 1944.

worried for him because he was only 22 and they felt it was a rushed marriage.” Arthur Jr. and Elizabeth exchanged vows in April 1942, immediately after Arthur received his gold pilot wings.

Arthur rose to the rank of lieutenant and served as a flight instructor in Jacksonville for over a year. Daniel recalls that his father was proud to be chosen as a flight instructor, but keenly felt the peer pressure to join the men fighting the war abroad. Diane, born in February of 1943, remembers, “My dad was sent overseas right after I was born. Mother came back to live in Pasadena with her mother and her grandmother and I did not see my dad for about a year and half.”

In June of 1943, Arthur joined the Naval VF-2 squadron, and trained in the new Grumman F6F Hellcat fighter planes. The military had just introduced the carrier-based aircraft to replace the older F4F Wildcats, and it developed into the most successful aircraft in Naval history. They headed out for Pearl Harbor in October. Arthur's first diary entry reveals his emotions on his departure.

*Oct. 9, 1943: I left L.A. for Alameda to join my squadron. Left B [Elizabeth] at Burbank airport. I shudder to think of how much I'm going to miss her. I'd give almost anything if I could spare her the same loneliness I know I'm due for.*



Elizabeth Yates, May 1941.

As Arthur settled in for the long ride across the Pacific to the war zone, the American military was revamping its strategy in the fight against the Japanese. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese gained a significant foothold in the Pacific. American-led offensives, such as the battles at Guadalcanal and Midway, resulted in minimal gains for the Allies. The U.S. shifted tactics and implemented a major effort to occupy the islands of the Central Pacific by amassing American warships, aircraft and troops in the area. The overall goal during the next year and a half was to demolish the Japanese Navy, island bases and strongholds, and to reduce communications in order to eventually establish Allied forces near the Japanese homeland. Arthur and his Navy VF-2 Squadron were involved in a 13-month American offensive effort to start the conquest of the Philippines through a series of raids and battles in the Gilbert Islands, Marshall Islands, New Guinea, the Marianas (Saipan, Tinian and Guam), the Philippine Sea, and the Palau Islands.

The "Fighting Two" Squadron served with the USS Enterprise in its initial months of active duty. Arthur recalls the first experiences with the fast and

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U.S. NAVAL AIR STATION — NEW ORLEANS, LA.



Lt. Arthur Van Haren Jr. pictured with Flight Instructor class, U.S. Naval Air Station, New Orleans, L.A.

deadly F6F Hellcat fighter plane and his loneliness while stationed near Hawaii. Landing the planes on the limited runway of a carrier was not an easy task.

*Nov. 10, 1943: Here we are, the whole squadron aboard the U.S.S. Enterprise. Boy what a day! Everything really is snaffoo [chaotic] — The deck crew*

*is green as grass and the ship is one jumble of confusion. Six of our planes were wrecked taxing on deck by just plain mishandling. "By" Johnson (not too sharp) had emergency landing on deck, crashed and we had some bond fire. They finally put it out and tossed the plane overboard. \$100,000 gone to hell! "Ozzie" Osborn tried in vain to get Skip to let him land, (out of gas) but the ship circled... He finally had to go*



Arthur Van Haren Jr. (pictured third row, third from left)

*in the drink making a water landing- \$200,000 gone to hell. We thought sure he'd go visit the other world but thank God he got out safely and DD [a Destroyer] picked him up. How long can our luck hold out? I received a wonderful letter from my B. before we left Oahu. God only knows how much I love her. I guess I sound like a darn martyr, but if it weren't for her and the baby I wouldn't worry about getting out at all. I've just got to make it for that reason.*

Arthur's son Daniel recalls how his father learned to land at night, and the dangers it entailed: "When they got out there on the Enterprise, at first, when they got out past Hawaii, they had to qualify for night landing and I mean, you talk about scary. You take all the dangers that are involved in landing on a ship during the day and make it about a hundred times as hard. And that's the night landing. All they had were the lights of the ship guiding them. At times, they didn't have even that because the ship was standard cover. So they would hit runway lights to show these guys where it was and then turn them off. They just hoped they knew where that deck was when they landed. It was a pretty scary thing."

The Allies' new military strategy began with Operation Galvanic in the Gilbert Islands in November 1943, in which Arthur flew his first bombing and combat



Flight deck of the USS Hornet CV12. By PHCS W.M. Cox, USN (Official U.S. Navy photograph USN 1116887.) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

missions. Their goal was to protect the 27th Infantry Division landing in Makin. Their mission was to hit the radio tower, boats and seaplanes, while avoiding Japanese anti-artillery fire. The day before the raid, Arthur was a bundle of nerves, knowing he'd be on the first run.

*Nov. 18, 1943: Well, tomorrow is the big day! We take off at 4:00 A.M. and hit "Makin" at dawn. I don't know quite how to feel about it. I can say for sure though I sure don't feel like dying. Believe you me I'm*

*going to be one "heads up" boy. I could get it, I guess, but it will be easy for me. I'll never know it. Please God take care of my B... Just a touch of the jitters I guess—kind of like the night before a football game—only a little more for keeps. I'll be alright as soon as "the first shot is fired" P.S., I'm firing the first one.*

The Gilbert Islands invasion began on November 19 and lasted for several days. Arthur recounted his experiences in the air.

*Nov. 19, 1943: The first is over by gosh. What a day! We've been on the go since 0300. We took off at 0430 and had a hellish, snaffoo night join up. We started hitting "Makin" about 0600 and what a beating we gave that place. We went down on our first strafing run from 15000' at 400 kts. That should figure better than 600 miles an hour... Gosh I wasn't scared or nervous at all once we started the dive... We go after them again tomorrow, bright and early. Maybe they'll come out of their holes this time. I frankly hope they do. The sooner the better. Let's get it over with.*

*Nov. 20, 1943: A flight of 28 of us went over to strafe and help our army of occupation move in on "Makin." Everything was timed pretty good. The Cruisers and Destroyers lined up on the lagoon side of the Island and shelled the hell out of them for a half an hour. Most beautiful sight I've seen yet. Then we went in right down to the tree-tops and strafed them—all the time this was going on, our landing boats were moving in. They shot at us with 50 cal,*

*but didn't hit any of us fatally. I figure the Island should be ours by now. Now that most of the tension is off, I'm awfully tired. None of us can understand why the Japs won't come out of their holes. We've got that coming, I guess. We're ready, I hope.*

*P.S. Lost one S.B.D. [Navy scout bomber] & pilot today. It really all seems so useless and foolish, doesn't it?*

*Nov. 21, 1943: I saw my first one go down in flames today. Our flight took off at 0500 and immediately we were vectored to a "Bogie" [Unidentified aircraft]. It turned out to be a "Betty" (Jap twin engine bomber - 7 men). We made our Brackit run. The Skipper and Dan Carmichael coming in from the left stern and myself and Dave Park coming in from the right stern. The Skipper opened up first crippling him*

*almost fatally then I came in for the kill. He blew up and crashed in no time flat. Boy it all happened in nothing flat. Funny how I was able to be calm and my mind was clear. Thank you dear God! We drew a lot of return fire on our run from the tail gunner, but all he could do for dear old Tojo wasn't enough. Amen.*

After a raid on the Marshall Islands from the USS Enterprise, the VF-2 squadron transferred to the USS Hornet. Between March and May of 1944, their orders included lending air support to cover the invasion at New Guinea, conducting air raids against Japanese bases in the Caroline Islands and supporting the amphibious assault to occupy the Marianas Islands. During this time Arthur flew in many bombing runs—and



Arthur Van Haren Jr. pictured in his F6F Hellcat fighter plane (#32).



Arthur and Elizabeth with daughter Diane, Pasadena, Calif.

watched American pilots lose their lives in planes hit by anti-aircraft artillery or through crashing on the Hornet's deck. He worried about his sense of direction and getting lost during missions. He brought his rosary with him on every flight, and thanked God, whom he called "the Ole Master," each time he returned safely. He missed Elizabeth considerably.

*March 29, 1944: Tomorrow is the ("K" day). I'm on the first strike taking off at 0620. All indications lead us to believe that it's going to be something tough. We're to hit the shipping in the harbor and the AA should be something terrific. Just in case B, my precious, please be real brave for me... Remember how much your Arty loved you and try to believe in this little quotation I picked up that was written for us. "As long as there is one of us there is both of us" Good night pumpkin.*

*I'll wait forever. Just take your time and keep a little place in your heart for me. Others will undoubtedly love you, but never like I've loved and adored you. Never forget that. God bless you and our baby.*

Arthur and the VF-2 squadron took part in the June 1944 Marianas Islands campaign. Here, American carriers struck against the Japanese strongholds of Guam, Saipan and Tinian. On June 6, D-Day in Europe, Arthur noted,

*"If the taking of the Marianas is done efficiently and in an expedient manner, it certainly ought to do a lot toward shortening this darn war."*

Maneuvering his F6F Hellcat, which was much faster than the Japanese aircraft, Arthur shot down his first two planes during a successful bombing run over Guam. After the June 11 attack, Arthur penned his thoughts about the accomplishment, which later earned him a Distinguished Flying Medal.

*June 11, 1944: Well the first old hurdle is down! We really had an aerial battle for a change. Zekes [Japanese Zero fighter planes] and plenty of them! We shot down 23 of them. I got two all by myself. They make lively fires and it was a glorious feeling indeed. Funny how I wasn't a bit scared and just used my old noggin-head! I'm a bit jittery now though. Especially since Dan Carmichael, (a swell Joe) missed*

*a mid-air collision by about a foot. He was really on the ball. He saved us. There is no doubt of that. We did lose Duff who was on my wing. We went into a strafing run on the field and he got shot down. Someone claims he saw him make a water landing and get out, but I doubt very much if he'll ever be picked up. Thank you dear God for staying with me. I swear I shall never forget your help and never be ungrateful to you if I can pull through the rest of this. Bless my B too—the precious angel that she is. I'll come back for you, baby.*

Eight days later, Arthur entered the Battle of the Philippine Sea, an attack on the Japanese Carrier Force located west of Guam. Known as the "Great Marianas Turkey Shoot," American planes destroyed more than 400 Japanese aircraft and three carriers. Called "the greatest carrier battle in history," this signaled a huge defeat for Japan and opened the way for the Americans to occupy the Philippines and Formosa. It was during this battle that Arthur earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for shooting down two Japanese Zeros, and an Air Medal for sighting and destroying an enemy scout plane.

*June 19, 1944: I will never forget this day! After what the Navy air corps did today. I'm proud to be one little member of it. They started coming after us in flocks this morning from all angles. However, very few of them got to ever take a look at our fleet.*

Only one B.B. [Battleship] got a bomb hit and it was very meager. The whole fleet shot down more than 250 Jap planes of which the flyers got nearly all. Our particular task force got over a hundred and hear this—our squadron got 48—over half. There are four carriers in our force. Of the 48, yours truly got two Zekes that went down in glorious flames. Twelve of us caught about 15 of them coming in about 20 miles from our force... Our squadron has 112 now and the spirit is tremendously good.

June 20, 1944: This has been another unforgettable day! First of all, Red and I went on a 325 mile search this A.M. in search of the Jap fleet. We saw no sight of it but we did get a "Jake" (Jap float plane) apiece. This makes my fifth plane and Red's seventh. We got back in good shape. Later on in the afternoon they got a contact with the Jap fleet and immediately sent a strike after it. Red and I didn't go because of our morning hops, thank God. They found it alright and did quite some damage to it. Sinking some of their carriers for sure... They're still getting fellows out of the drink and the plane loss was terrific... I guarantee you that I'm really getting tired of all this though.

In July, Arthur flew in the raid on the Kazan Islands, targeting Iwo Jima. He received the Gold Star for the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions, as summarized in his letter of Citation: "An aggressive airman, Lieutenant Van Haren rendered fighter protection during a bombing

attack on an enemy air base despite the advantage in altitude held by numerically superior enemy planes and succeeded in destroying three enemy single-engine fighter craft. His skill, courage and devotion to duty in the face of grave hazards reflect the highest credit upon Lieutenant Van Haren and the United States Naval Service." Upon his return, Arthur had few words for the battle.

July 3, 1944: Hit Iwo Jima. What a fight! Darn lucky to be back. We lost Butler and O'Neal and Dobbins. I got three more Zekes. Details disgust me, besides I don't feel like talking about it.

The VF-2 Squadron continued their work at chipping away at Japanese bases in the next few months with more island raids. Arthur was tired of the war, and hoping that his squadron would be released from duty soon. Referring to his military awards, he stated,

*"By the way I got 2 D.F.C's and an air medal a couple of days ago. Stuff for the birds if I've ever seen it. It was literally raining medals."*

In preparation for General MacArthur's invasion of Morotai, American carrier raids began September 9 on south and central Philippines. Three days later, Arthur led a division of escort fighters



Arthur Van Haren Jr. in U.S. Naval fighter pilot flight suit.

to protect bombers, and intercepted an attacking group of Japanese fighters, shooting down a bomber. He received a Gold Star in lieu of a second Air Medal. A week later he recalled the encounter.

*Sept. 20, 1944: We lost Randy Carlson to A.A at Palau. One swell fellow, like all of them. I got my ninth plane at Negros. A Zeke, chased him from 14000 to 5000. He bailed out. Then I had a hell of a time getting back my altitude. Clouds saved me. As ever, dear God take care of my B. Just in case I don't make it tomorrow or the next day. She's worth it.*

Arthur's final diary entry says it all:

*Sept. 28, 1944: Pulled in to Manus [Island]. On our way home! Need I say more!*

Arthur left the Pacific for the U.S. mainland. His squadron didn't participate in the final push into the Philippine Islands, which began with the Battle of Leyte in October. The capture of the Philippines would be the longest and largest American military action in the Pacific, leading to the bloody battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa in 1945.

Arthur's squadron, "the Fighting Rippers," provide an example of the Navy's aerial superiority. It became the top fighter squadron in the Pacific, with more

ace pilots and total victories than any other squadron. The VF-2 in total shot down 261 Japanese planes, with 245 destroyed on the ground. They lost seven in the squadron. During World War II, 1300 fighter pilots gained the title of "ace pilot," credited with destroying five or more enemy aircraft in aerial combat. Of these, only 371 served in the U.S. Navy. Of the total F6F Hellcat pilot aces, Arthur Van Haren Jr. is tied at 38th in the ranking.

The aerial superiority of the VF-2 and other squadrons led to the Allied victory in the Pacific. Arthur later told his son Daniel that, "the Japanese were using pilots that they hadn't fully trained yet. They would get these guys up in the air and they didn't know anything about actual combat... The Zeroes didn't have any armor on them at all for one thing; if they took any fire at all it was usually a fatality for them."

Arthur reflected that he didn't feel that all Japanese pilots wished to throw away their lives and that he "decided they want to return home alive the same as we do." Daniel recalled a story his father would tell, set at the end of one of the long battles. "It was getting dark and they were getting low on gas, they always had to watch how much fuel they had left. And I even

think my dad might've been out of ammo. He made eye contact with a Japanese pilot. It was kind of like they both just decided that the Japanese pilot was probably in the same shape: getting low on gas, probably didn't know how far his ship had gone since the last time he saw it. So they just kind of saluted each other and took off on their different ways. Neither one of them tried to shoot the other down."

In addition to the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal, American Defense Service Medal, World War II Victory Medal and Gold Stars, Arthur received the Presidential Unit Citation for service on the USS Enterprise and the USS Hornet, and other World War II campaign medals including the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one bronze star.

After reuniting with Elizabeth and baby Diane, Arthur returned to the role of flight instructor, this time based at the Glenview Naval Air Station just outside of Chicago. Meanwhile, his son Peter was born in August. The Navy discharged him in October of 1945 and he reunited with his family in California.



Distinguished Flying Cross  
Air Medal  
American Campaign Medal



Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal  
American Defense Service Medal  
World War II Victory Medal

Not Pictured:

Philippine Liberation Ribbon with One Bronze Star  
Presidential Unit Citation awarded U.S.S. Enterprise  
Presidential Unit Citation awarded U.S.S. Hornet  
Gold Star in lieu of second Air Medal  
Gold Star in lieu of Second Distinguished Flying Cross Air Medal

## SERVICE TO COMMUNITY: ARTHUR JR.'S LEGAL CAREER

With the G.I. Bill in hand, Arthur returned to the University of Arizona to finish his bachelor's degree and enter law school. He attended law classes along with other young men that had promising futures such as Morris Udall, future U.S. Representative and leading environmentalist, as well as future Arizona governor Raul H. Castro. He also graduated with Hayzel Daniels, Phoenix's first Black attorney and one of Arizona's first African American State legislators. Hayzel was part of a legal team that brought suit against Phoenix Union High School District to desegregate the high school, and against Wilson Elementary to desegregate elementary schools, which led to the 1953 desegregation of all Arizona schools. Arthur graduated law school and passed the Bar Exam in 1948, at the age of 28. His son Daniel, named after Arthur's flying buddy, Daniel Carmichael, was born on the day he passed his exam.

The Van Harens, now a family of five, settled back in Central Phoenix. The

city had grown considerably since the 1930s when Arthur left, doubling in size to over 100,000 people. As with other Mexican American men in the community, obtaining a degree helped Arthur move into a higher paying, professional job. His education afforded him entry into an elite group of Mexican American lawyers in the Valley, which included Albert Garcia and Valdemar Córdova, both World War II veterans. Other Mexican American attorneys of note, Greg Garcia and Ralph Estrada, became involved with the 1950s Tolleson school desegregation case which ended the practice of establishing separate schools for Mexican American children.

In 1949 Arthur joined the Oliver B. James Law Firm as a defense lawyer. In one case, he defended 20-year-old Geraldo Rodriguez, who was accused of murdering another young man at the Willow Breeze Dance Hall. Spanish-language newspaper *El Sol* reported on the case and congratulated Arthur on a successful defense stating, "He gave



Staff of County Attorney's Office. Back row, left to right: H. Lavon Payne, Frank Haze Burch, R. H. Renaud, James J. Caretto, Newman W. White, John J. Flynn, Arthur Van Haren. Front row, left to right: Douglas, H. Clark, Jack M. Anderson, Warren L. McCarthy, and Anthony O. Jones. *Arizona Weekly Gazette*, April 5, 1951.

a brilliant defense, he worked hard and showed once more his capacity and his talent, that he is a true lawyer and an honorable young man for whom we predict a bright future."

Arthur moved from private to public practice in late 1949 when he replaced Dow Ben Roush as Deputy County Attorney. In this consistently

understaffed office, Arthur worked as a prosecutor for three years. He prosecuted assault, robbery, and homicide cases and had several interesting cases during his time with the County. For example, Arthur was in charge of investigating the "digger machine" business in Maricopa County. These "claw machines,"—similar to the machines filled with brightly colored stuffed animals that stand

in the corner of many grocery stores today—were tied to gambling because users would obtain the merchandise in the machine using the “claw” and then exchange it for money. Located mainly in bars, authorities debated whether the machines were a “game of skill” or a gambling device.

In 1950, Arthur led the prosecution team in a highly publicized murder case against a woman accused of shooting her fiancé “in a lover’s quarrel” on New Year’s Eve in 1949. The defense team administered a lie detector test to the accused, Elaine George, prior to the start of the trial, and requested to use the results. Judge Fred Struckmeyer allowed the results to be introduced as evidence. The prosecution lost the case, but it was the first time evidence from a lie detector test had been used in an Arizona trial.

Arthur did not always bring cases to court. Much of his time was spent investigating crimes to keep the case from going before a judge. In one incident, Arthur investigated the shooting of an Avondale man by his 19-year-old wife. Arthur’s probe led to the County clearing her of the murder because she had been acting in self-defense. Arthur found that the man had pointed a gun at her

and threatened to kill her and her baby, saying she was not “a fit mother” because she worked as a waitress rather than staying home to care for the baby. After the court cleared her, Arthur received a thank you note from the family of the young woman, which stated, “We wish to thank you for your kindness shown us. And for your wonderful decision in the Vowell case. Everyone feels so grateful to you. We wish you the best of everything for the coming years.”

By 1952, Arthur decided he preferred to work as a defense attorney. His outgoing personality fit the role. Daniel recalls, “My dad was the kind of person that would make instant friends with anybody. It was just the way he was. He was the kind of person that would get his shoes shined at a stand on Jefferson Street in Phoenix and become best buds with the guy shining his shoes. It didn’t make any difference whether the guy was a shoe shiner or a CEO of Dow Corporation—it didn’t make any difference to my dad at all.” With a likeable personality, he attracted much of his business by word-of-mouth.

Arthur formed a new law partnership with fellow World War II veterans John Flynn and Harry Stewart. They

Arthur Van Haren, Jr. Asst. County Attorney, Elaine George on trial for New Years Eve Murder, Judge Lorna Lockwood.



opened an office in the Heard Building after resigning from the County Attorney's office. Interestingly, Arthur's replacement with the County was future Federal Judge Thomas Tang, who would be the first Chinese American to serve in the Ninth Circuit in the late 1970s. Arthur's daughter Diane recalled the new law team of Van Haren, Flynn and Stewart: "They were the best defense attorney team in town. They were all real go-getters. Of course nobody likes defense attorneys until you need one. But they were a big team... My dad, I'd say, was an attorney for the little man; the person who needed help." Margaret Lopez Trujillo, who served as court bailiff for Judge Renz Jennings in the late 1940s, remembers that Arthur was an aggressive attorney, "like a little bantam rooster." She says, "He was always well prepared. His diction was great and he had a great speaking voice. He did a lot of pro bono work. He was just a very good at doing community work."

Arthur also helped other military families. In one case, Arthur represented Frances Aguilar, the widow of an airman killed in Germany. Her husband had been in the process of changing the life insurance claim to name her as beneficiary when he

died. Her father-in-law argued that he was the sole beneficiary. The case went all the way to the Ninth Circuit Court in San Francisco, where Arthur helped Frances win the case.

The Flynn, Stewart and Van Haren partnership ended in 1955 and the three lawyers went their own ways. John Flynn would later represent Ernesto Miranda in the 1966 case *Miranda vs. Arizona*. This case led to the Supreme Court opinion that all individuals under arrest must be advised of their right to remain silent and to obtain legal counsel, known as the Miranda Warning. Arthur moved into a second law partnership, Van Haren, Forquer and Wolfe, in July of 1955. Robert Forquer was a former administrative assistant to Congressman John Rhodes in Washington, D.C., and Rhodes' campaign manager. Wolfe was a former labor relations director and attorney for International Metal Products Company in Phoenix. Their office was in the Mayer-Heard Building.

During the 1950s, Arthur became more active in the community outside of his career. He served as Chairman of the Phoenix Athletic Commission, joined the Luke Greenway American Legion Post, and the VFW. Arthur also joined

the board of the newly formed Boys Club of North Phoenix and served as second vice president alongside Calvin H. Udall, founding president and director. He dabbled in politics as a member of the 1954 Veterans Committee for Rhodes for Congress. When the rumor hit that a new Maricopa County Superior Court judge position might open, the *Arizona Republic* reported that over 800 individuals had signed petitions to name Arthur to the position. Interestingly, the newspaper added, "The Spanish American folk within the Democratic Party are spark plugging the move on behalf of Mr. Van Haren Jr. as the judge." The position never materialized.

While in private practice, Arthur moved into several part-time positions. He served as Special Counsel for the Maricopa County Highway Department, a position he took in 1959. A year later, he served a one-year term as a City of Phoenix municipal judge. City Manager Ray Wilson appointed Arthur to serve as a junior magistrate in the three-man court system, joining Judge John Bradford and C.W. Pensinger. A few years later, Arthur took the job as the Executive Secretary for Maricopa County Planning and Zoning Department.

By the 1960s, Arthur operated his own private law practice as a defense attorney. He often provided pro-bono legal counseling. Arthur's son Daniel reflects, "Most of his clients were poor people; they didn't have a great deal of money, with the exception of the guy that owned Westside Toyota, who paid his legal bill by giving my dad a new Supra every two years—for about eight years. But most of them didn't have a great deal of money. They always could pay their legal bill by doing something around our house or by providing produce for us or, I don't know, there were about four or five different ways I remember that we got paid. We never were a poor family; we actually had it pretty good as most families go but were never rich by any stretch of the imagination."

Arthur finally retired from private law practice in 1985, after moving to Dewey, Ariz. with his wife Elizabeth, who retired as secretary to the principal of Xavier High School. By this time, their three children had grown and moved on. Arthur Van Haren Jr. lived in Dewey with his wife until his death in 1992 from colon cancer. Elizabeth passed away in 2009.



Van Haren family portrait. Front row, left to right: Diane, Arthur Jr., and Elizabeth. Back row, left to right: Pete and Dan.

## REFLECTIONS

Diane and her mother pored over Arthur's diary, sharing tears as they read about his fears, his exhaustion, and his loneliness for his family. They shared their pride in his outstanding military service during a war in which hundreds of thousands of Americans lost their lives while protecting American liberty. Although Arthur escaped unharmed, he was wounded emotionally, and it changed his life forever.

Arthur's service to his country represented a dichotomy. He excelled in his duties, one of the few Arizonans to earn an ace pilot designation, and certainly among only a handful of highly decorated Mexican American World War II veterans to gain public recognition. Yet he didn't want the accolades that his "war hero" status brought. His son Daniel reflects, "I think it embarrassed him more than anything else. I don't think he was seeking that kind of publicity or notoriety... He thought of himself as a hero because he came back to his wife and his daughter. That was the only

heroism he needed to lay claim to." Inspired by the tradition of his father and grandfather's military service in the world wars, Peter Van Haren enlisted after college and served in Vietnam. He eventually followed his father's footsteps into law school, working as an attorney in various capacities. He remembers that as a lawyer, Arthur found ways to help those in need, and that, too, is a point of pride. "I think he was a hero in my eyes for that... and just the work he did as a representative for the people. I think he would like to be known for that. He was able to help represent and guide people and give a voice to people that otherwise wouldn't have a voice."

Fellow law school graduate and former Governor of Arizona (1975-1977), Raul H. Castro remembers Arthur as someone who was willing to lend a helping hand, often supporting him and other minority leaders in Arizona. He noted that Arthur had a strong passion for assisting the unfortunate, "He was a good guy and a good citizen, no question about it."

In December 2007, the City of Phoenix unveiled several eight-foot paintings commemorating exceptional aviators in Arizona history at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport. The municipal Public Art Program chose Arthur Jr. along with four other pilots to be painted by famous artist Robert McCall, often referred to as the NASA artist. This vibrant mural, which hangs near Terminal 4, depicts Arthur standing on a flight deck, positioned with hands on hips as a squadron takes flight in the background. Other pilots in the series included Vietnam helicopter pilot Fred Ferguson, Tuskegee Airman Vernon Haywood, World War I pilot Frank Luke Jr., and Women Air Force Service pilot Ruth Dailey Helm.

In 2012, due in part to the tireless efforts of Arthur's grandson, Eric Halvorson, Arthur Van Haren Jr. will be the first Latino inducted into the Arizona Aviation Hall of Fame. Located inside the Dorothy Finley Space Gallery, the Aviation Hall of Fame was established in 1985 to pay tribute to Arizona men and women who made significant contributions to aerospace and aviation development. Arthur's posthumous induction will place him alongside other notable Arizona aviators such as Sen. Barry M. Goldwater (1990) and Sen. John S. McCain (1997).

Eric's mother, Diane, reflected, "I can't tell you whether if he was alive today—'cause none of this research was started by my son until after he died—if he would appreciate having this place in history. But we appreciate him having a place in Arizona's history!"

Arthur's is a story of courage and service exemplifying the pride that Phoenix Latinos have in their community's long-standing heritage and in the contributions to Arizona. He was but one example of the thousands of Latinos who have played a part in American history, whether through military service, community service or beyond. His grandson, Eric Halvorson noted that the greatest legacy left by Arthur Van Haren, Jr. was his passionate love of life, his humility and compassion to those in need, and his love for those that he knew as well as those that he did not. "My Tata excelled in the Anglo-dominated sports and legal worlds, but never forgot his rich Mexican American roots."

*Arthur VanHaren, Jr.*

**Artist: Robert T. McCall, oil paint on canvas 72" x 57".**

*(Image courtesy of Phoenix Airport Museum)*



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# *A Legacy of Courage:*

When Arthur Van Haren, Jr. passed away in 1992, his family began to look through his belongings. His son Peter came across a small diary in a strongbox. He opened the book and out poured Arthur's feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and elation during his service in the Pacific as a Navy pilot. It was the voice of a 23-year-old man, far from his new wife and baby, facing the dangers of war. A voice that none of his children had ever heard.

*Nov. 21, 1943: I saw my first one go down in flames today.*



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