



**Darwin Arthur Schmidt** was born on February 14, in 1918 at home in Ellis, South Dakota. He was the oldest of six children, parents Arthur and Bernice Schmidt. His brothers and sisters were- Wanda, Wynn, Robert, Betty and Roger. As a youth, Darwin enjoyed visiting the family farm; youth plays at his church Ellis Methodist Church, baseball, and horseback riding.

Darwin attended Lincoln Elementary School, and in 1936, graduated from **Washington High School**. Darwin attended Sioux Falls College and Long Beach Junior College in Long Beach California.

In April 1941, Darwin entered the Naval Aviation Cadet Program. He was commissioned as an Ensign on January 22, 1942 with the third class to be graduated from the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi, Texas. Darwin married Ann Sebring in Alice, Texas on June 25, 1942. He became an instrument instructor in Corpus Christi for two years and was then transferred to San Diego, California for training as a torpedo bomber pilot. Darwin was assigned to the aircraft carrier Bismarck Sea in the South Pacific as Commander of the squadron. On February 21, 1945 the Bismarck Sea was engaged in the battle of Iwo Jima. The carrier was attacked by two kamikaze aircraft, which caused the ship to sink. 321 men died and 625 were recovered from the ship. This was the eleventh and last aircraft carrier sunk in World War II. Darwin Schmidt was reported missing at sea on March 7, 1945. Thirty days later a telegram was received that he had not survived the attack.

Composite Squadron 86 (VC-86) Unit performed combat operations in and around Leyte in support of the operations (14.-23. November 1944) and later took part in the Lingayen Gulf landings (9.-18. January 1945). On 16. February 1945, she arrived off Iwo Jima to support the invasion. The host carrier CVE-95 USS Bismarck Sea sank by two kamikazes on 21. February 1945, the last carrier sunk by the Japanese during WW2.



U.S.S. Bismarck Sea (CVE-95) Composite Squadron 86 (VC-86)

Middle Row, L-R

J.H. Goad, VF; C. Hubert, VT; F.F. Fiedler, Radio Officer; E. Mills, Intelligence Officer; R. Perry, Squadron Doctor; J.J. Scott, Personnel Officer; R. Chambers, VF; **D. Schmidt, VT, Executive Officer (killed 21 Feb 1945)**; M. Lakin, VF, Squadron Commander; G. Dignan, VF (killed 21 Feb 1945); D. Severy, VT; F. Breux, VT; M.B. Harper, VT; H.D. Woods, VF; D. Edwa

Several memorial markers for Darwin include- family plot in Woodlawn Cemetery in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, National Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, the Punchbowl, and the Memorial Plaque which stands on the hanger deck of the Aircraft Carrier Yorktown, , Charlestown, South Carolina. Darwin was awarded the Purple Heart and two Distinguished Flying Crosses, W.W.II medal, the American Campaign Medal and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal.

For the DFC w/Gold Star. Here are how the citations read:

1st DFC citation. "For distinguishing himself by heroism.....while leading his torpedo plane division in an aggressive attack on two Japanese destroyers, in the South China Sea on 5 January 1945.Lt Schmidt defied intense anti-aircraft fire to score a torpedo hit amid-ships on one destroyer". This attack sunk the Japanese destroyer Momi near the entrance to Manila Bay.

2nd DFC(Gold Star) citation. "For heroism.....in action against enemy Japanese forces in the Philippine and the Volcano Islands Areas, from November 1944 to 21 February 1945.Undaunted by grave hazards, Lt.Schmidt penetrated enemy territory to execute twenty daring raids against vital Japanese installations....."



## Sioux Falls Men Flew From Ill-Fated Carrier

Two Sioux Falls brothers-in-law and members of navy composite squadron 86, flying from the deck of the U.S.S. Bismarck Sea before it was sunk, played important parts in the naval engagement.

The flight led by Lt. Darwin A Schmidt, son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur E. Schmidt, Rt. 3, sank two destroyers off the coast of Luzon. He was reported missing on March 7.

Led by Lt. Comdr. Benjamin Marshall Lakin, the squadron also destroyed enemy installations and equipment in the path of the infantry at Lingayen gulf in the Luzon landing. His wife, the former Wanda Schmidt lives at Rt. 3 and his father, B Lakin, near Marshall, Minn. The wife is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Schmidt.

## Missing in Pacific



Mr. and Mrs. Arthur E. Schmidt, Rt. 3, were notified today that their son, Lt. Darwin Arthur Schmidt, 27, above, serving on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific, is missing "following action." The message contained no further information.

Lt. Schmidt, a former Washington high school and Sioux Falls

college student, entered the navy air corps in April, 1941 and was commissioned January 22, 1942 with the third class from Corpus Christi, Tex. He was an instructor for two years in instruments at Corpus Christi and was then assigned to a fleet squadron.

His wife, the former Ann Sebring of Alice, Tex., to whom he was married June 25, 1943, is teaching at Robston, Tex. A brother, Robert L. Schmidt, is an aviation cadet at Corpus Christi.

Credits: WINGS-AVIATION (photo of group), Catherine Olsen and Brittney Rhoades, American History, Roosevelt High School, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, April 18, 2002. The late Roger Schmidt of Sioux Falls, SD, and Find-a-Grave.