



Ralph Peter Plumb

Ensign
United States Navy
USS Neosho
Born 21 July 1916
Died 7 May 1942
Coral Sea

Ralph Peter Plumb was born July 21, 1916, in Tustin, CA, the son of Hugh and Frances “Frankie” Plumb. Hugh Plumb arrived in Tustin in 1906 and Frances Adams was born in Tustin in 1888.

The family was well-known in Tustin, Hugh Plumb was the Orange County Tax Assessor and Frankie was the daughter of one of Tustin’s first settlers, P.T. Adams. She was involved in many philanthropic organizations such as the Ebell Club, the PEO Sisterhood, and the Assistance League.

Peter, as he was known in Tustin Elementary and at Tustin High, could be described as an All-American boy. He participated in sports, Drama Club, choir, broadcasting, and Spanish Club.

After graduating from Tustin High in 1934, Peter attended Santa Ana College and received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of California, Berkley, where he majored in Agriculture.

He joined the United States Naval Reserve in 1939 receiving his military training at Northwestern University and began active duty in March 1941. He was assigned to the supply ship the USS Neosho.

The USS Neosho participated in raids on Leyte and the Salomon Islands. On May 7, 1942, at the Battle of Coral Sea, the Neosho was mistaken as an aircraft carrier and attacked by Japanese bombers. The Neosho was directly hit seven times, including by a suicide dive bomber. More than 2/3 of the crew were killed, including Ensign Plumb. He was 25 years old and Tustin’s first soldier to die during World War II.

Ensign Plumb is the recipient of the Asiatic-Pacific Ribbon with three Battle Stars, the American Theater Ribbon, and the pre-Pearl Harbor Ribbon. His remains were never recovered with the sinking of the USS Neosho.

