

RADM Sam Cox, USN(Ret):wrote:

It is with deep regret I inform you of the passing of Vice Admiral John Walfrid Nyquist, U.S. Navy (Retired,) on 9 April 2021 at age 88. VADM Nyquist entered the U.S. Naval Academy in 1951 and served as a Surface Line Officer until his retirement in 1991 as Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Surface Warfare (OP-03.) His career included three Vietnam deployments as Weapons Officer of USS COCHRANE (DDG-21,) in-country Mekong Delta as Navy Liaison to IV Corps, and Executive Officer of USS HORNE (DLG-30/CG-30.) His commands included USS SEMMES (DDG-18,) Destroyer Squadron THREE SIX (DESRON 36,) and Cruiser-Destroyer Group FIVE (CRUDESGRU 5,) embarked on USS KITTY HAWK (CV-63.) He was a driving force in gaining Congressional funding and in the fleet introduction of the ARLEIGH BURKE (DDG-51) class destroyers.

VADM Nyquist's father, Walfrid Nyquist, graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1921, commanded two destroyers and assumed command of Destroyer Division ONE at Pearl Harbor on 6 December 1941. He subsequently commanded a destroyer squadron and the light cruiser ATLANTA (CL-104,) retiring as a rear admiral.

John entered the U.S. Naval Academy on 5 July 1951, where he was a varsity baseball pitcher (and pitched a no-hitter on the Plebe team against Baltimore Junior College.) He graduated on 3 June 1955 with a Bachelor of Science in Naval Science and was commissioned an ensign. In June 1955, Ensign Nyquist reported to the destroyer OZBOURN (DD-846,) homeported in San Diego, serving consecutively as Main Propulsion Assistant (MPA,) Damage Control Assistant (DCA,) and Chief Engineer, each year earning the Engineering "E" and then the "Golden E" when he was CHENG. OZBOURN operated periodically with SEVENTH Fleet, including port visits in Australia. In August 1950, Lieutenant (junior grade) Nyquist assumed duty as Executive Officer on Long Beach-based minesweeper PRIME (MSO-466,) deploying to the Western Pacific, operations with the South Korean Navy and a major amphibious exercise at Kodiak, Alaska.

In July 1960, Lieutenant Nyquist reported to the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Physics. In August 1963, he reported briefly to guided-missile destroyer BERKELEY (DDG-15) in San Francisco Naval Shipyard before reporting to the pre-commissioning crew as Weapons Officer of guided missile destroyer COCHRANE (DDG-21,) under construction in Seattle. Following commissioning in March 1964 and home port shift to Pearl Harbor, COCHRANE participated in "Shot BRAVO" of Operation Sailor Hat, in which ATLANTA (IX-304,) ironically his father's command before her conversion to a test ship, was the target of a 500-ton blast of conventional explosives to simulate a nuclear explosion. ATLANTA survived. COCHRANE then proceeded to Vietnam to support the landing of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Force near Danang, before escorting carriers on Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin. He was promoted to lieutenant commander in July 1964.

In October 1965, Lieutenant Commander Nyquist reported to the staff of Commander Anti-Submarine Warfare Forces Pacific (COMASWFORPAC,) as Weapons Officer. In April 1968 he commenced a training track at Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado and then at the U.S. Army Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg. In August 1968, LCDR Nyquist deployed to Vietnam as part of Joint U.S. Public Affairs, Vietnam as Navy Liaison Officer and Psychological Operations Division Officer to U.S. Army IV Corps staff in the Mekong Delta. He was promoted to commander in July 1969.

After a short training track at Fleet Training Center, San Diego, CDR Nyquist reported as Executive Officer to San Diego-based guided missile destroyer leader HORNE (DLG-30, later CG-30) in October

1969. HORNE then deployed to the Gulf of Tonkin, serving as Search and Rescue (SAR) and Positive Identification Radar Advisory Zone (PIRAZ) ship, while also serving as flagship for Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Flotilla FIVE (CRUDESFLOT 5,) RADM Worth H. Bagley. In April 1971, CDR Nyquist was ordered to the Bureau of Naval Personnel as Head of the Surface Missile System and Ordnance Training Branch. In a major reorganization, the Surface Warfare Branch (OP-03) was created in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and CDR Nyquist became a plank owner as Head of Anti-Air Warfare/Electronic Warfare Training Branch (OP-391.)

In September 1973, CDR Nyquist commenced a training track at Naval Destroyer School, Newport, before assuming command of Charleston-based guided-missile destroyer SEMMES (DDG-18,) named after the most successful commerce raider of all time, Rafael Semmes, Confederate States Navy. After relieving CAPT Hank Mauz, Nyquist took SEMMES through a complex overhaul at Charleston Naval Shipyard before entering the Navy's inaugural Light-off Examination/Operational Propulsion Plant Examination (OPPE,) process, and passing, before conducting missile tests and fleet training off Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Following his command tour, CDR Nyquist was ordered to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations as Executive Assistant and Senior Aide to the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Surface Warfare (OP-3,) Vice Admiral James Doyle, working with Rear Admiral Wayne Meyer to bring the AEGIS system and TICONDEROGA-class cruiser to the fleet. Of note, the Junior Aide was future CNO, LCDR Vern Clark. Promoted to captain in April 1976, CAPT Nyquist was awarded the first of four Legion of Merit medals.

Commencing a training track in November 1978, CAPT Nyquist reported in March 1979 as Commander, Destroyer Squadron THREE SIX (DESRON 36,) with additional duty between April and June of 1980 as Commander DESRON 20. Embarked on his previous ship SEMMES, CAPT Nyquist led the squadron on two six-month deployments to the Mediterranean.

In April 1981, CAPT Nyquist was designated a rear admiral for duty in a billet commensurate with that rank. RADM Nyquist reported the same month to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations as Director Command and Control and Information Systems and concurrently as Director Department of the Navy Automated Data Processing (ADP) Management (OP-942.) This tour was cut short as a result of changes to the Tomahawk missile program and in September 1982, RADM Nyquist was reassigned to the Office of the CNO as Director, Surface Combat Systems (OP-35) as the OPNAV sponsor for the TICONDEROGA-class guided missile cruisers, ARLEIGH BURKE guided missile destroyers, and the Tomahawk missile system. During this period the ARLEIGH BURKE class was approved by Congress in the FY-85 budget. He received permanent promotion to rear admiral on 1 October 1982.

In May 1985, RADM Nyquist relieved RADM Walt Piotti (passed away 11 Mar 2021) as Commander, Cruiser-Destroyer Group FIVE (CRUDESGRU 5.) After working up carrier KITTY HAWK (CV-63) and escorts for a Western Pacific Deployment, RADM Nyquist was recalled early back to OP-03 in Washington by VADM Joseph Metcalf to serve as his deputy (OP-03B.) In this position, RADM Nyquist got to see Bobbie Burke (CNO Burke's wife) break the champagne bottle on ARLEIGH BURKE (DDG-51,) commencing the longest-running shipbuilding program in U.S. Navy history. Following VADM Metcalf's retirement in December 1987, RADM Nyquist was promoted to vice admiral and assumed the duties of Assistant CNO for Surface Warfare (OP-03) until his retirement in January 1991.

VADM Nyquist's awards include the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit (four awards,) Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Commendation Medal (two awards,) Meritorious Unit

Commendation (two awards,) China Service Medal (two awards,) Vietnam Service Medal (seven stars,) Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal

Following his retirement from active duty, VADM Nyquist worked in the defense industry for 17 years. For 20 years he served as Chairman of the Board for the San Diego chapter of the Surface Navy Association (SNA,) during which the chapter won many chapter awards, and he was inducted last year into the SNA hall of fame. He was also the head of four commissioning committees; HALSEY (DDG-97,) MAKIN ISLAND (LHD-8,) SAN DIEGO (LPD-22,) and CORONADO (LSC-4.) He was Chairman of the San Diego Armed Services YMCA. Along with his wife, he was a founding member of PAWS of Coronado, devoted to care of stray, abandoned, and relinquished animals of Coronado. (He once described a cross-country move crammed in a car with his wife, two kids, a large dog, and a mother cat with four kittens.)

Apparently an animal lover, VADM Nyquist was described by an officer who knew him as DESRON Commander as, “unfailingly polite, never once heard him raise his voice or get cross or complain about the tight quarters or sporty ride. A thorough gentleman, to be consciously emulated by all the junior officers if they were perceptive.” This is a common consensus. Polite he may have been, but he was also an officer who got things done, the right way, and often in a big way. He set the tone for his career on his very first tour, leading the Engineering Department on OZBOURN to multiple Engineering Battle Efficiency “E” awards. Regardless of whether he was at sea or in a shipyard he exhibited the most rigorous standards, playing a key role in bringing COCHRANE into commission, and bringing SEMMES through a major overhaul and the first ever OPPE. His biggest impact however was in Washington DC in multiple tours in OP-03, Surface Warfare Branch of the Office of the CNO. He was so valuable he was recalled multiple times, culminating in almost five years as OP-03B and OP-03. VADM Nyquist would be the second to last Surface Warfare “Baron.” Although the Baron system was criticized for being overly focused on specific communities (air, surface and submarine,) it was hard to argue with success; the system in the late 70’s and early 80’s produced the AEGIS system, TICONDEROGA-class cruisers, ARLEIGH BURKE- destroyers, and the Tomahawk missiles system, all mainstays of the U.S. Navy Fleet 40 years later. VADM Nyquist served with extraordinary dedication and effectiveness; his impact on the U.S. Navy was profound, and his legacy quite literally lives on in the Navy today (and with ARLEIGH BURKE’s still on the ways, for probably at least another 40 years.) We all owe him a debt of gratitude for his service.

Very respectfully,

Sam

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