

From: Cox, Samuel J SES USN NHHC WASHINGTON DC (USA) <samuel.cox@navy.mil>
Subject: Passing of Rear Admiral F. Neale Smith, USNR (Ret.)

It is with deep regret I inform you of the passing of Rear Admiral Francis Neale Smith, U.S. Naval Reserve (Retired) on 15 August 2020 at age 89. Neale joined the U.S. Naval Reserve in 1952, serving as a Surface Warfare Officer on active duty and the Reserves until his retirement in 1989 as the Chief of Naval Reserve (OP-095) and Commander, Naval Reserve Force.

Neale graduated from Loyola College (now Loyola University,) in Baltimore in 1952 with a degree in History. He was commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve on 1 September 1952. He was called up for active duty during the Korean War and reported on 22 December 1952. He then reported to the destroyer-minesweeper USS GHERARDI (DMS-30) in January 1953 as Chief Engineer, operating out of Charleston, SC for Atlantic Fleet exercises including Operation Springboard in the Caribbean and LANTMINEX. GHERARDI reverted to her original designation as DD-637 before being decommissioned on 17 December 1955, and Lieutenant (junior grade) Smith was released from active duty the same date.

While pursuing a civilian career with Esso (later Exxon) he attended the University of Maryland Law School in Baltimore. Remaining in the Inactive Reserve from March 1956, he first served in Surface Division 9-19 in Danville, IL, and then Surface Division 5-1 in Baltimore, MD, where he was promoted to lieutenant in September 1956. In March 1957, LT Smith served with Surf Division 5-2 in Baltimore. In April 1958, LT Smith reported to Military Sea Transportation Service Division 5-2 in Baltimore as Assistant Chief inspector, and was promoted to lieutenant commander in July 1962.

In July 1963, LCDR Smith was assigned duty with the Naval Control of Shipping Organization Division 5-5 at White Oak, Adelphi MD. In December 1963, he assumed duty as Chief Staff Officer for Group Command 4-35 (S) in Youngstown, OH. In July 1966, LCDR Smith then assumed command of surface division 4-115 (M) in Youngstown, and was promoted to commander in November 1966. In July 1967, CDR Smith returned to Group Command 4-25 as Chief of Staff. In August 1968, CDR Smith reported as Program Officer in Public Affairs Company 4-3 in Columbus, OH. In July 1971, he then served as Chief Staff Officer for Group Command/Staff Unit 4-32 (M) in Columbus, and then in January 1972 in Group Command 4-6 (S,) Harrisburg, PA as Staff Program Assistant and Senior Member, Counseling Board. He was promoted to captain on 1 June 1973.

In September 1974, CAPT Smith assumed command of Military Sealift Command Office 2404, in Allentown, PA until September 1976. Following command, he served in Volunteer Training Unit 604, in Harrisburg, PA as the Readiness Commander's Representative and Military Support Plans Officer to the Pennsylvania State Military Adjutant. In March 1977, CAPT Smith assumed command of the Military Sealift Command Office 204, in Wilmington, DE. In October 1978, he reported to Volunteer Training Unit 0406 in Harrisburg as Officer-in-Charge, Plans and Programs Analysis Team. In October 1979, CAPT Smith assumed duty as Inspector General for Naval Reserve Readiness Command Region FOUR, Philadelphia, PA.

CAPT Smith's Active Duty for Training in the Grade of Captain Assignments included; THIRD Naval District Reserve Policy Board, Brooklyn NY (1973,); Military Sealift Command, Washington DC (1975 and 1976); Naval Reserve Readiness Command, Philadelphia, PA (1976 and 1977); Transportation Management Course, Oakland CA (1978); Defense Strategy Seminar, National Defense University,

Washington, DC (1978 and 1979); Staff Chief of Chief of Naval Operations (Naval Research,) Washington DC (1980); Commander Service Group TWO, Norfolk, VA (1981.)

Promoted to rear admiral on 1 June 1981, he then served in Volunteer Training Unit 0413, Philadelphia until he was recalled to active duty in November 1984 as Deputy Director Naval Reserve (OP-09RB) in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. In May 1987, RADM Smith then assumed duty as Chief of Naval Reserve (OP-095) and Commander, Naval Reserve Force, responsible for 145,000 U.S. Naval Reserve personnel around the globe. RADM Smith was the first Surface Warfare Officer and the first Selected Reservist (SELRES) to serve as the Chief of Naval Reserve (the position was established as the Director of Naval Reserve in 1973 and RADM Smith was the sixth to serve in that position.) RADM Smith's last tour concluded in August 1989 and he retired thereafter.

RADM Smith's awards include the Legion of Merit, Navy Occupation Service Medal with Europe clasp, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with two Hour Glass Division, National Defense Service Medal, Expert Rifle Medal "E," and Expert Pistol Shot Medal.

In his civilian career, RADM Smith started in marketing and sales with Esso in Washington DC and northern Ohio. He then became Assistant District Manager for Humble Oil and Refining Co. and then District Manager in Pennsylvania before finishing on the Headquarters Staff of Exxon Pipeline in Houston until 1984 when he returned to active duty. He was a member of; Naval Reserve Association; U.S. Naval Academy Athletic Association; Reserve Officers Association; Navy League; Surface Navy Association; Naval Enlisted Reserve Association; Retired Officers Association. He was very active in the Catholic Church throughout his life. After his retirement from active duty in 1989, he served as Executive Director for the Navy Memorial in Washington DC during its earliest years.

RADM Smith's wife of 67 years, Virginia "Ginny" Smith was a Navy Nurse at the Charleston, Naval Hospital when they first met on his first tour. She served for many years as a volunteer "Arlington Lady" at Arlington National Cemetery, comforting grieving families and in some cases ensuring that no service member is ever buried alone – truly selfless and righteous service to our nation too. Of their four children, all served in uniform or married someone who did.

No memorial events are scheduled at this time..

Neale Smith volunteered to join the Navy and serve our Nation at a time when the Korean War had become increasingly unpopular at home. Undeterred, his sense of duty, dedication and patriotism would carry him through 37-years of service. He was known as someone of integrity, honor, and who led by example and left all who knew him with a greater sense of purpose. (He was also an avid reader and collector of naval history.) Anyone who has served on a Navy Reserve Apply Board can't help but come away truly impressed by the dedication and sacrifice necessary to serve in the senior ranks of the U.S. Navy Reserve, as officers crisscross the country for the privilege of serving in scarce command billets, often losing money in the process. RADM Smith's tours in Volunteer Training Units meant that he wasn't being paid for that time, yet was working just as hard and spending time away from family. Although those who affiliate with a VTU indicate they are ready and willing to return to a pay billet, there is no guarantee. RADM Smith was a trailblazer in this process, at some point impressing enough senior Navy leadership for Navy Secretary Jim Webb to approve him as the first "SELRES" to serve as the Chief of Naval Reserve (his five predecessors were all active-duty aviators.) The U.S. Navy Reserve ("U.S. Naval Reserve" before 2005) has served our Navy exceedingly well through numerous exercises, crises and wars, and RADM Neale Smith will always be one of the finest examples. His

continued service to the Navy after his retirement as the Director of the Navy Memorial, honoring those who served and sacrificed for our Navy, capped a lifetime of leadership by example. Bravo Zulu, RADM Smith.

Rest in Peace Admiral Smith

Very respectfully,

Sam

Samuel J. Cox (SES)
RADM, USN, (Ret.)
Director of Naval History
Curator for the Navy
Director, Naval History and Heritage Command
Samuel.cox@navy.mil
202-433-2210 (office) 571-213-9392 (govt cell)