

Tribute to the Life of Rear Admiral William Albert “Bill” Walsh, USN(Ret)

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It is with deep regret I inform you of the passing of Rear Admiral William Albert “Bill” Walsh, U.S. Navy (Retired) on 14 April 2020 at age 86. Bill entered the Naval Reserve Officer Training program at the University of Notre Dame in September 1952 and served as a Surface Line Officer until his retirement in late 1985 as the Director of the Surface Warfare Division (OP-32) on the OPNAV Staff. His tours included multiple amphibious ship assignments, three Vietnam deployments (on USS REEVES (DLG-24,) as Executive Officer of USS COCHRANE (DDG-21) and Commanding Officer of USS TOWERS (DDG-9) during which he earned a Bronze Star,) as well as command of USS JUNEAU (LPD-10,) Amphibious Squadron THREE, and Amphibious Group Eastern Pacific.

While attending the University of Notre Dame, Bill received a draft notice from the U.S. Army during the Korean War. Displaying sound judgment, he promptly applied and was accepted in the Naval Reserve Officer Training Program on 18 September 1952. Midshipman Walsh graduated from Notre Dame in June 1955 with a Bachelor of Science in Commerce/Accounting and was commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve. Following a couple months at Naval Amphibious Training Unit, Little Creek, VA, in July 1955 he reported to his first ship, the Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) flagship-configured fast transport HOLLIS (APD-86,) which conducted local operations and a Midshipman Cruise before being decommissioned in October 1956. That same month he reported to the Naval Combat Information Center (CIC) Officers School at NAS Glenview, IL as a student and was promoted to Lieutenant (junior grade.) In March 1957, he reported to the Naval CIC School at NAS Glynco, Brunswick, GA and then several

more months of training at Fleet Training Center Norfolk, prior to joining his second ship as part of the commissioning crew of the new-construction destroyer escort HARTLEY (DE-1029) in June 1957, serving aboard for her shakedown in the Caribbean, local operations from Newport, RI, and preparations for her first Mediterranean deployment.

In May 1958, LTJG Walsh reported to the staff of Commander Destroyers U.S. Atlantic Fleet. This was followed in June 1958 with duty on the staff of Headquarters, NINTH Naval District, Great Lakes, IL. In March 1959, LTJG Walsh joined ship's company on the landing ship tank WASHTENAW COUNTY (LST-1186,) which included a Western Pacific deployment, Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) major exercise "Saddle UP" off British Borneo, as well as crisis response to Communist activity in Laos. During this tour Lieutenant Walsh augmented into the U.S. Navy.

In November 1960, LT Walsh reported to Bremerton, WA as Aide and Public Affairs Officer for Commander Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. In June 1962 he proceeded to the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA where he graduated with distinction in June 1963 with a Master of Science in Management. This was followed by a series of schools and short assignments including Transportation Management School at the Naval Supply Center, Oakland, the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and the Fleet Anti-Submarine Warfare School in San Diego.

In March 1964, LT Walsh reported to Long Beach as a member of the commissioning crew of new-construction guided-missile destroyer-leader REEVES (DLG-24, later CG-24,) first as Training Officer and then Operations Officer when promoted to lieutenant commander in July 1964. LCDR Walsh deployed aboard REEVES to waters off Vietnam, where she acted as Anti-Air Picket for carrier ORISKANEY (CVA-34) and then MIDWAY (CVA-41) conducting strike operations into North Vietnam in the summer of 1965.

LCDR Walsh then attended Naval schools Command Mare Island, Vallejo, CA and Nuclear Weapons Training Center Pacific, before reporting in November 1965 as Executive Officer for guided-missile

destroyer COCHRANE (DDG-21) homeported in Pearl Harbor, HI. COCHRANE deployed to the Gulf of Tonkin in the late summer of 1966, including time on the gunline destroying Communist targets ashore, duty as AAW and ASW Picket ship, participation in Exercise Storm Cloud with the British Royal Navy, and as plane guard for carrier KEARSARGE, put her whaleboat in the water and rescued a Sailor blown overboard from KEARSARGE in under five minutes. COCHRANE also won the Ney Award for best food service in the fleet (an award she would win repeatedly in years afterwards.)

In July 1967, LCDR Walsh proceeded to Washington DC to serve as Head of Amphibious/Mine Warfare and Gun Fire Support Office in the Strategic Plans Division of the Office of the CNO (Op-605DIF) and then as Aide and Administrative Assistant for Joint Chiefs of Staff Matters. Promoted to commander in May 1969, he then attended and graduated from the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk in January 1970, followed by additional duty under instruction at the Naval Destroyer School in Newport and the Navy Nuclear Weapons Training Center Pacific.

In April 1970, CDR Walsh assumed command of guided-missile destroyer TOWERS (DDG-9,) homeported in San Diego. During local operations, TOWERS directed the successful helicopter rescue of the pilot of a crashed F-8 Crusader, and during transit to Vietnam in January 1971 assisted destroyer-escort ROARK (DE-1053) in putting out a major engine room fire and then taking ROARK in tow until relieved by a fleet tug. Following Naval Gunfire Support Missions in northern South Vietnam, TOWERS assumed plane guard for carrier RANGER (CVA-61,) rescuing a RANGER sailor blown overboard. Following duty as the northern Search and Rescue (SAR) Coordination ship, more time on the gunline and plane guard for KITTY HAWK (CVA-63,) TOWERS returned to San Diego in July 1971. CDR Walsh was awarded a Bronze Star (not 100% sure for which tour, but most likely this one.)

In August 1971, CDR Walsh attended the Senior Course in Naval Warfare at the Naval War College Newport, RI, graduating in June 1972 while simultaneously earning a second Masters Degree, this one in

International Affairs, with honors, from the George Washington University.

In June 1972, CDR Walsh went to Washington DC for what turned into a series of assignments, first as Head, Surface Ship Placement Officer in the Jun 72 – Jul 73 Bureau of Naval Personnel, and then as the Executive Assistant for the Chief of Officer Development and Distribution in BUPERS. In March 1974 he commenced duty as the Assistant to the CNO for special projects, and then in June 1974 as the Assistant to the CNO for Human Relations and Equal Opportunity Affairs during the last weeks of Admiral Zumwalt's tenure as CNO. Promoted to captain in July 1974, in August he became Special Assistant to the Deputy CNO for Surface Warfare (OP-03AX) and then in August 1975 as Executive Assistant and Senior Aide to the DCNO for Surface warfare (OP-03A.)

In February 1976, CAPT Walsh assumed command of amphibious transport dock JUNEAU (LPD-10,) homeported in San Diego, which included the first AV-8A harrier landing on a Pacific Fleet LPD and a port visit to Juneau, Alaska with embarked Marines for the 1976 National Bicentennial celebration. In August 1978, he assumed command of Amphibious Squadron THREE, also in San Diego.

In August 1979, CAPT Walsh reported to the staff of Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor, HI, as Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans and Policy. In March 1981 he was designated as a Rear Admiral for duty in a billet commensurate with that rank and promoted to Rear Admiral (two star) on 10 September 1981. While dealing with the operations of the Soviet Pacific Fleet during the height of the Cold War, he was also assigned duty as the Naval Component Commander for the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (which evolved into the Rapid Deployment Forces Command and then into U.S. Central Command in 1983.) This would have been a really tough job given the U.S. Navy (and U.S. Pacific Fleet in particular) lack of enthusiasm for the establishment of another Combatant Command to stake a claim on Navy resources for Persian Gulf/Middle Eastern Operations.

In November 81, RADM Walsh assumed command of Amphibious Group Eastern Pacific, headquartered in San Diego, where he was responsible for four amphibious squadrons, 51 ships, 16,000 Sailors, and five different shore-based commands. In August 1983 he returned to Washington DC to the Officer of the CNO as the Director of the Surface Warfare Division (OP-32) until his retirement in late 1985.

RADM Walsh's awards include the Legion of Merit (3,) Bronze Star, Navy Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with one silver and one bronze star, Sea Service Ribbon, the Republic of Vietnam Distinguished Service Order 2nd class, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with device.

After retirement from active duty, Bill took a year off before becoming President of Air/Space America, 86-89 a not-for-profit international aerospace trade exposition from 1986-1989, followed by a number of years in management and business consulting before his ultimate retirement about 2010.

I regret I don't have any information on funeral arrangements at this time.

Rear Admiral Walsh may have joined the Navy to duck serving in the Army, but he found opportunities to bring his ship in range of Communist shore batteries in support of U.S. forces ashore, and boldly brought his ship alongside another to help fight a serious fire, and also his ships saved a pilot and two sailors from death in the water. By his count, he made 21 moves (and his family 18) during his 32 year Navy career, serving many of those years away at sea. Whether as a decommissioning crew or a commissioning crew, or leading ships in wartime operations off Vietnam, he handled tough tours with aplomb and superb leadership. He was also obviously a survivor, coming through the transition from Admiral Zumwalt's revolutionary tenure, and then serving in a position that the Navy at the time wanted to strangle in the crib (the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force.) He was obviously a master of amphibious operations, something no other Navy in the world can come as close to doing as well as the U.S. Navy. His legacy lives

on in those he led and mentored and set an exemplary record of service and sacrifice.

Rest in Peace Admiral Walsh.

Very respectfully,
Sam