

Public Information Division  
U. S. Coast Guard Headquarters  
Washington 25, D. C.

Biographical Sketch

REAR ADMIRAL LOUIS M. THAYER, U. S. COAST GUARD

(RETIRED)

Louis MacLane Thayer, Jr., was born on July 2, 1908, at Butte, Montana. After receiving a diploma from Helena High School (1926), and attending Mt. St. Charles College at Helena, he served in the Montana National Guard for two years.

He entered the U. S. Coast Guard Academy at New London, Conn., with an appointment as cadet on July 30, 1929, and was graduated and commissioned an Ensign on May 15, 1933. Subsequently, he advanced in rank to Lieut. (jg), May 15, 1936; Lieutenant, May 25, 1940; Lieut. Commander, October 1, 1942; Commander, January 1, 1944; Captain, July 1, 1956; Rear Admiral, March 1, 1963.

He served his earliest assignments on board the Cutters TAMPA and GALATEA of the Third Coast Guard District, New York. From December 1934 to November 1937, he served in the Cutter UNALGA which operated out of San Juan, P. R. After a tour of duty as assistant engineer officer in the Cutter MENDOTA of the Fifth District, Norfolk, he returned to the Cutter UNALGA as engineer officer in December 1939.

WORLD WAR II:

While remaining in the Caribbean throughout the first year of the United States' engagement in World War II, he advanced to executive officer and then to commanding officer of the Cutter UNALGA. From September 1942 to February 1944, he was Chief, Anti-Submarine Warfare School at the Coast Guard Training Station in St. Augustine, Fla.

After undergoing preparatory sessions at the Sub-Chaser Training Center in Miami and at the Coast Guard Manhattan Beach Training Station in New York, he commanded the Destroyer USS POOLE (DE-151) on trans-Atlantic convoy escort operations from May 1944 to May 1945. Designated Commander, Escort Division Twenty-Two at that time, he saw action in that capacity in both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres of operations until after the war, with the Destroyer POOLE as his flagship. The then Commander Thayer was awarded the Navy Commendation Ribbon with Combat Distinguishing Device for his services in the Atlantic.

POST WAR:

From December 1945 to February 1946, he was stationed with the Merchant Marine Hearing Unit in New York City, after which he was ordered to San Francisco as Senior Investigating Officer of the 12th Coast Guard District Merchant Marine Hearing Unit.

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He was a student at the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Va., from December 1947 to July 1948. Transferred from there to Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D. C., he first served there under the Chief, Planning and Control Staff until June, 1949, then as Chief, Training and Procurement Division until July 1953.

After undergoing training at the Merchant Marine Indoctrination School, located then at the Coast Guard Academy, for three months, he was assigned duties in the Marine Inspection Office at Portland, Oregon. He became Chief of that office in April 1954, with additional duties of Captain-of-the-Port, Portland.

In June 1958, he became commanding officer of the Reserve Officers' Candidate School which at that time was located at the Coast Guard Academy. While there he was also an instructor, and conducted periodic examinations and training inspections at Maritime Administration Radar Schools in New York, New Orleans, and San Francisco, which had to have Coast Guard approval.

In July 1959, he placed into commission and became commanding officer of the U. S. Coast Guard Reserve Training Center at Yorktown, Virginia. The facilities at Yorktown were formerly a Navy Mine Warfare School which were remodeled to Coast Guard specifications.

As head of the Reserve Center, the then Captain Thayer's responsibilities included supervision of the following schools which were transferred there from the site of the Coast Guard Academy in New London: (1) the Reserve Officers' Candidate School, which provides four months of courses for qualified civilians and enlisted personnel of the Armed Forces for commissions in the Coast Guard Reserve; (2) Merchant Marine Indoctrination School, where Merchant Marine Officers study for three months to become Coast Guard officers specializing in marine inspection work, and where Coast Guard officers are trained in merchant marine safety work; (3) the East Coast Direct Commission School, where men who were commissioned direct into the Coast Guard are indoctrinated in Service policy and functions, and are trained in leadership. His responsibilities also included coordinating of plans for making Yorktown into a permanent east coast training center where Reservists could fulfill their annual two weeks of training duty.

Detached from the Reserve Center in November 1961, he became Chief, Operations Division at the Fifth Coast Guard District office in Portsmouth, Va. While in that post, he was appointed to the grade of Rear Admiral by approval of the President and confirmation of the Senate on March 15, 1963, to rank as such from March 1, 1963. Thereupon he was transferred to Coast Guard Headquarters to assume the post of Flag Officer in charge of the Coast Guard Reserve effective as of April 4, 1963. As such he also became Chief, Office of Reserve.

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In March 1965, RADM Thayer assumed his present post as Commander, 7th Coast Guard District, Miami, under whose jurisdiction are Coast Guard facilities and operations in the states of South Carolina, Georgia in most part, Florida, and Caribbean areas. Hardly had he gotten his bearings in that post when the Cuban Refugee Exodus occurred in the fall of 1965, during which thousands of Cubans left their homeland to cross the Straits of Florida to the United States. RADM Thayer successfully coordinated the efforts of the Coast Guard and several other government agencies in this massive humanitarian effort which resulted in literally thousands of refugees being saved from perilous positions. For his dynamic leadership and outstanding professional competence during that period, RADM Thayer was awarded the LEGION OF MERIT.

On November 13, 1965, the Panamanian cruise ship SS YARMOUTH CASTLE caught fire and sank in the Atlantic Ocean with the loss of 90 lives while en route from Miami to Nassau. RADM Thayer was appointed President of a Marine Board of Investigation to inquire into that disaster. As a result of the investigation, the United States undertook through the Intergovernmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), of which it is a member, to raise safety standards for passenger vessels of all member nations. RADM Thayer has lectured extensively throughout the country on that disaster and the general subject of passenger ship safety since the investigation.

RADM Thayer's World War II campaign service medals and ribbons include, in addition to the Navy Commendation with "V", the American Area, American Defense with sea clasp, European-African-Middle Eastern Area, Asiatic-Pacific Area, World War II Victory. More recent of his awards is the LEGION OF MERIT for his efforts during the Cuban Exodus.

RADM Thayer's wife is the former Mignon B. Rehmann of San Antonio, Texas. They have two daughters, Joanna P., and Karen C. They also have a son, Raymond E., a graduate of West Point, and another daughter, Mrs. F. D. (Elizabeth) Upchurch, Jr., of Walnut Creek, California.

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