

United States Coast Guard
Office of Boating, Public, and Consumer Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20593

Biographical Sketch

REAR ADMIRAL EDWARD H. THIELE,
U.S. COAST GUARD
(1905-1981)

Edward H. Thiele was born on September 4, 1905, at Washington, D.C., was graduated from McKinley Technical High School, and attended Devitt Prep School, both in Washington, D.C. His Coast Guard career began after serving for more than two and one half years in the active National Guard Company C, 121st Engineers. He received an honorable discharge on May 14, 1924 to accept an appointment as cadet engineer at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy at New London, Connecticut.

Graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree and commissioned an Ensign on March 8, 1927, he thereafter advanced in rank as follows: Lieutenant (j.g.) March 8, 1929; Lieutenant, March 8, 1931; Lieutenant Commander, May 25, 1940; Commander, September 1, 1942; Captain, March 20, 1945; and Rear Admiral on June 17, 1957.

After graduation from the Academy he served on various Coast Guard destroyers including the CUMMINGS and SHAW on North Atlantic Patrol, and saw sea duty in Norfolk, Virginia in 1929 and 1930 as assistant engineering officer aboard the Cutter MENDOTA.

From 1930 to 1933 he was assigned to the Coast Guard Academy as instructor in electrical engineering with collateral duty as coach of the Academy's swimming team. Upon leaving the Academy he was assigned as engineering officer of the destroyer USS HUNT and participated in the protection of the U.S. nationals in Cuba during the Cuban revolution of 1933.

He later served for two years as engineering officer of the Coast Guard Cutter CHELAN stationed in the Pacific Northwest and Bering Sea.

From 1936 to 1940 he was assigned to Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D.C. in the office of the Engineer-in-Chief as Chief, Internal Combustion Engine and Small Boat Section, and Chief, Research and Development Division, respectively.

In 1937 Rear Admiral Thiele was ordered to visit various foreign countries in connection with the study and construction of icebreakers. From information gathered, a fleet of Coast Guard icebreakers has been built.

In the early stages of World War II, he was assigned to the office of the U.S. Navy Supervisor of Shipbuilding at New York City where he supervised the design and construction of icebreakers which included the MACKINAW for the Great Lakes, the WIND class for Arctic service, and the 110-foot harbor icebreakers known as the RARITAN class. All of these vessels have performed outstanding service in the Coast Guard.

Rear Admiral Thiele was assigned as the first executive officer of the icebreaker WESTWIND in 1944, which was later turned over to Russia. This ship has been returned to the United States after the end of the Second World War.

During the latter part of the war, Rear Admiral Thiele was assigned to the Pacific Theater as Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard-manned troop transports USS GENERAL D. E. AULTMAN (AP-156) and the USS WAKEFIELD (AP-21).

From February to September 1946 he served as District Engineer of the Third Coast Guard District, New York, then was again assigned to Coast Guard Headquarters in the office of the Engineer-in-Chief as Chief of the Machinery Section, Naval Engineering Division, and later as Coast Guard Safety Director.

In 1948 and 1949, Rear Admiral Thiele attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York, and was graduated with a Bachelor of Management in Engineering degree. Completing his studies he returned to Headquarters in June 1949, in the office of the Commandant as Chief of the Administrative Management Division.

In September 1949, he was assigned as Senior Coast Guard and Merchant Marine Detail Officer, Europe, with headquarters in London, England. In this post he was charged with operational and administrative control of all Coast Guard activities in the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Area. In addition, he served on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief, Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean.

Rear Admiral Thiele left London in August 1953 for Norfolk, Virginia, where he was assigned to the staff of the Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District at Norfolk, Virginia, and served as Chief of the Merchant Marine Safety Division until April 1956, and as Chief of Staff until

May 1957. Nominated in January 1957 for the permanent rank of Rear Admiral, he took his oath of office on June 17, 1957. At this time he became Commander, Ninth Coast Guard District, Cleveland, having under his jurisdiction Coast Guard activities in areas including the state of Michigan, and large parts of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. On May 22, 1957, the President nominated Rear Admiral Thiele to be Engineer-in-Chief of the Coast Guard, confirmed by the Senate, effective August 1, 1958. His active duty as Engineer-in-Chief of the Coast Guard was from August 1, 1958 to July 1, 1961. Following his Coast Guard retirement, Rear Admiral Thiele was vice president of Cleveland Stevedore Company, Cleveland, Ohio, from 1961 to 1970.

He holds the following campaign medals for his World War II service: American Defense; American Theatre; Pacific Theatre; World War II Victory; Philippine Defense; and Navy Occupation. In addition, he is entitled to wear the Coast Guard Expert Pistol and Expert Rifle Medals.

Rear Admiral Thiele was national president of the American Society of Naval Engineers in 1961; was lifetime honorary vice president of the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers; president of the Council of Lake Erie Ports in 1967; past national director of the Society of American Military Engineers; a member of the International Institute of Welding governing board; he was a member of the Newcoming Society of England; U.S. Power Squadrons; Propeller Club; World Trade Association; and Council of American Transportation Specialists.

He was a registered professional engineer in the District of Columbia, and was listed in "Who's Who in America," "Who's Who in Engineering," and "Engineers of Distinction." He was a member of the Union Club of Cleveland, Army and Navy Club of Washington, and the Princess Ann Country Club, Virginia Beach.

Rear Admiral and Mrs. Thiele, the former Vibeke Laub of Copenhagen, Denmark, have two daughters, Mrs. A. Byron Holderby, Jr., of Newport, Rhode Island, and Mrs. Jerome J. Weber, of Vienna, Virginia; and five grandchildren.