

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

Biographical Sketch

VICE ADMIRAL KENNETH K. COWART,
U. S. COAST GUARD
(RETIRED)

Vice Admiral Kenneth Keith Cowart, former Engineer-in-Chief of the U. S. Coast Guard, retired from that Service on July 1, 1959, with more than thirty years of experience afloat and ashore, including World War II service in both Atlantic and Pacific combat operations.

He was born on January 16, 1905, at Twin City, Georgia, where he graduated from Emanuel County Institute in 1922. After a year of post-graduate work at that school, he entered the U. S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Conn., as a cadet in October 1923.

After graduating from the Academy and receiving a commission as Ensign (Engineering) on May 15, 1926, Admiral Cowart served in various engineering capacities on board Coast Guard vessels. He first served as assistant engineer officer on board the Cutter MOJAVE. Later, he was transferred to line duty on board the Destroyer TUCKER, one of the Destroyer Force which the Coast Guard operated against smugglers in the Atlantic between 1924 and 1934. In September 1927, he became assistant engineer officer of the Cutter TAMPA, then returned to the Cutter MOJAVE for engineering duty in January 1928. In October of that year he was transferred to the Cutter PONTCHARTRAIN to serve first as assistant engineer officer and later as navigator.

From 1930 to June 1932, Admiral Cowart was engineer officer on board the Destroyer HERNDON. During the following year he took a post-graduate course in engineering at the Naval Academy Postgraduate School, Annapolis, Md. From there he went to the University of California in Berkeley to win a Master of Science Degree in 1934.

During the next four years Admiral Cowart was assigned to the Coast Guard Academy as an instructor in the Department of Science and Engineering. In June 1938, he was ordered back to sea on line duty in the Cutter SARANAC. Four months later he was reassigned to administrative and instructor duties at the U. S. Maritime Service Training Station, Fort Trumbull, Conn., which was established at that time for training men as licensed officers in the Merchant Marine. He remained there until October 1942, when he was assigned to Coast Guard Headquarters for temporary duty.

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In December 1942, during World War II, the then Commander Cowart became engineer officer of the combat Cutter CAMPBELL. He was serving at that post when the cutter rammed and sank an enemy submarine with gunfire and depth charges, and took several of the crew as prisoners, while on convoy escort operations in the Atlantic on February 22, 1943. In that engagement the cutter took a large tear in her side plating leading to the engine room. For his gallantry and tireless efforts in directing the damage control measures to check the rising water, and during the ensuing period when the cutter was towed safely to port, Admiral Cowart was awarded the SILVER STAR. During the twenty-four hours prior to ramming the submarine, his ship engaged five other U-boats with varying degrees of success. Admiral Cowart commanded the CAMPBELL in the rank of Captain from May 1943 to January 1944 on convoy duty.

He received the NAVY COMMENDATION RIBBON for outstanding performance of his next tour of duty as Chief of the Merchant Marine Personnel Division at Coast Guard Headquarters.

From September 1945 to April 1946, he commanded the troop transport USS ADMIRAL E. W. EBERLE (AP-123) in the Pacific. While under his command, that transport set a record in December of 1945 of 8 days, 7-3/4 hours for Pacific transport crossing while returning troops from Nagoya, Japan, to Seattle, Wash.

After serving a stint of five months as District Engineer Officer at the 12th Coast Guard District office in San Francisco, he became Assistant Engineer-in-Chief at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D. C. On August 1, 1950, he was appointed Engineer-in-Chief of the Coast Guard with the rank of Rear Admiral for a term of four years. On August 1, 1954, he was reappointed for a second term.

Succeeded by RADM E. H. Thiele, USCG, on August 1, 1958, Admiral Cowart then served as special assistant to the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Alfred C. Richmond, until he retired on July 1, 1959, with the rank of Vice Admiral.

While serving as Engineer-in-Chief, Admiral Cowart also was Chairman of the Ship Structure Committee, and served on the Council and Steering Committee of the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers. He was President of the Washington, D. C. Propeller Club in 1955. In 1956 he was President of the American Society of Naval Engineers. A more detailed listing of his activities and interests is attached.

Admiral Cowart was promoted in rank as follows: Ensign, May 15, 1926; Lieutenant (jg), May 15, 1928; Lieutenant, May 15, 1930; Lieut. Commander, May 1, 1937; Commander, August 15, 1942; Captain, August 1, 1943; Rear Admiral (Upper Half), August 1, 1950; Vice Admiral, Retired, July 1, 1959.

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~~REAR~~ ^{V. C. E.} ADMIRAL K. K. COWART, U. S. COAST GUARD (RETIRED)

List of Activities and Interests

1. Member, American Society of Naval Engineers. 1938-present.
 2. Member, Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers. 1947-present.
 3. Member, Propeller Club of the United States, Port of Washington, D. C. 1948-present.
 4. Member, American Branch, Newcomen Society of England. 1948-present.
 5. Member, Columbia Country Club. 1949-present.
 - * 6. Engineer-in-Chief of the U. S. Coast Guard, with rank of Rear Admiral (Upper Half). 1950-present. *Aug. 1, 1953 to July 1, 1958.*
 7. Chairman, Ship Structure Committee. (An interagency group who conduct a program of research to improve the hull structures of ships. The five member agencies are: BuShips, Navy Dept.; MSTS, Navy Dept.; Mar. Admin., Commerce Dept.; U. S. Coast Guard, Treasury Dept., and the American Bureau of Shipping.) 1950-present.
 8. Member, Merchant Marine Council. 1950-present.
 9. Member, Board of Directors, Navy Mutual Aid Association. 1950-present.
 10. Member, Executive Committee, Chesapeake Section, Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers. 1953-present.
 11. Member, Steering Committee, Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers. 1953-present.
 12. Member, Society of American Military Engineers. 1953-present.
 13. President, U. S. Coast Guard Academy Alumni Association. 1954-1955.
 14. President, Washington Chapter, U. S. Coast Guard Academy Alumni Association. 1954-1955.
 15. President, Propeller Club, Port of Washington, D. C. 1954-1955.
 16. Member, Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association. 1954-present.
 17. Member, Board of Directors, Washington, D. C. Chapter, Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association. 1954-1955.
 18. Member, Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C. 1954-present.
 19. Member, Chatterbox Club, Washington, D. C. 1954-present.
 20. Certified Professional Engineer (Mechanical/Marine) in the District of Columbia. 1954-present.
 21. Member, Council, Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers. 1955-present.
 22. Vice President, Washington, D. C. Post, Society of American Military Engineers. 1955-1956.
 23. President, American Society of Naval Engineers. 1956.
 24. Appointed a permanent Rear Admiral in the U. S. Coast Guard. 1956.
 25. Editorial Adviser, Encyclopaedia Britannica. 1956-present.
 26. Member, National Directors, Society of American Military Engineers. 1957:
 27. *Information Director, Military ~~Order~~ Order of the Caribou, 1967.*
- ~~* 6. Engineer-in-Chief from August 1, 1950 to July 1, 1958.~~

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