

Public Information Division
U. S. Coast Guard Headquarters
Washington, D. C., 20591

Biographical Sketch

REAR ADMIRAL REGINALD H. FRENCH,
U. S. COAST GUARD
(RETIRED--DECEASED)

Reginald Hicks French was born on December 28, 1902, at Ardsley, N. Y., and graduated from Arthur Hill High School, Saginaw, Mich., in 1924. On May 12 of that year he entered the U. S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Conn., with an appointment as cadet and was graduated and commissioned an Ensign on March 8, 1927.

He subsequently rose through the ranks as follows: Lieutenant (jg), March 8, 1929; Lieutenant, March 8, 1931; Lieut. Commander, May 25, 1940; Commander, September 1, 1942; Captain, March 20, 1945; retired July 1, 1957; made Rear Admiral on the retired list.

ADM French served his earliest assignments on board the Destroyers McCALL, WILKES, and FARRING of the Destroyer Force that the Coast Guard operated against the smugglers and rum runners of the prohibition era. In August 1930 he was transferred to the Alaskan Patrol where he first served in the Cutter TALLAPOOGA until September 1931, and then in the Cutter HAIDA as navigator until April 1933. He next commanded a shore unit at Jacksonville, Fla., for two years.

From March 1935 to September 1937, he served as a line officer on board the Cutter SEBAGO out of Norfolk, Va. That was followed by a tour of duty on board the Cutter MOJAVE, based at Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., until October 1940, and two years as engineer officer on board the Cutter DUANE out of Boston, Mass.

Fifteen years of continuous sea duty was interrupted by an assignment in October 1942, during World War II, as training officer in the Chicago Division. After attending Submarine Chaser Training School at Miami from July to September of 1943, he returned to sea to command the Destroyer USS LOWE (DE-325) on convoy escort duty in the Atlantic.

While in command of the Destroyer Escort USS PRIDE (DE-323) of the Atlantic Fleet from May 1944 until the end of the war, he also served as Commander, Escort Division 26 for more than year and then as Commander of/submarine killer task group of Division 46. After one particular prolonged search for an enemy submarine that harassed convoy ships, the then Commander French directed a series of attacks which destroyed the marauder. Subsequently, he was awarded the LEGION OF MERIT Medal and the BRONZE STAR Medal with Combat "V" Device for successfully carrying out the mission of escort operations.

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Detached from the PRIDE in August 1945, RADM French, in the rank of Captain, served at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D. C., as Chief, Headquarters Administration Division for five years during which he was designated the additional title of Commanding Officer, Headquarters, in March 1946. In September 1950, he was assigned as Chief of Operations in the 8th Coast Guard District, New Orleans, La.

In July 1952, he was transferred to the 13th Coast Guard District, Seattle, Wash., where he first served as Chief of Operations until May 1956, and then as Chief of Staff of that district for one year. That was his last tour of duty until he retired on July 1, 1957, with 30 years of service. He was promoted from Captain to Rear Admiral on the retired list.

In addition to the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V", RADM French had the following World War II campaign medals and ribbons: American Area, European-African-Middle Eastern Area, and World War II Victory.

RADM French died just before his 68th birthday on Monday, December 7, 1970, in the Naval Hospital at Great Lakes, Ill. RADM French suffered from heart and lung disease which aggravated by pneumonia became fatal.

RADM French is survived by his widow Mrs. French, the former Margaret Baker of Chicago, Ill., at their home at 14700 South Central Ave., Oak Forest, Ill. He also leaves two sons, Robert A. and Chester.

Funeral services were arranged from Hickey's Funeral Home, 4201 - 447th St., Midlothian, Ill., followed by burial in St. Mary's Cemetery at Evergreen Park, Ill.