

Public Information Division  
U. S. Coast Guard Headquarters  
Washington, D. C. 20226

Biographical Sketch

REAR ADMIRAL CHESTER L. HARDING,

U. S. COAST GUARD

Chester Lawrence Harding was born son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank E. Harding on February 4, 1909, at Lawrence, Mass. He graduated from Lawrence High School in 1926, and from Phillips Academy at Andover, Mass., in 1927. After completing a second semester at Northeastern University in Boston, he entered the U. S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut, as a cadet in September 1928. He was president of the class of 1931, and maintained a Gold Star (honor student) during all three years at the Academy. He was captain of the football and basketball teams during the 1930-31 season.

He was graduated and commissioned an Ensign in the U. S. Coast Guard on May 14, 1931, and subsequently advanced to Lieutenant (jg), May 15, 1934; Lieutenant, May 15, 1936; Lieut. Commander, June 15, 1942; Commander, November 1, 1942; Captain, August 6, 1951; Rear Admiral, May 14, 1959.

From the Academy he was assigned to the Cutter MOJAVE serving in the North Atlantic out of Boston for nearly three years.

In March 1934, he reported as a student aviator to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola, Fla. He was designated Coast Guard Aviator No. 30 February 27, 1935, and in April of that year reported for duty as aviator and executive officer at Coast Guard Air Station, St. Petersburg, Fla.

In June 1936, he was placed in charge of the Air Patrol Detachment at Charleston, S. C. When the Detachment was decommissioned the following October and made part of a newly established Coast Guard Air Station at Charleston, he served as aviator and executive officer there until May 1937. He then served a year as inspector of Coast Guard aircraft at the United Aircraft Corporation, East Hartford, Conn.

From August 1938 to June 1939, he attended the Air Force Aircraft Maintenance School, Chanute Field, Rantoul, Ill. He then served nearly three years as Assistant Chief, Aeronautical Engineering Division at Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D. C. (In April 1941 of that period he was designated Coast Guard Representative on Sub-committee No. 5 for Direction Finding, Radio Technical Committee for Aeronautics.)

In May 1942 of World War II, he was transferred to the Coast Guard Air Station at Salem, Mass., where he first served as executive officer, then as commanding officer from January to June 1944. Transferred next to Washington, D. C., he served as Coast Guard liaison officer on aeronautical communications matters at the Navy Department under the Chief of Naval Operations.

Reassigned in December 1945, he served as Chief, Aeronautical Engineering Division at Coast Guard Headquarters until September 1950. (On March 26, 1947 of that period he was designated a Coast Guard Helicopter Pilot.)

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On his next assignment he commanded the 311-foot Cutter COOK INLET (WAVP-384) on ocean station (weather) patrol and plane guard duty in the North Atlantic out of Portland, Maine. At the termination of that tour in November 1951, he was assigned for four months at the Coast Guard Academy to a course in Merchant Marine Inspection Indoctrination. He then served as travelling marine inspector under the Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety at Coast Guard Headquarters from March 1952 to May 1953.

At that time he reported at the Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean, in London, England, to become Senior Coast Guard and Merchant Marine Detail Officer, Europe. In August 1954, he was transferred to San Juan, P. R., where he first served as executive officer of the Coast Guard Base, and as Operations Officer, Greater Antilles Section, then as of March 1956, as Commanding Officer, Coast Guard Base, and Commander, Greater Antilles Section.

In July 1957, he assumed command of the Coast Guard Aircraft Repair and Supply Base at Elizabeth City, N. C. While there, in the rank of Captain, he was appointed to the permanent grade of Rear Admiral by nomination of the President (in January 1959), and confirmation of the Senate--to rank as such from May 14, 1959. Simultaneously he became Commander of the 17th Coast Guard District, Alaska, with offices at Juneau. He was designated Commander, First Coast Guard District, Boston, Mass., effective July 1, 1960. In late June 1964, he assumed the dual post of Commander, Eastern Area, and Commander, Third Coast Guard District, New York (succeeding retired RADM Richard M. Ross, USCG).

RADM Harding's World War II campaign service ribbons include the American Defense, American Area, and World War II Victory.

RADM Harding is married to the former Helen Rafferty of New London, Conn. They have two daughters, Gail F., Joan W., and a son, Chester L., Jr.