

Information Division
Coast Guard Headquarters
Washington, D. C. 20226

Ok'd by
WADM Helmer
8/17/65
Biographical Sketch

REAR ADMIRAL FRANK V. HELMER,
U. S. COAST GUARD

To Commander
13CGO 4/24/67

Frank V. Helmer was born on January 16, 1913, at Lakewood, Ohio, and received his early education at Grant School, South Plainfield, New Jersey, graduating from Plainfield High School in 1931.

He entered the U. S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut, with an appointment as cadet on July 30, 1931. During his four years at the Academy, he was a member of the varsity football squad and a member of the boxing team.

After graduating from the Academy with a B. S. Degree and a commission as Ensign on May 27, 1935, he served on board the Coast Guard Cutter PONTCHARTRAIN on International Ice Patrol and search and rescue in the North Atlantic. His next tour of duty on the Alaskan Patrol with the Coast Guard Cutter SPENCER, based then at Cordova, lasted from February 1937 to July 1939. The following two years saw him as navigator and watch officer in the Cutter ESCANABA which operated in the Great Lakes out of Grand Haven, Michigan.

WORLD WAR II

From June 1941 to March 1944, during World War II, he was navigator of the Coast Guard-manned attack troop transport USS LEONARD WOOD (APA-12) first during the North African landings and the Sicilian invasion, and later in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands invasions. He received a Navy Commendation Ribbon for skillfully navigating submarine infested waters during the assault and occupation of French Morocco when the WOOD was the flagship for the Center Attack Group on Fedala in November of 1942. He also received a Navy Unit Commendation for duty with that vessel. Later he won a Bronze star and Combat "V" device in place of a second Commendation Ribbon for duty as Commanding Officer of the Destroyer Escort USS VANCE (DE-387) on Atlantic and Mediterranean convoy duty from May 1944 to June 1945. His ship delivered to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the first German submarine to surrender around VE-Day--this was the U-Boat 873 captured May 11, 1945, off the Azores while the VANCE was making her last convoy trip.

During the mop-up at the ending of the war, he was first executive officer and then commanding officer of the attack troop transport USS CAMBRIA (APA-36) first in the Atlantic and then in the Pacific with the transport carrying out the "Magic Carpet" operations of bringing troops home from Shanghai, Okinawa, and Japan.

Pacific

Atlantic

(more)

POST WAR

Between March and August of 1946, he placed in commission and commanded the new Coast Guard Cutter ESCANABA (WPG-64), which was named for his former ship that was torpedoed and sunk by the enemy in the North Atlantic in 1943. After this brief assignment, he reported for duty in the Enlisted Personnel Division at Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D. C. He served as Assistant Chief of that division from June 1947 to June 1951, when he took command of the Destroyer KOINER (WDE-431), stationed at Seattle, Washington. From December 1952 to July 1956, he was Chief, Aids to Navigation Section at the 13th Coast Guard District office in Seattle.

His next tour of duty was as Chief of Personnel, 12th Coast Guard District, San Francisco. Three years later, in June 1959, he took command of the 327-ft. Coast Guard Cutter TANNEY (WPG-37) which operates out of Alameda, California, on ocean station patrol and search and rescue.

He next served as Assistant Superintendent of the U. S. Coast Guard Academy from May 1961 to June 1964. At that time he assumed the post of Chief of Staff of the Third Coast Guard District, New York.

During that tour of duty, he was nominated by the President (on January 13, 1965) and confirmed by the Senate (on March 17, 1965) for the permanent grade of Rear Admiral to rank from July 1, 1965. Subsequently, he assumed the post of Comptroller at Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D. C., in August 1965. *RADM Helmer became Chief, office of Operations at Coast Guard Headquarters in July 1966.*

In addition to the Navy Commendation Ribbon with Bronze Star and Combat "V" and the Navy Unit Commendation, RADM Helmer's World War II campaign and service medals and ribbons include the following: American Area, American Defense, European-African-Middle Eastern Area (two combat stars), Asiatic-Pacific (two combat stars), World War II Victory, Navy Occupation. He also has the Expert Rifleman and Expert Pistol Shot Medals. More recent awards include the National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal, and United Nations Service Medal (Korea).

Resume of appointments in rank: Ensign, May 27, 1935, Lieutenant (jg), May 27, 1938, Lieutenant, May 25, 1941, Lieut. Commander, December 1, 1942, Commander, March 1, 1944, Captain, July 1, 1957, Rear Admiral, July 1, 1965.

RADM Helmer's wife is the former Hilda K. Caldwell of Plainfield, New Jersey, a graduate of Skidmore College for Women, Saratoga Springs, New York. They have three children, John C., 25, Michael F., 18, and Hilda Mary, 14.

The Helmers are presently residing at
 3203 Turner Lane
 Chevy Chase, Md.