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

Biographical Sketch

REAR ADMIRAL WILLIAM W. KENNER, U. S. COAST GUARD (RETIRED)

William Wilson Kenner was born one of twin sons on January 18, 1904, of the late Mr. and Mrs. Wilson T. and Bertha Bricker Kenner at Riverton, Virginia. The family having moved to Washington, D. C., William was graduated from McKinley Manual Training School. That same year on July 22, 1922, he received an appointment as cadet at the U. S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut. There he was graduated with a commission of Ensign on October 17, 1924.

Subsequently, he advanced in rank as follows: Lieutenant (jg), October 17, 1926; Lieutenant, October 17, 1928; Lieut. Commander, October 17, 1932; Commander, July 17, 1942; Captain, December 1, 1943; and Rear Admiral, June 1, 1954. He retired July 1, 1960.

From the Academy his first assignment was to duty in connection with the reconditioning and outfitting of the Destroyer TRIPPE at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. This was one of the Destroyer Force the Coast Guard acquired on loan from the Navy and used in an all out suppression of smuggling on the Atlantic Coast between 1924 and 1934. With the TRIPPE he served out of New London until September 1927, acting as executive officer during the last four months of this assignment. He then became executive officer of the Destroyer FANNING.

After commanding the Cutter PAMLICO, based at New Bern, N. C., from January to November of 1928, he served for five months on board the Cutter SENECA and then with the Destroyer ALMEN. Both of these vessels were based at New York City. In September 1929, he took command of Coast Guard Base Three at Charleston, S. C. In February 1930, he reported for line duty on board the Cutter NORTHLAND at Oakland, Calif., and with this vessel served for twelve months on patrol duty in Alaskan waters.

From January 1932 to March 1933, he commanded Coast Guard Section Base Twelve at Anacortes, Washington, a unit of the Puget Sound Patrol, during which the base won the small arms target practice trophy and cup. This was the highest merit for section bases for 1931-32. He next commanded Coast Guard Base TEN, at Port Townsend, Washington, until its decommissioning in July 1934. From there he was assigned to duty in connection with the construction of new vessels with the Coast Guard Inspector at the Lake Union Dry Dock and Machinery Works at Seattle. When the 165-ft. patrol Cutter ATALANTA was commissioned there in September 1934, he was assigned her commanding officer. Detached in April 1937, he next reported on board the 327-ft. Cutter INGHAM at Port Angeles to serve first as executive officer and later as commanding officer during seven months on Bering Sea Patrol duty.

(more)

In November 1937, he was assigned as commanding officer of the patrol cutter CALYPSO at Baltimore, Maryland. From July until November 1939, he served on a series of temporary assignments which included duties as commanding officer of the cutter NORTHLAND on the West Coast, and work at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D. C., in connection with Maritime Service training. He was then assigned the multiple duties of commanding officer of the U. S. Maritime Training Station at St. Petersburg, Florida, which he performed until transfer of Maritime Training to the War Shipping Administration in September 1942. During this period he also performed duties as Captain of the Port at Tampa.

With World War II well underway, his next assignment was to establish the Coast Guard Training Station at St. Augustine, Florida, where he served as commanding officer until October 1943. After a course of instruction at the Submarine Chaser Training Station at Miami, his next assignment designated him as Commander, Escort Division 22, of the 10th Atlantic Fleet, his flagship being the Destroyer POOLE (DE-151). During the destroyer's operations between December 25, 1943 and January 4, 1944, he was escort group commander of convoys sailing between Norfolk and North African ports, and in April and May 1944 he commanded the escorting of fast oil and mercantile convoys along the submarine-harassed routes to England. For outstanding service during these assignments he was awarded the Legion of Merit with combat "V", and the Bronze Star.

In August 1944, he was relieved of ocean convoy duty to become commanding officer of the war-born Coast Guard Training Station at Palm Beach, Florida, where training of personnel included enlisted SPARS of the Women's Reserve.

In February 1945, he was ordered to the Southwest Pacific Theatre of War to become Commander, Coast Guard-Army Manning Detachment, and Administrative Commander of Coast Guard activities under the Commander, Service Force 7th Fleet. His duties included assigning, reassigning, and transferring of Coast Guard personnel in outlying shore establishments and ships operating within the Southwest Pacific area, and the returning of personnel to the United States. From August 1945 to May 1946, he performed similar duties as Commander, Coast Guard-Army Manning Detachment and Administrative Commander of Coast Guard activities on the Phillippine Sea Frontier and Australia-New Guinea Area, respectively.

Returning to the United States, he was assigned the duties of commanding officer, Coast Guard Group at Alameda, California. In June 1947 he transferred to Washington, D. C., to attend a course of instruction at the U. S. National War College. On completing the course in June 1948, he was named Assistant Chief, Office of Personnel, Coast Guard Headquarters. In March 1952, he was designated Commander, 17th Coast Guard District, Juneau, Alaska.

(more)

On July 8, 1954, with the approval of the President and confirmation of the Senate, the then Captain Kenner was promoted to permanent Rear Admiral to rank from June 1, 1954. Concurrently, Rear Admiral Kenner was designated Chief, Office of Personnel, Coast Guard Headquarters, the duties of which he assumed on September 1, 1954. In this post he also assumed the collateral duty of Flag Officer in charge of the Coast Guard Reserve.

In June 1957, Rear Admiral Kenner became Commander, 7th Coast Guard District, Miami, Fla. Under his jurisdiction were Coast Guard activities in areas comprised of South Carolina and Georgia, all of Florida except the part west of the Apalachicola River, the Panama Canal Zone, all of the island possessions of the United States pertaining to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and all United States naval reservations in the islands of the West Indies and on the north coast of South America. He held that post for three years until his retirement on July 1, 1960.

In addition to the Legion of Merit, Rear Admiral Kenner earned the following World War II campaign service medals and ribbons: American Defense, American Area, European-African-Middle Eastern Area, Asiatic-Pacific, Philippine Liberation, World War II Victory.

Rear Admiral Kenner was married to Hilda E. Bolan of Charleston, S. C., in December 1930. They had two children, William W., Jr., and Hilda Mary. Mrs. Kenner died at Juneau, Alaska, on May 27, 1953.

Rear Admiral Kenner was remarried on June 15, 1955, to Helen Catherine von Storee Cannon of Hamlet, N. C., a graduate of Converse College and the University of South Carolina. Mrs. Kenner held memberships in the Business and Professional Women's Club, the American Accounting Association, and an Associate Membership in the NCCPA Auxs. While stationed in Washington, D. C. from 1954 to 1957, the Kenners resided at 7200 Delfield St., Chevy Chase, Md.

Rear Admiral William Kenner's twin brother, Frank, was also a Rear Admiral in the Coast Guard. He retired on May 1, 1958, and died on March 9, 1961. The Kenner twins were graduated together from McKinley Manual Training School in Washington, D. C., entered the Coast Guard Academy the same date, and graduated together as Ensigns. They rose through the ranks on the same dates except in the rank of Rear Admiral by which Frank preceded William by one year.

Rev. July 1960 - cas