

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

Biographical Sketch

REAR ADMIRAL JOHN B. OREN  
U. S. COAST GUARD  
(RETIRED)

John Bridsell Oren was born on December 27, 1910, at Madison, Wisconsin. After attending high school in Baraboo, Wisconsin, he joined the Navy and was admitted to the Naval Academy Preparatory School at San Diego in 1928.

A Special Order Discharge from the Navy permitted his transfer to the U. S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut, with an appointment as cadet in July 1930, whereupon he was graduated and commissioned an Ensign in the U. S. Coast Guard on May 15, 1933. While a cadet he actively engaged in various sports and was captain of the cross country and swimming teams.

With subsequent advancements through various officer billets, he was appointed to rank as follows: Lieutenant (jg), May 15, 1936; Lieutenant, May 1, 1940; Lieutenant Commander, October 2, 1942; Commander, February 18, 1949; Captain, May 1, 1956; Rear Admiral, June 19, 1964.

He served his earliest assignments as line officer on board the Destroyer HUNT out of New York, and the Cutters CALYPSO and SHOSHONE on the West Coast. Meanwhile he bolstered his early training as an officer with a correspondence course in International Law through the Naval War College.

While training for engineering duty on board the 327-foot Coast Guard Cutter HAMILTON, based at Oakland, California, from 1937 to 1939, he made several Alaskan cruises in her and participated in the search for missing aviatrix Amelia Earhart in the South Pacific. During that period, he also wrote an engineering thesis on refrigerating machinery which was considered an excellent, informative report and was published in the Coast Guard Engineer's Digest.

Under ensuing orders, he completed a two-years' course of instruction in naval engineering at the U. S. Naval Academy Graduate School and then went on to earn a Master's Degree in Marine Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In June 1942, during World War II, he was assigned as Engineer Officer and later as Executive Officer on board the 327-foot Cutter SPENCER in which he saw action in three grueling sea battles with enemy submarines in the North Atlantic. In one of these battles the SPENCER sank the Nazi submarine U-225 in February 1943. Another was the Cutter's memorable attack and sinking of the U-179 in April 1943, from which forty prisoners were captured.

(more)

In August 1943, he was assigned to the outfitting detail on the heavy duty icebreaker WESTWIND which was being built at San Pedro, California, and became her Engineer Officer when she was commissioned the following year. Later, <sup>he</sup> was instrumental in the lend lease program for delivering the WESTWIND and a sister icebreaker to the U.S.S.R. in 1945. Meanwhile, from September 1944 to June 1945, he was Engineer Officer on board the troop transport USS GENERAL J. C. BRECKENRIDGE (AP-176) which operated out of Oakland, California.

During the following nine months, he was assigned inspection duties at the Defoe Shipbuilding Company in Bay City, Michigan, after which he served as Eighth Coast Guard District marine engineer in New Orleans from March 1946 to January 1949. For the next few months he performed inspection work on the Coast Guard heavy duty icebreaker EASTWIND at the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company at Newport News, Virginia.

From August 1949 to May 1951, he served on board the 327-foot Cutter INGHAM, based at Norfolk, Virginia, first as Executive Officer then as Commanding Officer. His next duty station was at the U. S. Coast Guard Yard, Curtis Bay, Maryland, where he first served as Commanding Officer of the Field Testing and Development Unit until May 1954, then as Production Officer of the Yard until June 1956. He then served a tour of duty as Chief, Engineering Division, of the Eleventh Coast Guard District, Long Beach, California, which was followed by a similar assignment in the Twelfth District, San Francisco, in June 1959.

In May 1961, he assumed the duty of Assistant Chief, Office of Engineering at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D. C. He was designated Chief of Staff of the Eighth Coast Guard District, New Orleans, effective as of July 23, 1963. Appointed to the rank of Rear Admiral on June 19, 1964, he returned to Washington, D.C. and was assigned to duty as Chief, Office of Engineering, at Coast Guard Headquarters until his retirement on January 1, 1968. He was awarded the LEGION OF MERIT for that last tour of duty. Rear Admiral Oren has more than 34 years of service to his credit.

Admiral Oren's World War II campaign service ribbon and medal decorations include the following: American Defense; American Area; European-African-Middle Eastern Area (3 battle stars); Asiatic-Pacific Area; WW II Victory.

His wife is the former Virginia Prentis of New London, Connecticut, and the niece of the late Rear Admiral F. C. Billard, USCG, former Commandant of the Coast Guard. The Oren's have one daughter, Virginia Joan, and one son, John Edward, a Coast Guard officer, Academy graduate of 1962.

Rear Admiral Oren holds memberships in the American Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers; American Society of Naval Engineers; and <sup>was</sup> is Chairman of the Ship Structure Committee. \*