

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

Biographical Sketch

REAR ADMIRAL OSCAR C. ROHNKE,
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Oscar Carl Rohnke was born on July 2, 1909, in Jersey City, N. J., where he was graduated from Lincoln High School. He attended Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute and the Newark Technical School and was employed as a structural draftsman in private industry.

Entering the U. S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn., with an appointment as cadet on August 1, 1929, he was graduated and commissioned an Ensign on May 16, 1932.

Subsequently he advanced in rank to Lieutenant (jg), May 16, 1935; Lieutenant, May 25, 1939; Lieut. Commander, June 26, 1942; Commander, December 21, 1943; Captain, November 12, 1952; Rear Admiral, July 1, 1961.

His first assignment was to line duty on board the Coast Guard Cutter SENECA of the New York division for two years, followed by similar duty tours in the Cutter UNALGA based at San Juan, P. R., and in the Cutter GALATEA. He performed engineering duty in the Cutter PONTCHARTRAIN from December 1935 until January 1937. The latter two vessels operated out of New York City.

He next served as an inspector on the last construction stages and outfitting of the 327-ft. Coast Guard Cutter GEORGE M. BIBB at the Navy Yard in Charleston, S. C. After the vessel's commissioning on March 10, 1937, he was assigned engineering duties aboard her for two years. In February 1939, he reported as engineering officer aboard the Cutter SARANAC at Galveston, Texas.

WORLD WAR II

In April 1941, he was assigned as instructor at the Coast Guard Training Station for Merchant Marine personnel at Fort Trumbull, New London, Conn. While there he also acted in an advisory capacity to the War Shipping Administration as it took over the functions of training Merchant Marine officers and men from the Coast Guard in July 1942, during the first year of World War II. By September that year, he was stationed as training officer at the war-time Coast Guard Training Station in St. Augustine, Fla. From October 1943 to August 1944, he commanded the Destroyer Escort USS SAVAGE (DE-386) on convoy escort duty in the Atlantic. He next served as Executive Officer of the troop transport USS GEN. ROBERT L. HOWZE (AP-134) in the Philippine Campaign.

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POST WAR:

Returning to the United States from the Pacific in July 1945, he was placed in charge of a Radar Study Group attached to the Communications Division at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D. C. The work of this Group was to evaluate Radar and Racon, aids to navigation inventions born out of the war emergency, as to their practical useage to commercial shipping in peace time. He traveled extensively to lecture and give demonstrations before interested maritime groups and to Coast Guard groups throughout the various districts. In June 1946, he was released from the Radar Study program and assigned as Chief, Shore Units Division of the Office of Operations at Coast Guard Headquarters.

Returning to sea duty in September 1946, he commanded first the Cutter TAMPA out of Miami, next the Cutter CAMPBELL from January to December 1947, then the Cutter SEBAGO until June 1948. Both of these vessels were based in New York City. His next tour of duty was as Chief, Aids to Navigation Division at the Third Coast Guard District office in New York City until August 1950. At that time he was assigned as a student at the Naval War College in Newport, R. I., and after completing the course he commanded the Cutter IROQUOIS out of Honolulu from August 1951 to October 1952. He then became Chief, Aids to Navigation at the Fourteenth Coast Guard District office in Honolulu.

During the summers of 1954 and 1955, he commanded the Coast Guard heavy duty icebreaker EASTWIND (WAGB-279) on the annual resupply missions to Arctic weather stations and bases, and on DEW LINE (Distant Early Warning Radar Stations) operations in cooperation with a Navy Task Force Group.

On November 10, 1955, the EASTWIND under RADM Rohnke's (a Captain then) command departed her homeport at Boston, Mass., to join Task Force 43, U. S. Naval Support Force, in conducting the first of a series of annual expeditions tagged "Operation Deep Freeze", supporting United States' scientific projects in Antarctica. This historic expedition, headed by Admiral Richard Byrd, was organized to launch the United States' participation in the International Geophysical Year Scientific Programs. The icebreaker's work consisted of breaking paths through ice barriers for cargo ships, delivering man power, supplies, food, fuel, and equipment vital to the establishment and existence of the scientific stations and bases. He returned with the EASTWIND to Boston from her long sojourn in May 1956.

After three months of study at the Coast Guard Merchant Marine Inspection School, located then at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, in October 1956, he was assigned to the Office of Merchant Marine Safety at Coast Guard Headquarters. This was his home base for duty as travelling marine inspector. While thus assigned he also helped establish the AMVER (Atlantic Merchant Vessel Report) system which utilizes IBM 305 AMRAC brain computers to keep track of merchant ships and their positions, enabling the Coast Guard to radio the ships nearest to emergencies at sea to render assistance.

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In May 1958, he became officer-in-charge of the Coast Guard Marine Inspection Office in Long Beach, Calif., with collateral duties of Chief, Merchant Marine Safety Division, Eleventh Coast Guard District, Long Beach. In April 1961, he was designated Chief of Staff of the Eleventh District.

By nomination of the President on July 18, 1961, and following confirmation of the Senate, Captain Rohnke was appointed Rear Admiral to rank from July 1, 1961. Subsequently he was designated Commander, Second Coast Guard District, with office in St. Louis, Mo., on August 25, 1961.

On May 1, 1962, RADM Rohnke became Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety at Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D. C. In this post he also assumed the role of chairman of the Coast Guard Merchant Marine Council.

In June 1964, he assumed the duties of Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District, Portsmouth, Virginia (succeeding retired RADM Henry J. Wuensch, USCG). Retired from this post July 1, 1967.

RADM Rohnke's World War II campaign service medals and ribbons include the American Area; European-African-Middle Eastern Area; Asiatic-Pacific Area; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with combat star.

RADM Rohnke is married to the former Gladys May Kutcher of Eastontown, N. J. They have one son, Karl Edward, a graduate of Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va. The Rohnke's currently reside at 2606 N. Pollard St., Arlington, Va.