

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

Biographical Sketch

REAR ADMIRAL CHESTER I. STEELE  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Chester I. Steele was born December 12, 1913, in Rehoboth, Delaware. He completed his primary schooling in Lewes, Del., and in June of 1932, was graduated from Neptune High School in Ashbury Park, N. J. He attended the Peddie School in Hightstown, N. J., for one year before being appointed a cadet at the Coast Guard Academy on August 4, 1933.

During his four years of cadetship, he served as a company commander, and manager of the Academy's boxing team in his First Class year, as editor of "Running Light", the cadet handbook, in his Second Class year, and as a cheer leader in his Third and Fourth Class years. He was graduated and commissioned an Ensign from the Academy on September 20, 1937.

His first assignment as a Coast Guard officer was as a watch officer aboard the Coast Guard Cutter CAMPBELL, operating out of Staten Island, N. Y. In September of 1938, he ended his duty aboard the CAMPBELL, and was transferred to the Cutter PONTCHARTRAIN, then operating out of Staten Island, where he was assigned as the ship's navigator. In November of 1939, Ensign Steele won a letter of appreciation from the Commandant of the Coast Guard citing his effective rescue by surfboat of three survivors of a sunken barge at sea. A short time later, he left the PONTCHARTRAIN for duty as Commissary Officer at the Maritime Service Training Station at Hoffman Island, N. Y.

A little over a year later, the now Lieutenant Steele was assigned as a Commanding Officer of the three-masted schooner VEMA, a training vessel employed by the Maritime Service Training Station. After nearly 10 months in command of the VEMA, he was reassigned to the Coast Guard Academy as an instructor in seamanship.

From September 1, 1943 to September 1, 1944, Lieutenant Commander Steele performed duties at various stations along the Atlantic coast in connection with the outfitting and commissioning of patrol frigate class cutters. In June of 1944, he assumed command of the frigate ABILENE, engaged in duty in the North Atlantic.

In October of 1945, he was transferred to the staff of the District Coast Guard Officer under the Commander, 4th Naval District in Philadelphia, Pa., where he served for two years as the Personnel Officer. In October of 1947, he began a one-year tour of duty as Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard Cutter JONQUIL, operating out of Portsmouth, Va.

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He received transfer orders in September of 1948 for duty on the staff of the Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District, with offices then located in Norfolk, Va. He was first assigned as the Assistant Chief, Aids to Navigation Section there, then on October of 1949, he became Chief of the Section.

In March of 1951, and now promoted to the rank of Commander, he returned to the Coast Guard Academy for duty as a seamanship instructor. During the summers, Commander Steele served as the Executive Officer aboard the Coast Guard Cutter EAGLE, the Academy's training Bark.

His next assignment took him back to New York, and a tour of duty as Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard Cutter ROCKAWAY, a 311-foot ocean station vessel.

On July 1, 1955, he was assigned as a student to the U. S. Naval War College, located at the Navy Base in Newport, R. I. One year later, and after completing his course of studies, Commander Steele was placed on the Staff of the War College, where he served for two years.

On July 1, 1958, he became the Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard Cutter MENDOTA, a 255-foot ocean station vessel operating out of Wilmington, N. C. Now promoted to the rank of Captain, he received another letter of appreciation, this one for the efficient and coordinated rescue of two downed Air Force pilots in the Atlantic Ocean. The citation specifically pointed out the fact that the MENDOTA recovered the pilots within three hours after receiving the initial distress call, and the distance between the cutter and the pilots were considerable.

In June of 1960, he returned once more to New London and the Coast Guard Academy, where he was assigned as Head, Seamanship Section. In this assignment, he also served as Commanding Officer of the Cutter EAGLE during her summer cadet cruises. In July of 1961, He was assigned as Head, Professional Studies Department and less than a year later, was reassigned at the Academy to the post of Commandant of Cadets.

In June 1964, Captain Steele was ordered to London, England, where he assumed duty as Commander, Coast Guard Activities Europe. This command was established to exercise operational, technical and administrative control over Coast Guard Merchant Marine Details in Europe and three Loran-C chains covering the Mediterranean Sea, the Norwegian Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. These chains are composed of Loran-C stations located in Newfoundland, Greenland, Iceland, Jan Mayen Island, Norway, Faeroes, Germany, Spain, Italy, Libya, Greece and Turkey.

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In June 1966, he assumed duty as Commander, Second Coast Guard District, with headquarters in St. Louis, Mo., a post which carries with it the rank of flag officer. He was appointed Rear Admiral to rank from July 1, 1966.

He is entitled to wear the following medals and decoration: American Defense Service Medal (with star); American Theatre; European Theatre; World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Service Medal; and the Expert Rifleman and Expert Pistol Shot Medals.

He has been promoted in rank as follows: Ensign on September 20, 1937; Lieutenant (junior grade) September 20, 1940; Lieutenant on May 20, 1941; Lieutenant Commander on May 15, 1943; Commander on February 10, 1950; and Captain on July 1, 1959. Nominated to the rank of Rear Admiral on May 2, 1966, Rear Admiral, July 1, 1966.

He was married to the former Miss Olive V. Perry of Hightstown, N. J., on September 20, 1937, and has two daughters; Mrs. Charles F. Reid, now living in Hayward, California, and Rosemary, born March 8, 1946, at home.