



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

SUBJ: IN MEMORIAM FOR RADM BENNETT S. "BUD" SPARKS

A. ALCOAST 316/09

1. IN REF (A), THE COMMANDANT ANNOUNCED THE PASSING OF REAR ADMIRAL BENNETT S. "BUD" SPARKS ON MAY 22, 2009 IN WINDSOR, CALIFORNIA, AT 83 YEARS OF AGE. RADM SPARKS HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS ONE OF A KIND, A TRUE PATRIOT, A REAL LEGEND, AS WELL AS A LOVING FAMILY MAN. IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN THE MARCH/APRIL 2001 RESERVIST MAGAZINE, RADM SPARKS WROTE THAT IF HE HAD ONE WORD TO DESCRIBE HIS MORE THAN FIVE-DECADE COAST GUARD CAREER, (1942-89), IT WOULD HAVE TO BE "OPPORTUNITY." THROUGHOUT HIS COAST GUARD CAREER, HE HAD MANY OPPORTUNITIES AND ALWAYS MADE THE MOST OF THEM. HE WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED FONDLY BY THOSE WHO KNEW AND WORKED WITH HIM THROUGHOUT THE YEARS.

2. BORN OCTOBER 10, 1925, IN PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA, RADM SPARKS JOINED THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD RESERVE IN DECEMBER 1942, TAKING A TRAIN FROM ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA TO BOOT CAMP AT MANHATTAN BEACH, NEW YORK. AFTER BOOT CAMP, HE SERVED IN ENLISTED RANKS FROM SEAMAN RECRUIT/E-1 TO CHIEF PETTY OFFICER/E-7.

3. DURING WORLD WAR II, HE SERVED AS A COMBAT AIR CREWMAN ABOARD A VARIETY OF COAST GUARD AIRCRAFT IN THE PACIFIC, ATLANTIC AND EUROPEAN THEATERS, FLYING BOTH ANTI-SUBMARINE AND AIR-SEA RESCUE MISSIONS. IN 1946, HE TRANSFERRED TO THE REGULAR COAST GUARD, AND IN 1957, RECEIVED A FIELD PROMOTION TO ENSIGN. AS A PILOT, HE FLEW AS BOTH A COAST GUARD AND CIVILIAN AVIATOR IN ALASKA FROM 1946 TO 1957 ON MAPPING MISSIONS FOR THE U.S. COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY (WHICH BECAME PART OF THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION IN 1970).

4. FROM 1966 TO 1989, RADM SPARKS HELD NINE CONSECUTIVE COMMANDS: FOUR COAST GUARD UNITS, THREE COAST GUARD GROUPS, AND TWO U.S. NAVY MARITIME DEFENSE ZONE SECTORS. HE ALSO SERVED AS DISTRICT INSPECTOR FOR THE ELEVENTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT AND AS SENIOR COAST GUARD RESERVE OFFICER FOR THE PACIFIC AREA IN SAN FRANCISCO AND THE ATLANTIC AREA IN NEW YORK. HE COMMANDED THE UNITED STATES NAVY NORTHERN CALIFORNIA MARITIME DEFENSE ZONE HEADQUARTERED IN SAN FRANCISCO AND LATER THE MARITIME DEFENSE ZONE SECTOR SIX AT THE U.S. NAVY BASE IN CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA.

5. RADM SPARKS TRAINING INCLUDED THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE, NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE, NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY, INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES, AND THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE. NOMINATED BY PRESIDENT REAGAN FOR FLAG RANK IN THE USCGR IN FEBRUARY 1985, HE WAS PROMOTED TO REAR ADMIRAL (UPPER HALF) IN 1987.

6. IN 1989, HE SERVED AS CHAIRMAN OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESERVE CAPABILITY STUDY (SPARCS-89). THIS STUDY POSED A BROADER DEFINITION OF THE RESERVE COMPONENTS NATIONAL SECURITY MISSION, SERVING AS A LONG-RANGE BLUE PRINT FOR THE COAST GUARD RESERVE AND PROVIDING THE THEORETICAL BASIS FOR COAST GUARD-WIDE INTEGRATION OF

ACTIVE AND RESERVE FORCES. IN JULY 1989, HE RETIRED FROM THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD RESERVE AFTER 47 YEARS OF SERVICE.

7. MAINTAINING HIS INVOLVEMENT, RADM SPARKS BECAME THE FIRST COAST GUARDSMAN TO SERVE AS PRESIDENT FOR THE RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES. HE ALSO SERVED AS THE NATIONAL DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES IN WASHINGTON, DC FROM 1988-91, WITH ADDITIONAL DUTIES AS DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION AND DIRECTOR OF FINANCE. IN ADDITION, HE SERVED AS CHIEF OF THE UNITED STATES DELEGATION TO THE INTER-ALLIED CONFEDERATION OF RESERVE OFFICERS (CIOR) AT NATO HEADQUARTERS IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM. IN 1992, HE WAS APPOINTED TO A TWO-YEAR TERM AS INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY GENERAL OF CIOR, A POSITION OPEN TO THE UNITED STATES ONLY EVERY 24 YEARS. HE WAS THE FIRST COAST GUARD OFFICER TO EVER HOLD AN INTERNATIONAL POSITION IN THE CIOR.

8. IN 1993, THE TOTAL FORCE AWARD WAS RENAMED THE RADM BENNETT S. "BUD" SPARKS TOTAL FORCE AWARD IN HIS HONOR. THE AWARD IS PRESENTED ANNUALLY BY THE RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES TO THE COAST GUARD UNIT JUDGED TO BE THE MOST SUPPORTIVE OF A TOTALLY INTEGRATED COAST GUARD FORCE DEMONSTRATED BY ITS EFFECTIVE USE OF COAST GUARD RESERVISTS.

9. RADM SPARKS IS SURVIVED BY FOUR CHILDREN, BENNETT JR., JAMES, JOHN AND JULIEANN, A SISTER, DORIS LEDERMAN, 11 GRANDCHILDREN, 22 GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN, AND ONE GREAT-GREAT-GRANDCHILD. HIS WIFE OF 60-PLUS YEARS, ELIZABETH "BETTY" SPARKS, PREDECEASED HIM OCTOBER 28, 2005, AS DID TWO OTHER CHILDREN, RICHARD AND DONNA.

10. A FUNERAL SERVICE WILL BE HELD AT WELLS FARGO CENTER, SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA AT NOON ON SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 2009. INTERMENT WILL FOLLOW AT SHILOH CEMETERY, WINDSOR, CALIFORNIA.

11. IN LIEU OF FLOWERS, THE FAMILY SUGGESTS MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN HIS NAME TO COAST GUARD MUTUAL ASSISTANCE, 4200 WILSON BOULEVARD, SUITE 60, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22203-1804, THE VETERANS HOME OF CALIFORNIA YOUNTVILLE, P.O. BOX 1200, YOUNTVILLE, CALIFORNIA 94599, OR THE ALZHEIMERS ASSOCIATION NORTH BAY CHAPTER, 4340 REDWOOD HIGHWAY, SUITE D314, SAN RAFAEL, CALIFORNIA 94903.

12. RDML D. R. MAY, DIRECTOR OF RESERVE AND TRAINING, SENDS.

13. INTERNET RELEASE AUTHORIZED.

