

REAR ADMIRAL G. H. PATRICK BURSLEY, USCG (Retired)

George Herbert Patrick Bursley was born on April 5, 1925, in Istanbul, Turkey, the son of the late Herbert S. Bursley, a career Foreign Service Officer and former Ambassador to Honduras, and Mrs. Robertina H. Bursley.

A graduate of the United States Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut, he was commissioned as Ensign, U. S. Coast Guard, on June 5, 1946. He then served at sea as a line officer and executive officer in Coast Guard cutters engaged in ocean station patrol, logistics support in the Western Pacific Ocean, and in-shore search and rescue operations.

Following post-graduate training at George Washington University Law School in Washington, D.C., he was awarded the Degree of Juris Doctor upon graduation in 1953. He was admitted to the District of Columbia Bar in 1954. He was subsequently admitted to the California State Bar (1964), and the Bars of the U. S. District Court of Hawaii (1964), the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces (1967), and the Supreme Court of the United States (1968). He served as Trial and Defense Counsel of Courts Martial and as a Military Judge for General Courts Martial pursuant to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. As a senior officer he served collaterally as a Judge on the Coast Guard Court of Military Review.

From 1954 to 1958 he was District Legal Officer in the 13<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District in Seattle. From August 1958 to July 1960 he was Commanding Officer of the Cutter MAGNOLIA based in San Francisco and engaged in maintaining ocean aids to navigation. He then served as District Legal Officer of the 12<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District in San Francisco until July 1961 when he was assigned as District Legal Officer of the 14<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District in Honolulu. As a district legal officer he advised the District Commanders regarding the impact of federal, international, and state law on Coast Guard operations, and assisted U. S. Attorneys in litigation involving the Coast Guard.

On July 15, 1964, RADM Bursley was detailed to the Department of the Treasury as Coast Guard Liaison Officer and Aide to the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Coast Guard Affairs. In January 1966 RADM Bursley was assigned additional duties as the Department of the Treasury and Coast Guard member of the interagency task force that drafted the legislation to establish a Department of Transportation--to include the Coast Guard--and that subsequently coordinated the activities of the executive agencies in support of its enactment by the Congress in late 1966. For exceptionally meritorious performance in that assignment he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the Coast Guard's highest award for non-combatant service.

Early in 1967, RADM Bursley designed the Executive Secretariat of the Department of Transportation and placed it into operation. Upon activation of the Department on April 1, 1967, RADM Bursley, as Assistant to the Deputy Undersecretary of Transportation, and later as a member of the Department's Office of Policy Review, was engaged in the development of program concepts and policy proposals, particularly those directed at the revitalization of the merchant marine and the organization of the Office of the Secretary of Transportation. In March 1969 he was given additional duties as the Transportation Department's representative

on the White House Interdepartmental Working Group on Maritime Policy. His service in these two capacities led to the award of the Coast Guard Commendation Medal.

In July 1969 RADM Bursley returned to duty within the Coast Guard as Chief of the Maritime and International Law Division in the newly established Office of the Chief Counsel of the Coast Guard. He concurrently served as the alternate to the Chief Counsel of the Department of Transportation on the Interagency Law of the Sea Task Force. During this period he was deeply engaged in interagency coordination of the implementation of Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 and other environmental statutes and in the national and international response to a proliferation of major oil pollution incidents at sea.

On July 7, 1972, RADM Bursley was assigned as Captain of the Port of Baltimore. Concurrently he served as Commanding Officer, Port Safety Station, Baltimore, and Coast Guard Group, Baltimore, with responsibility for marine safety and environmental protection in the Maryland waters of Chesapeake Bay.

In January 1974, the then Captain Bursley was nominated by the President and with the advice and consent of the Senate was promoted to Rear Admiral to rank from July 1, 1974. He was assigned as Commander, Second Coast Guard District, with offices in St. Louis, Missouri. His area of responsibility for marine safety and environmental protection encompassed the entire Mississippi River system and its tributaries above Vicksburg, Mississippi, including the Missouri and Ohio Rivers. He was awarded the Coast Guard Meritorious Service Medal for introducing numerous innovations in Coast Guard operations on the inland waterway of the United States.

In July 1976, RADM Bursley returned to Coast Guard Headquarters as Chief Counsel of the U. S. Coast Guard to direct the full range of legal services provided by over one hundred military and civilian attorneys in Headquarters and in the field in support of Coast Guard operations and regulatory activity. His role in litigation that defined the preemption of federal over state authority in regulating maritime commerce led to the award of the Legion of Merit. He concurrently served as Chairman of the Marine Safety Council exercising policy direction in the promulgation of marine safety and environmental protection regulations affecting the public. In 1978 he was Chairman of the U. S. Delegation to the International Conference on Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims.

RADM Bursley retired from active duty in the Coast Guard on September 30, 1978.

In 1979 President Jimmy Carter, with the advice and consent of the Senate, appointed RADM Bursley as one of the five Members of the National Transportation Safety Board. Over the next six years he provided policy direction to the independent agency's 350 member investigative staff. He directed the on-scene investigation of numerous accidents in all modes of transportation and presided at public hearings at which additional evidence was gathered. Prominently, he chaired the public hearing of the Pan American 737 crash in 1982 in Kenner, Louisiana, that led to heightened understanding of the effects of wind shear on low flying aircraft operating at reduced speeds.

He was awarded the Atilio Cappa Prize (Gold Medal) for his presentation to the XVIth Pan American Railway Congress in 1984 regarding transportation safety as a quality of life issue.

In 1989 RADM Bursley chaired a National Research Council Committee on Alternatives for Inspection of Outer Continental Shelf Operations leading to comprehensive revisions of existing procedures.

Since retirement RADM Bursley has been active in community affairs and as a long-time volunteer reader for The Metropolitan Washington Ear in providing radio and telephone reading services for the blind and those who cannot physically manage reading materials, and in the AARP Tax Counseling for the Elderly program in providing tax preparation assistance to senior citizens.

RADM Bursley's wife, Claire Mulvany Bursley, and his daughter, Kathleen Anne Bursley, are deceased. His son, Kevin Herbert Bursley, PhD., is in practice as a psychologist in Pittsburgh.