

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

Biographical Sketch

REAR ADMIRAL GEORGE DENVER SYNON  
U. S. COAST GUARD

George Denver Synon was born on May 14, 1908, at Norfolk, Virginia, where he was graduated from Maury High School in 1925. After attending William and Mary College for two years, he entered the U. S. Coast Guard Academy at New London, Conn., with an appointment as cadet in July 1929. He was graduated and commissioned an Ensign on May 16, 1932.

Since then he was promoted in rank as follows: Lieutenant (jg), May 16, 1935; Lieutenant, June 15, 1938; Lieut. Commander, June 26, 1942; Commander, December 21, 1943; Captain, August 26, 1952; Rear Admiral, August 1, 1963.

Between 1932 and 1941 prior to World War II, he served in the Coast Guard Cutters MODOC and ICARUS in the Atlantic, the HERMES in the Pacific, and the DUANE in the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic waters. From 1938 to 1941, he commanded the 125-ft. Cutters ALERT and NEMAHA, based at Ketchikan, Alaska. During that period the ALERT was ordered on an emergency mission through the Bering Straits to Point Hope, on the Arctic Ocean, the smallest Coast Guard vessel ever to venture so far north.

Subsequently, he served for one year at Coast Guard Headquarters, where he was a member of the General Board. Shortly after the outbreak of World War II, he was transferred to sea where, except for brief temporary shore assignments, he remained until the end of the war.

In 1942 and 1943, while in command of the Coast Guard Cutters NIKE and TRITON, on anti-submarine and escort of convoy duties, he engaged in several actions against enemy submarines. He was awarded the LEGION OF MERIT, with Combat "V", for sinking a German submarine in the Straits of Florida during May 1942. In the same year his vessel rescued 34 survivors from the burning tanker, S.S. PORTRERO DEL LLANO, the first Mexican vessel torpedoed during the War.

In late 1943, he took command of the Gulf Sea Frontier Anti-Submarine Flotilla, consisting of Coast Guard 83 foot patrol boats and small Navy aircraft, then being organized to combat the submarine menace in Gulf and Caribbean waters. Following that tour of duty, he was transferred to command of the USS MUSKEGON, and in January 1945, to command of the Coast Guard Cutter TANEY, then being converted for service as an amphibious command ship. The TANEY was the Flagship of Commander, Naval Forces, Ryukyus throughout the Okinawa Campaign and later participated in the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay. At Okinawa, the TANEY came under air attack on 242

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separate occasions by more than 1,500 enemy planes. She was credited with shooting down three Kamikaze aircraft and assisted in the destruction of many more. RADM Synon was awarded the Bronze Star, with Combat "V", for his services in that campaign.

Following the War, he was transferred to duty on the Staff of Commander, Second Coast Guard District, at St. Louis, Missouri, where he served successively as Planning and Control Officer, Chief of the Intelligence and Law Enforcement Section, and Chief of the Legal Section.

In 1948, he was ordered to the Naval War College, at Newport, R. I., as a student in the Senior Course in Strategy and Tactics. He was recommended for retention as a member of the War College Staff and remained at Newport in this capacity for an additional two years, the first Coast Guard officer to be so assigned.

Upon completion of this tour of duty, he was again ordered to sea as Commanding Officer of the TANEY, the same ship he had commanded during the closing year of the War. In addition to serving as a Pacific Ocean Station Vessel, the TANEY, while under RADM Synon's command, engaged in the Korean conflict furnishing plane guard and weather services to Allied aircraft.

In 1953, he was transferred to duty on the Staff of Commander, Fourteenth Coast Guard District, at Honolulu, T.H., where he served as Chief of the Readiness and Search and Rescue Sections, Operations Division. Following this assignment, he was recalled to Coast Guard Headquarters in April 1955, to serve as Chief of the Program Analysis Division.

He served his next tour of duty as Chief of Operations, Ninth Coast Guard District, Cleveland, from June 1959 to May 1961. At that time he became Chief of Staff of the Fourteenth Coast Guard District, Honolulu. By nomination of President John F. Kennedy and the approval of the Senate, Captain Synon was appointed to the permanent grade of Rear Admiral to rank from August 1, 1963. The following month he assumed the post of Commander, 17th Coast Guard District, Alaska, with offices in Juneau. In June 1966 he became Commander, 14th Coast Guard District, Honolulu. He retired from that post on April 1, 1967, with 35 years of service.

In addition to the LEGION OF MERIT and BRONZE STAR, both with Combat "V", RADM Synon has the following campaign and service medals from World War II: the American Defense Service Medal (Star), American Campaign Medal (Star), Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal (Star), Victory Medal World War II. He also has the more recent National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal, and the United Nations Service Medal.

RADM Synon married the former Eleanor Rallis Burruss, of Norfolk, Va. They have one daughter, Mrs. Donald L. Felt.

RADM Synon is a member of the Sigma Phi Epsilon and Phi Delta Gamma Fraternities.