



**United States Coast Guard**  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

## *U.S. Coast Guard History Program*

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

Biographical Sketch

VICE ADMIRAL WILLIAM D. SHIELDS,  
ASSISTANT COMMANDANT  
of the  
U. S. COAST GUARD

William Davis Shields was born on August 19, 1907, son of the late Dr. and Mrs. Edgar T. Shields, at Philadelphia, Pa. He attended elementary schools in Lewisburg, Pa., and in Hollywood, Calif., and graduated from Keystone Academy, Factoryville, Pa., in 1925.

Receiving an appointment as cadet in August 1928, he was graduated from the U. S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Conn., with a B.S. Degree and a commission as Ensign on May 15, 1931. During his four years at the Academy, he served as a Cadet Battalion Commander, and as President of the Athletic Association. He was also a basketball letterman.

He served his first assignment on board the Coast Guard Destroyer HUNT on anti-smuggling patrol out of New York City from June 1931 to May 1933. Following a few weeks of temporary duty with the Coast Guard Rifle Team Detachment at Wakefield, Mass., he served in the Coast Guard Cutter GALATEA in the North Atlantic until March 1934.

After a year of flight training, he was graduated from the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Fla., as a Coast Guard Aviator on May 20, 1935. He performed his first flight assignments from the Coast Guard Air Station at St. Petersburg, Fla.

From May 1938 to October 1939, he was stationed as aviator on board the 327-ft. Cutter BIBB which at that time operated out of Norfolk, Va. The following eighteen months saw him performing flights out of the former Coast Guard Air Station at Charleston, S. C., in addition to acting as Operations Officer for a time and then as Executive Officer of that station.

In May 1941, he began performing aerial reconnaissance missions from the Cutter NORTH STAR which was one of the Coast Guard vessel forces assigned to the Greenland Patrol to foil the Nazis from invading the Western Hemisphere. The NORTH STAR, with the then Lieut. Commander Shields on board, assisted the Coast Guard Cutter NORTHLAND in the capture of the German-controlled Norwegian trawler BUSKOE on the east coast of Greenland, September 12, 1941. The Coast Guard seizure of that trawler, which was used to service hidden German radio stations in Greenland, was the first naval capture of World War II.

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Between January 1942 and January 1944, during the war, he was Executive Officer of the Coast Guard Air Station, Miami, Fla., following which he commanded the Air Station at Biloxi, Miss., for nine months. He became Search and Rescue Officer at the 8th Coast Guard District office in New Orleans in October 1944.

From May 1945 to August 1948, he was Assistant Chief, Aviation Division at Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D. C. After commanding the Coast Guard Air Station, San Francisco, for the next three years, he returned to Coast Guard Headquarters to again serve as Assistant Chief, Aviation Division from August 1951 to August 1955. At that time he was transferred to the 7th District Office in Miami where he served first as Chief, Search and Rescue Section for a year, then as Chief of Operations.

In June 1959, he reported for duty as Chief of Operations of the First Coast Guard District, Boston, Mass., and a year later became the Chief of Staff of that District (April 1960 to March 1961).

While serving next as Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard Receiving Center, Cape May, N. J., in the rank of Captain, he was appointed Rear Admiral on February 1, 1962. Subsequently, he assumed the post of Commander, 17th Coast Guard District, Juneau, Alaska, the following June 1st.

In November 1963, he was called to Coast Guard Headquarters to assume the post of Chief, Office of Operations. With the nomination of the President shortly thereafter and the confirmation of the Senate, he was appointed Assistant Commandant of the U. S. Coast Guard with the accompanying grade of Vice Admiral to rank as such from July 8, 1964. He succeeded retired Vice Admiral Donald McG. Morrison, USCG.

Vice Admiral Shields' World War II campaign service medals and ribbons include the following: American Defense with "A"; American Area; European-African-Middle Eastern Area with star; World War II victory. He also has the Expert Rifleman's Medal, the Expert Pistol Shot Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal.

Following is a resume of VADM Shields' appointments in rank: Ensign, May 15, 1931; Lieutenant (jg), May 15, 1934; Lieutenant, May 15, 1936; Lieut. Commander, June 15, 1942; Commander, November 1, 1942; Captain, August 6, 1951; Rear Admiral, February 1, 1962; Vice Admiral July 8, 1964.

Vice Admiral Shields is married to the former Sally Noyes of St. Petersburg, Fla. They are living at 633 Woodland Circle, Falls Church, Va. They have two daughters, Mrs. (Elizabeth) E. C. Summers of Corona, Calif., and Mrs. (Barbara) J. D. Dempsey of Virginia Beach, Va. VADM Shields has a sister, Mrs. (Ruth) O. D. Falck, living at 7320 Summit Place, Alexandria, Va., and a brother, Charles R. Shields, at 2869 Eaton Rd., Shaker Heights, Ohio.

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