

CAPTAIN WILLIAM R. CARUTHERS
UNITED STATES NAVY

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

William Rowell Caruthers was born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, on July 20, 1906, son of C. K. and Lena Rowell Caruthers. He was graduated from Pine Bluff High School and entered the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from his native state in 1923. He was graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 2, 1927, and through subsequent promotions attained the rank of Captain, to date from March 20, 1945.

After graduation from the Naval Academy in June 1927, he had sea duty until 1934, serving for two years in the USS MARYLAND, a unit of Battleship Division 5, of the Battle Fleet; later in destroyers of the Asiatic Fleet (USS PEARY and USS BARKER); and from 1931 in the USS NEVADA, of Battleship Division 3, Battle Force. He returned to Annapolis in July 1934 for instruction in Communications and Applied Communications at the Naval Postgraduate School and, completing the course in 1936, was ordered back to Asiatic Station, where he served for two years on the staff of Commander Submarine Squadron 5, on board the USS CANOPUS, flagship.

During a two year period in 1938-1940, he had shore duty assigned to the Naval Examining Board, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. In the fall of 1940 he was ordered to sea duty, serving throughout the period preceding the outbreak of World War II in the USS MONSSEN, a destroyer operating in the North Atlantic. On November 22, 1941 he assumed command of the USS MACLEISH (DD 220). Under his command at Reykjavik, Iceland, on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, that destroyer subsequently served as escort for the British line QUEEN MARY. He served as Convoy Escort Commander, his flagship the MACLEISH, during trans-Atlantic convoys, and later coastal convoys when the submarine menace in home waters became acute. The MACLEISH was credited with a probable kill when in May 1942 a submarine was discovered in shoal water off the Florida coast.

He received a Letter of Commendation with Ribbon and Combat "V," from the Chief of Naval Operations, which follows in part: "While serving as Convoy Escort Commander in Atlantic Ocean from May 1942 to February 1943, Captain (then Lieutenant Commander) Caruthers displayed the highest qualities of leadership, courage, professional skill and sound judgment...All convoys under his command successfully completed their voyages, thus making an outstanding contribution to the war effort during an extremely critical period...(while) involved in direct participation in combat operations..."

Ordered next to the staff of Amphibious Forces (Advanced Group) in North Africa, he participated in 1943-1944 as Communications Officer on the Amphibious Force Staff, in the landings at Gela, Sicily and Salerno, Italy. He received commendatory letters from the Chief of the Bureau of Naval Personnel and Commander Naval Forces, Northwest African Waters, for outstanding service in that assignment.

He was transferred in 1944 to the staff of the Allied Naval Commander in Chief, and took part in operations in Normandy, France. He was awarded the Legion of Merit "For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services...as Communication Officer, attached to the staff of the Allied Naval Commander in Chief, Expeditionary Force, prior to and during the invasion of Normandy, France, June 1944..." The citation continues: "Exercising sound judgment in the performance of his complex and vital assignment, (he) rendered inestimable service throughout this crucial period and, through his thorough knowledge of communications and United States Naval operating procedure in general and his keen discrimination regarding matters contributing to United States interests, assisted materially in the formulation of a joint communication plan in which the needs and interests of the United States were admirably met...(and) was largely responsible for the successful consummation of the highly effective Communication Plan for the operation..."

In July 1945 he was ordered to duty on the staff of Commander Western Sea Frontier. After more than a year in that assignment, he served until June 1947 as Assistant Director, Armed Forces Staff College, Norfolk, Virginia. For a year in 1947-1948 he commanded the USS OKALOOSA (APA 219), and for three years thereafter was Commanding Officer of the Fleet Sonar School, Key West, Florida. In June 1951 he was ordered to duty as Force Communication Officer on the staff of Commander Naval Forces, Far East. He was awarded a Letter of Commendation from Commander Naval Forces Far East, for meritorious service in that capacity from September 1, 1951 to August 4, 1952.

He then took command of Destroyer Squadron NINE, operating as a fast Carrier Task Force Screen Commander in the Western Pacific until December 1953, when he assumed his present assignment of duties as Commanding Officer, U. S. Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In addition to the Legion of Merit and the Commendation Ribbon with star and Combat "V," Captain Caruthers has the Yangtze Service Medal; American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal; American Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Korean Service Medal; and the United Nations Service Medal. He also has been awarded the Croix de Guerre with star by the Government of France, and the Order of the British Empire (Commander Military Division) by the Government of Great Britain.