

REAR ADMIRAL WILLIAM M. BENKERT

U.S. COAST GUARD

Retired Rear Admiral William M. Benkert of the U.S. Coast Guard and a Mclean, Virginia resident died of cancer on December 14th, 1989. Admiral Benkert who was born in Chicago, Illinois on April 24th, 1923 graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in 1943 and was a veteran of World War II.

During World War II and immediately on graduation from the Academy, the Admiral served in the Pacific and later participated in the Aleutian Island Campaign.

His career including the Academy years spanned 38 years and incorporated many accomplishments. Admiral Benkert was entrusted with numerous commands both at sea and within the Coast Guard's maritime safety units. He commanded the Coast Guard cutters Aurora, Ewing, Coos Bay, Minnetonka, and the Polar Ice Breaker Eastwind, as well as serving in or commanding marine safety units at San Francisco, New York, and San Diego.

His career brought him to Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C. on several occasions. His Headquarters tours included assignments as Assistant Chief for Merchant Vessel Inspection and Deputy Chief for the Office of Merchant Marine Safety.

During a 1971 Headquarters tour, he was appointed permanent Rear Admiral by Executive Order and approval of the U.S. Senate. After his appointment he was selected as Chief for the Office of Marine Environment and Systems and later served until his retirement as Chief for the Office of Merchant Marine Safety.

Admiral Benkert contributed to many Coast Guard operations. His accomplishments and contributions during polar ice patrols in the Antarctic resulted in a polar mountain being named after him: Mt. Benkert. In addition, he received the Legion of Merit in 1973 from then Commandant of the Coast Guard Chester R. Bender for the contributions he made to the Coast Guard's environmental protection program.

He retired in 1978 and entered private life where his accomplishments paralleled his Coast Guard career. On retiring Admiral Benkert accepted the position of president with the American Institute of Merchant Shipping. He held this position until 1984 when he became president of Petroferm Marine Incorporated.

In addition to serving as president for two commercial organizations, he was Vice-chairman of the International Chamber of Shipping, headed numerous the U.S. Delegation to the International Maritime Organization, served on the Board of Directors for the American Heavy Lift Shipping Company, provided consultations to the American Bureau of Shipping and was effectively involved with the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences.

During Admiral Benkert's military service he received numerous medals, commendations, and awards. His decorations include the National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Star, the Distinguish Service Medal, the Secretary of Treasury's Commendation for Achievement, and ribbons representing World War II Victory, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign, American Campaign, American Defense, and Antarctica Service.

Admiral Benkert is survived by his Wife, the former Dorothy Greig of Groton, Conn., two children Eileen Benekert of Alexandria, Va and Alan G. Benkert of Salem, Conn. The family has indicated that a memorial service will be held later in the year.