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RADM W. J. KEESTER, RETIRED COAST GUARD VETERAN OF TWO WORLD WARS, DIES

Rear Admiral William J. Keester, 78, retired U. S. Coast Guard of veteran/two World Wars, died last Thursday (September 14, 1967) at Salisbury, Md., where he lived at 1113 Fast Church St. since his retirement in 1949 as Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard Yard, Curtis Bay, Md.

Born on June 6, 1889, RADM Keester was a native of Chicago where he graduated from John Marshall High School in 1907. That same year he was appointed a Cadet in the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service, forerunner of the Coast Guard, and after receiving his commission as Ensign in January 1910, he served in the Cutters SEMINOLE and PAMLICO.

During 1912, while assigned to the Cutter MANNING on the Bering Sea Patrol, he with his shipmates took active part in rescuing Alaskan natives when Mount Katmai volcano erupted. Later the then Lieut. Keester was sent to Kodiak to distribute relief supplies. The crew of his cutter were commended for gallant work in a letter from President Taft.

In March 1913, he was ordered to the Cutter UNAIGA and two years later to the Cutter MACKINAC in the Great Lakes. After completing a brief stint on board the Cutter ONONDAGA in 1916, he served in the Cutter YAMACRAW first in the Atlantic and then overseas from 1917 to 1919, during World War I.

After returning to the States, he served as Supervisor of construction and upkeep of Coast Guard telephone lines and cables in the Great Lakes region. Following a tour of duty on board the Cutter KANKAKEE in 1920, he returned to Green Bay, Wis., as Division Supervisor of Communications in the Great Lakes region.

He returned to the Cutter KANKAKEE as Commanding Officer in October 1920. From July 1923 to May 1924, he was a student at the Naval War College, Newport, R. I., following which he served as Lieison Officer at the U. S. Naval Training Station at Newport until November of that year when he became Executive Officer of the Cutter TAMPA.

After commanding the destroyer JOURT on anti-smuggling operations from May to November of 1926, he was assigned at the Coast Guard Yard, Curtis Bay, Md., until December 1930. While next commanding the Cutter YAMACRAW in the Atlantic he received a Coast Guard commendation for assisting the steamers FRESLAND, WATERWITCH, and DORIS KELLOGG within a space of six weeks.

After commanding the Cutter MENDOTA from February 1933 to July 1934, he was stationed as Supplies and Accounts Officer at Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D. C. During that period he assisted the Naval Observatory in the design and development of the high grade endless tangent screw sextants. He also served as Chairman of the Board of Lifesaving Appliances.

In July 1940, he became Acting Commander and later Commander of the 5th Coast Guard District with offices in Norfolk, Va. Along with that post he had the added duties of Captain of the Port of Hampton Roads and the Harbors of Newport News and Norfolk. In August 1941, he became Captain of the Port of Baltimore and the Harbors of Newport News and Norfolk and all other ports in adjacent waters.

He again served at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington in the Office of Operations from November 1942 to June 1943, during World War II.

During the remainder of the war he commanded the Coast Guard Training

Stations at Talm Beach and St. Augustine in Florida, respectively.

His the tour of duty at Coast Guard Headquarters was as Inspector in Chief from January 1945 to January 1945. He then returned to the Coast Guard Yard at Chais Bay to serve his last tour of duty as Commanding Officer until he reason October 1, 1949, with more than 39 years of service.

After receiving homomission as Ensign on January 14, 1910, he was promoted as followed Lieutenant (jg), December 19, 1910; Lieutenant, November 14, 1921; Lieut. Commander, January 12, 1923; Commander, July 1, 1929; Captain, December 1, 1940; Commodore, October 1, 1944; retired as Rear Admiral on October 1, 1949.

RADM Keester was married to the former Verna A. Short of Sault Ste.

Marie, Mich., in June 1916. They had no children. After the Admiral's retirement, he and Mrs. Keester lived a few months in Florida, then moved to Ocean City, Md., and after a short period there, they made their permanent home in Salisbury. Mrs. Keester died at Salisbury on January 1, 1965, and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Graveside services with full military honors will be held for RADM Keester at Arlington National Cemetery at 2:00 P.M., Monday, September 18, 1967.

RADM Keester was a member of the Masonic Lodge.