

Remembering Richmond Navy League Council Member Rear Admiral Roy Francis Hoffman USN-Retired

Fellow Flag Officers,

It is with deep regret I inform you of the passing of Rear Admiral Roy Francis Hoffman, U.S. Navy (Retired) on 8 November 2022 at age 96 or 97. RADM Hoffman enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserve in April 1943, was commissioned in June 1946, and served as a Surface Warfare Officer until his retirement in September 1978 as Commander, Naval Base Charleston/Commandant SIXTH Naval District. His commands included destroyer escort USS CROMWELL (DE-1014,) guided missile destroyer USS CHARLES F. ADAMS (DDG-2,) Coastal Surveillance Force/Coastal Flotilla ONE (TF 115,) guided missile destroyer leader USS LEAHY (DLG-16,) Mine Warfare Force Atlantic Fleet and Mine Warfare Command. He survived the sinking of minesweeper USS PIRATE (AM-275,) which struck a mine while clearing the way for the landings at Wonsan in October 1950 during the Korean War. He commanded the Coastal Surveillance Force (including over 80 Swift Boats) during the Vietnam War in 1968-69. During his service he was awarded a Silver Star, three Bronze Stars with Combat "V," a Purple Heart and a Presidential Unit Citation.

Roy Hoffman enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserve on 28 April 1943 and reported for active duty on 21 November 1943 at Naval Air station St. Louis, Missouri. Under the V-12 officer accession program he then entered Missouri Valley College at Marshall, Missouri. In April 1945 he transferred to the University of Notre Dame as a member of the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps unit. He was honorably discharged on 29 June 1946. He was then commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve on 1 July 1946 and continued on active duty. Ensign Hoffman then reported to the destroyer-minesweeper USS QUICK (DMS-31) in Sasebo Japan, operating from there and the Marianas in clearing leftover mines from WWII. On 3 May 1947, he was honorably released from active duty. He attended the University of Nebraska and earned a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry in 1948 and was promoted to lieutenant (junior grade) in the Reserves in June 1949.

Within weeks of the outbreak of the Korean War, Lieutenant (junior grade) Hoffman was recalled to active duty, reporting on 24 August 1950. He was assigned as Gunnery Officer to the Admirable-class minesweeper USS PIRATE (AM-275) which had been in caretaker status in Japan until activated in July 1950, assigned to Mine Division THREE TWO (MINDIV 32.) On 12 October 1950, while clearing a channel through a minefield in preparation for a major Allied amphibious landing at the North Korean port of Wonsan, PIRATE struck a mine and went down in less than four minutes, along with minesweeper USS PLEDGE (AM-277) which also struck a mine moments later and then sank. PIRATE suffered one dead and 12 missing (later declared dead.) LTJG Hoffman was among the 170 survivors of PIRATE rescued from the cold water and was awarded a Purple Heart. PIRATE was awarded four battle stars for Korean War service and along with PLEDGE and the rest of MINDIV 32 was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for their actions in the heavily mined waters off North Korea. (Of note, PIRATE's battle flag went down with the ship, but was recovered by a diver and returned to the Commanding Officer many years later, and is now in the National Museum of the U.S. Navy. Also of note, then-ensign and future Rear Admiral John J. Ekelund also survived the sinking of PIRATE, who passed away on 28 July 2022 at age 93.)

After being rescued, LTJG Hoffman was reassigned to destroyer USS HARRY E. HUBBARD (DD-748) as Gunnery Officer, deploying back to the Korean combat zone in March 1951. In June 1951, HARRY HUBBARD rendered assistance to destroyer USS WALKE (DD-723) which suffered severe damage from an underwater explosion a good distance off Wonsan, killing 26 and wounding 35 (the deadliest combat loss for the U.S. Navy during the war.) Although there was speculation WALKE had been hit by a

torpedo (from a Soviet submarine) it was almost certainly a drifting mine. (WALKE was repaired and served until 1970.) HARRY E. HUBBARD returned for a second Korean War deployment in July-December 1952. LTJG Hoffman was promoted to lieutenant in June 1952.

In June 1953, Lieutenant Hoffman was assigned as an instructor in naval weapons at the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) Unit at the Illinois Institute of Technology. On 28 July 1955, his appointment in the U.S. Naval Reserve was terminated and the next day he augmented into the active duty U.S. Navy. In September 1955, LT Hoffman was assigned Aide and Flag Secretary to Commander Destroyer Flotilla TWO (COMDESFLOT 2.) In January 1958, he assumed duty as Executive Officer of Newport-based Gearing-class destroyer escort USS LLOYD THOMAS (DDE-764) for exercises in the Caribbean as part of annual Atlantic Fleet Exercise Springboard, hunter-killer training off Norfolk, and a midshipman summer cruise to Quebec, Canada. He was promoted to lieutenant commander in March 1958.

In July 1959, Lieutenant Commander Hoffman was assigned to the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington DC as Placement Officer for Destroyers/Minecraft Atlantic Fleet in the Officer Distribution Division; he also served as the BUPERS representative on the Chief of Naval Operations Standing Anti-submarine Warfare Board. In May 1961, LCDR Hoffman assumed command of Newport-based destroyer escort USS CROMWELL (DE-1014,) earning a Navy Expeditionary Medal for operations in the vicinity of Cuba, while also participating in Exercise UNITAS around South America in 1963. He was promoted to commander in December 1962.

In July 1963, Commander Hoffman was assigned as a student at the Naval War College in Newport. After graduating in June 1964, he remained at the War College as a Special Project Officer in the Academic Plans Department. While at the War College he earned a Master of Science in International Affairs from the George Washington University.

In November 1965, CDR Hoffman assumed command of the guided missile destroyer USS CHARLES F. ADAMS (DDG-2,) the first ship designed from the keel up as a surface-to-air missile launch platform. Homeported in Charleston, CHARLES F. ADAMS deployed to the Mediterranean, and assisted in the search for a lost thermonuclear bomb off Palomares, Spain resulting from the crash of a B-52 after colliding with a KC-135 tanker. In July 1966, CHARLES F. ADAMS underwent an extended overhaul, deploying in January 1968 for North Atlantic and Mediterranean operations (and the Indian Ocean after the change of command.) He was promoted to captain in March 1968.

In April 1968, Captain Hoffman assumed command of Coastal Surveillance Force/Coastal Flotilla ONE (Task Force ONE ONE FIVE (TF-115) in South Vietnam, responsible for the execution of Operation Market Time, the interdiction of Communist supply efforts along the Vietnamese coast. He also played a lead role in the planning and execution of Operation SEALORDS (Southeast Asia Lake, Ocean, River and Delta Strategy) in the Mekong River Delta, intended to disrupt North Vietnamese supply lines from Cambodia into South Vietnam, which also increasingly integrated South Vietnamese personnel and then units into the operation. Captain Hoffman was awarded a Distinguished Service Medal and multiple awards for valor, as well as an Air Medal, during this period of intense fighting.

In June 1969, CAPT Hoffman assumed command of the Norfolk-based destroyer tender USS SIERRA (AD-18) and was awarded his first Meritorious Service Medal, still a comparative rarity at the time, especially for a commanding officer of an auxiliary. SIERRA was awarded a Navy Unit Commendation. In December 1970, CAPT Hoffman assumed command of guided missile destroyer leader USS LEAHY (DLG-16) in the Mediterranean, after LEAHY had made an emergency deployment in September 1970 in response to a crisis in Jordan, that began with a series of aircraft hijackings and

ended with the expulsion of Palestinian groups from Jordan, an event known as “Black September” (and the origin of the name of the terrorist group that attacked the 1972 Munich Olympics.) LEAHY remained in the Eastern Mediterranean with the USS FORRESTAL (CV-59) Battle Group, returning to Norfolk in May 1971. Under CAPT Hoffman’s command, LEAHY deployed again to the Mediterranean in February-July 1972, and won the Atlantic Fleet award for Anti-Aircraft Warfare Excellence. Captain Hoffman was awarded his second Meritorious Service Medal.

In September 1972, CAPT Hoffman reported to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington DC as Head, Current Plans Branch. On 27 April 1973, he was designated a rear admiral for duty in a billet commensurate with that rank. In April 1973, Rear Admiral Hoffman continued in the Office of the CNO as Director of the Strategic Plans and Policy Division and Surface Warfare Division with additional duty as Program Coordinator for the Surface Ship Aviation Integration Program. He was promoted to rear admiral on 1 July 1974.

In November 1974, RADM Hoffman assumed command of the Mine Warfare Force, in Charleston, South Carolina which in July 1975 became the Mine Warfare Command. In June 1976, RADM Hoffman assumed command of Naval Base Charleston/Commandant SIXTH Naval District. He retired on 1 September 1978.

RADM Hoffman’s awards include the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, Legion of Merit (two awards,) Bronze Star (three awards with combat “V,”) Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal, Navy Commendation Medal, Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Unit Commendation, Navy Expeditionary Medal (Cuba,) China Service Medal, American Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Navy Occupation Service Medal (Asia,) National Defense Service Medal (two awards,) Korea Service Medal (seven campaign stars,) Vietnam Service Medal (four campaign stars,) Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, United Nations Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

Following retirement from active duty, RADM Hoffman became Port Director for the Port of Milwaukee, Wisconsin and then Vice President and Chief Operation Officer of Meehan Overseas Terminal, Richmond, Virginia. He was Chairman of Swift Boats for Truth, in opposition to the Presidential candidacy of Senator John Kerry in 2004. “This is Latch: The Rear Admiral Roy F. Hoffman Story” was written by Weymouth D. Symmes, published in October 2007.

Services will be held at Arlington National Cemetery at a date to be determined.

RADM Hoffman got his baptism of fire early on as one of only a handful of U.S. Navy officers since World War II who had to abandon ship. However he very quickly got back into the fight as Gunnery Officer on a destroyer back on the gunline in the Korean War. The experience no doubt colored the rest of his career. He had a reputation as a no-nonsense, very aggressive officer who believed in taking the fight to the enemy and not conceding initiative to the enemy. He brought this attitude to his leadership of Task Force 115 in 1968 during the Vietnam War in the execution of Operation Market Time and the SEALORDS campaign. He initiated operations up the Mekong Delta all the way to the Cambodian border and led from the front, earning a Silver Star and multiple Bronze Stars for valor. In his other commands he constantly pushed for excellence and combat readiness, his abilities were particularly on display in a command of a destroyer tender (USS SIERRA) earning a Navy Unit Commendation. In his later years he had the unenviable task of trying to get the Navy to invest more in mine countermeasures, as he well understood the results of not being prepared, based on his experience off North Korea. His post-retirement leadership of Swiftboat Veterans for Truth became highly politicized, making both friends and many enemies (with the moral being don’t believe everything you read on the internet.) RADM

Hoffman served our Navy with great valor and distinction, at considerable sacrifice to his family life, for which the Navy and nation should be grateful.

Rest in Peace Admiral Hoffman

Very respectfully,

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