

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

VICE ADMIRAL STEPHEN R. EDSON
SUPPLY CORPS, UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED

Stephen Reuben Edson was born on November 12, 1895, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, son of James Richards and Mary Barbara (Strauss) Edson. Graduated in 1916 from Central High School in his native city, he attended the College of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota, before he enlisted in the U. S. Navy as a Landsman for Yeoman on May 17, 1917. He was promoted successively to the rank of Yeoman Third Class, Second Class and First Class, and finally Acting Pay Clerk before being commissioned Assistant Paymaster in the Supply Corps of the U. S. Navy, with the accompanying rank of Ensign, to date from July 15, 1919. Thereafter he advanced progressively in rank to that of Rear Admiral, to date from January 17, 1944. On September 1, 1957 he was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy and was advanced to Vice Admiral on the basis of combat awards.

After receiving his commission in the Supply Corps, while on duty in the Thirteenth Naval District, he remained there until September 1919, when he was ordered to the USS VULCAN as Supply Officer. He continued service in that vessel until she was placed out of commission on July 20, 1921, and subsequently had short duty at the Receiving Barracks, Hampton Roads, Virginia. In September 1921 he reported as Supply Officer of Division THREE and FOUR, Squadron ONE, Mine Force, Atlantic Fleet, with service in the USS MALLARD, after which he had instruction, between July and November 1922, at the Supply Corps School of Application, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. After completing the course he was assigned to the Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, as Assistant to the Supply Officer.

Following fitting out duty in the USS NIAGARA, at the Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he reported aboard as Supply Officer upon her commissioning in June 1924. He served in her, operating in Venezuelan waters as a survey ship, until April 1926. Returning to shore duty, upon detachment from the NIAGARA, he was assigned to the First Naval District, Boston, Massachusetts as Supply Officer, with additional duty as Officer-in-Charge, Ship's Store, Naval Hospital, Boston, from May 1926 to November 1929. Thereafter he had duty as Division Officer of the USS CAMDEN.

In July 1931, he reported to the Naval Air Station, Lakehurst, New Jersey, and during this assignment was ordered to the Goodyear Zeppelin Corporation, Akron, Ohio, for duty in connection with the trials and commissioning of the airship AKRON. Detached from that Air Station in November 1931, he proceeded to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, reporting in December 1931 as Officer-in-Charge of the Commissary Store there. While on duty at the Academy, he also served as Assistant Treasurer and member of the Athletic Committee of the Naval Athletic Association from 1933 to 1935.

Between November 1935 and December 1937, he served on the staff of the Commandant, Fifteenth Naval District, Balboa, Canal Zone, after which he joined the USS RICHMOND, as Supply Officer. Relieved of that assignment in July 1940, he proceeded to the United States and reported the following month for duty in the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. He remained in the Bureau until September 1942 when he was assigned to the Staff of Commander Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet, as Force Supply Officer. He received a Letter of Commendation, with authorization to wear the Commendation Ribbon and Combat "V," from the Commander in Chief, Atlantic and U. S. Atlantic Fleet for "meritorious service while participating in the planning phase of the landing operations carried out by the Western Naval Task Force in Northwest French Morocco in November 1942..."

In February 1943 he transferred to duty as Supply Officer on the Staff of Commander Naval Forces, Northwest African Waters. He was awarded a Legion of Merit and a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Legion of Merit, both with Combat "V," for services in this assignment. The citations follow in part:

Legion of Merit: "For exceptionally meritorious conduct...as Supply Officer on the Staff of Commander United States Naval Forces, Northwest African Waters during the Sicilian and Italian Campaigns. During formations of the EIGHTH Fleet and the United States Naval Forces, Northwest African Waters, (he) arranged many complex details of organization and administration of supply functions so that effective logistic support for these forces could be adequately provided. Preliminary to the invasion of Sicily and Italy, he displayed great energy, tact, and efficiency in the successful coordination of these problems of maintenance and supply so vital to participating services of the Allied Command."

Gold Star in lieu of a Second Legion of Merit: "For...outstanding services...as Supply Officer on the Staff of a Task Force Commander, prior to and during the Amphibious Invasion of Southern France in August 1944...(he) fulfilled supply and logistic requirements of Fleet units and their supporting shore establishments undergoing intensive preparations for the seaborne movement of the invasion forces to the assault area. In addition, he coordinated logistic and supply matters with the United States Army authorities and agencies of the Allied Services, thereby contributing materially to the successful mounting of the assault and to the adequate maintenance of the rapidly advancing Allied Armies in Southern France..."

Relieved of staff duty in April 1945, he served until June 1947 as Deputy Supply Officer in Command (Officer-in-Charge) of the Naval Supply Depot, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, after which he had duty as Supply Officer at the Naval Gun Factory, Washington, D. C. He remained in that assignment until July 1949, when he became Supply Officer in Command, Naval Clothing Depot, Brooklyn, New York. In December 1949 his designation was changed to Commanding Officer, Naval

Clothing Depot, Brooklyn, with additional duty as Clothing Supply Officer, Clothing Supply Office, Naval Clothing Depot, Brooklyn. On August 30, 1951, he was assigned to the Office of Naval Material, Department of Navy, and two years later, August 1953, became Vice Chief of that Office. In March 1954 he assumed command of the Naval Supply Depot, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. On September 1, 1957 he was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy.

In addition to the Legion of Merit with Gold Star and Combat "V," and the Commendation Ribbon with Combat "V," Vice Admiral Edson has the World War I Victory Medal, the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the American Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with one engagement star; the World War II Victory Medal; and the National Defense Service Medal. He has also been awarded the Croix de Guerre with Silver Star from the French Government.

Vice Admiral Edson is a past Commander of the Military Order of the World Wars, Central Pennsylvania Chapter, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a life member of ELK'S Lodge No. 1181, Bremerton, Washington, and a member of the Holy Name Society, Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament, Washington, D. C.