

REAR ADMIRAL WILLIAM K. MENDENHALL, JR.,  
UNITED STATES NAVY

William Kavanaugh Mendenhall, Jr., the son of the late W. K. Mendenhall and Mrs. (Jennie Moore) Mendenhall; was born on February 23, 1900, in Waco, Texas. He attended Brownville, Texas, public schools before his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, by the Honorable John Nance Garner in 1919. As a Midshipman he was a member of the wrestling squad and the "Log" staff. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 8, 1923, he advanced progressively in rank to that of Rear Admiral, to date from January 1, 1951.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy in 1923, he joined the newly-commissioned battleship, USS MARYLAND, and served as a junior officer on board while she operated as a unit of Division 5, Battle Fleet. He then had instruction in Ordnance Engineering at the Naval Postgraduate School, Annapolis, and in May 1931 was ordered to Asiatic Station for duty in the USS HOUSTON. While aboard that cruiser, Flagship of the Commander in Chief, U. S. Asiatic Fleet, he commanded the landing force guarding the Shanghai (China) Light and Power Plant during the Sino-Japanese hostilities.

Completing a three-year tour of duty aboard the USS HOUSTON in June 1934, he was assigned to the Bureau of Ordnance, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., where he served until May 1936. He then reported as Executive Officer of the USS HOVEY. When detached from that destroyer in December 1936, he joined the Staff of the Commander Battleship Division 2, as Flag Secretary, and in January 1938 was transferred to the Staff of Commander Battleships, Battle Force.

Between July 1939 and February 1941 he served in the Design Division of the Naval Gun Factory, Washington, D. C. Following fitting out duty in the USS MEREDITH, he assumed command of that destroyer at her commissioning, March 1, 1941. After her shake-down cruise, conducted in Atlantic waters, she sailed, under his command, to Bermuda, BWI, in July 1941, then operated along the Atlantic Coast. She later was assigned patrol duties in the Atlantic, and while in North Atlantic waters participated in the occupation of Iceland and the establishment of the United States Base at Havalfordjur, Iceland, in the early period of World War II.

Relieved of command of the MEREDITH in March 1942, he joined the Staff of Commander Destroyers, Atlantic Fleet, as Gunnery Officer. For his performance of duty in that assignment, he received a Letter of Commendation from the Commander in Chief, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, with authority to wear the Commendation Ribbon. The citation follows, in part:

"...His untiring effort, outstanding ability and technical knowledge contributed much to the development and maintenance of a marked increase in the battle efficiency of destroyers, and to the reduction of time required for the necessary training operations. Recent successful and, in numerous cases, outstanding operations of destroyers in the Atlantic are striking proof of the results of his training methods."

Upon the commissioning of Destroyer Squadron EIGHTEEN in May 1943, he assumed command, with additional duty as Commander Destroyer Division THIRTY FIVE. After almost a year of convoy operations in the Atlantic, he reported in April 1944 for duty with Anti-Submarine Warfare Unit, Fleet Operational Training Command, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, Norfolk, Virginia, and in August of that year assumed command of that unit. For three months, January to March 1945, he had special duty under the Commander in Chief, U. S. Atlantic Fleet.

"For exceptionally meritorious conduct...as Commanding Officer Atlantic Fleet Anti-Submarine Warfare Unit and while serving on special duty under Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet..." he was awarded the Legion of Merit. The citation continues in part: "... Charged with analyzing operations of carrier task groups during offensive sweeps against hostile submarines, (he) developed highly effective operational methods and improved the procedure technique of our surface vessels for joint air-surface attacks against enemy undersea crafts..."

He reported in March 1945 for duty as Commanding Officer of the Naval Proving Ground, Dahlgren, Virginia, and remained there until August 1946, when he was assigned to the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy Department. In February 1947 he joined the USS PASADENA, and commanded that cruiser until December 1947.

Following duty as Chief of Staff and Aide to Commander Battleships Cruisers, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, he transferred in March 1949 to the staff of Commander Cruisers, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, to serve as Chief of Staff, Aide and Operations Officer until October 1949. He was then assigned to the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project, Washington, D. C., and in January 1951 became Deputy Chief of the Project. He assumed command of Destroyer Flotilla THREE in December 1952 and while in that assignment served as Senior Representative of the United States to the United Nations Command, Military Armistice Commission in Korea. He was awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit by the Department of the Army and was cited as follows:

"For distinguishing himself...as a member of the United Nations Command, Military Armistice Commission in Korea from June 18 to December 6, 1953. As Senior Representative of the United States Navy, Admiral Mendenhall's astute judgment and comprehensive grasp of the far reaching strategic and political implications were of great importance in developing and coordinating an organization

which later proved highly effective in supervising the implementation of the armistice agreement. He played a dominate role in all matters of major policy and planning and proffered timely and valuable recommendations in resolving multiplex issues and problems. Through careful estimation and expert analyses of Communist proposals and intentions subsequent to the signing of the armistice agreement and brilliant guidance of supporting staff officers, he materially enhanced unification of effort and progression toward acceptance and adoption of a frame work for an equitable armistice. His training and experience were of special significance in formulating basic provisions of rules to govern shipping in the Han River estuary and in instituting regulations for the operations of Joint Observer Teams charged with supervising the implementation of the armistice agreement in that area. Admiral Mendenhall's sound technical advise and recommendations coupled with his resourcefulness and keen analytical perception were major contributing factors to the successful conduct of difficult negotiations prior to and during the critical post-armistice period..."

In January 1954 he reported as Assitant Chief of Naval Operations, Chairman Ship Characteristics Board, Washington, D. C., and in July 1954 his title was changed to Director of the Fleet Development and Maintenance Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. He was Commander Operational Development Force from August 1956 until October 1958, when he became Commandant of the Potomac River Naval Command, with headquarters at the Naval Gun Factory (later Naval Weapons Plant), Washington, D. C. On August 17, 1960 he was assigned as Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Joint Staff, Commander in Chief, United States European Command.

In addition to the Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster (Army) and the Commendation Ribbon, Rear Admiral Mendenhall has the Yangtze Service Medal; American Defense Service Medal with Bronze "A"; American Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Korean Service Medal and United Nations Service Medal. He also has the Korean Presidential Unit Citation Badge.

His usual address and that of his wife, the former Sally Russell of Brownsville, Texas, is [REDACTED]. He has a daughter, Margaret Harrilyn Mendenhall by a former marriage.