

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

REAR ADMIRAL LEONARD B. AUSTIN
UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED

Leonard Bynner Austin was born in Swathmore, Pennsylvania, on March 20, 1893, son of the late James Henry and Emma Bynner Austin. He attended Germantown Academy in Philadelphia, before his appointment of the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from his native state in 1913. Graduated and commissioned Ensign on March 29, 1917, he subsequently attained the rank of Captain, to date from June 14, 1942. On July 1, 1948, he was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy and promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy in March 1917 and the United States' entry into World War I on April 6 of that year, he served throughout the war in the USS NEW ORLEANS, which acted as ocean escort to merchant convoys, assigned to Squadron TWO, Cruiser Force, Atlantic Fleet. Before his detachment in November 1920, that cruiser had returned to her former duty with the Asiatic Fleet. While at Vladivostok, Siberia, as station ship until September 1920, she joined the U. S. Army-Navy, and Russian expedition in July and August 1919 to clear and occupy the region of the Briner Mines.

He continued sea duty in 1921 aboard the USS HART and USS TARBELL, units of the Asiatic Fleet, and during November and December of that year commanded the USS BRUCE, operating with Destroyer Squadron THIRTEEN, in the Pacific. From February to November 1922 he served in the USS HANNIBAL, assigned to U. S. Navy Surveying Expedition No. TWO. He next had a tour of shore duty in the Fourth Naval District, attached to the Navy Yard, Philadelphia, and from November 1924 to August 1927 served successively in the battleships UTAH and ARKANSAS.

Returning to the Naval Academy in September 1927, he served until May 1930 as an instructor in the Department of English. During the next three years he had duty afloat, first as Executive Officer of the USS AARON WARD, and from April 1932 in command of the USS CROWNINSHIELD. A second tour of duty at the Naval Academy, this time in the Department of Seamanship and Navigation, preceded duty for a year (June 1936-1937) as Navigator of the USS COLORADO, and a second year as Commanding Officer of the USS CUYAMA.

He reported in June 1938 to the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, and after a year's instruction, had still another period of duty, until June 1940, at the Naval Academy, assigned to the Department of English, History and Government. From July 1940 until May 1941 he commanded the USS BALCH, and immediately prior to and during the first part of World War II, he commanded Destroyer Division SEVEN participating in operations following the attack on Pearl Harbor and the initial landings at Guadalcanal and Tulagi. From September to November 1942 he commanded Destroyer Squadron THREE, also in the Pacific, and for three months thereafter he was assigned to Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-TWO.

"For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service...as Commander Destroyer Division SEVEN from December 7, 1941, to August 14, 1942; and as Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-TWO, during March 1943..." he was awarded the Legion of Merit

with Combat "V." The citation continues: "After undergoing the air attack at Pearl Harbor, Captain Austin took part in the offensive Carrier Task Force sweeps in the Pacific, rescuing survivors of the SIMS and NEOSHO...and took an active part in rescue operations following the Battle of Savo Island. As Commander Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-TWO, he successfully carried out escort operations in the Pacific..."

In April 1943 he assumed command of the USS WEST VIRGINIA, battleship. A month later he was detached to report to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., where he remained on duty until June 1945. He received a Letter of Commendation, with Ribbon, from the Secretary of Navy, for "exceptionally meritorious service in the performance of his duties as Officer in Charge of the Destroyer Section of the Fleet Maintenance Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, from August 9, 1943 to June 4, 1945..."

He was attached to the Training Command, Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet, from June to August 1945, and for three months thereafter he commanded Transport Division FORTY-FOUR. In December of that year he joined the staff of Commander Occupation Forces, Truk Island, and served as Chief of Staff and Aide until April 1946. Returning to the Navy Department, he had brief duty in the Bureau of Naval Personnel, after which he again had duty in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations from July 1946 until relieved of active duty pending his retirement on July 1, 1948.

In addition to the Legion of Merit with Combat "V," and the Commendation Ribbon, Rear Admiral Austin has the World War I Victory Medal, Escort Clasp; the American Defense Service Medal; the American Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two stars; and the World War II Victory Medal.