

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

CAPTAIN WILLIAM A. BEST
SUPPLY CORPS, U. S. NAVY, RETIRED

William Alexander Best was born in South Canton, New York, on September 25, 1894, son of William T. and Alice M. (Alexander) Best, both now deceased. He attended Peoples Academy, Morrisville, Vermont, and the University of Vermont, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree from the latter in 1917. While he was a student there, he enlisted in the National Guard of the State of Vermont on June 21, 1916, and had Federal service until September 19 of that year. After graduation from the University, he was appointed Assistant Paymaster, USN, with rank of Ensign on June 30, 1917, and through subsequent promotions attained the rank of Captain in the Supply Corps of the U. S. Navy, his date of rank January 1, 1942. He was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy on June 1, 1949.

Completing instruction at the Naval Pay Officers' School in Washington, D. C., on July 3, 1917, during the early part of World War I, he was assigned duty as Assistant to the Supply Officer at the Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In February 1918 he was ordered to Liverpool, England, and served as Supply Officer of the Receiving Ship there until June 1919. Later that year he had successive service in the USS EDDLYN and USS IMPERATOR, and from December 1919 until September 1920 served as Assistant Supply Officer at the Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, with additional duty at Bath (Maine) Iron Works.

He again had sea duty as Supply Officer for Destroyer Division 36, attached to the USS DICKERSON, flagship, and in October 1921 became Division Supply Officer with Division Y, later Division ONE, of the Atlantic Fleet. Reporting in October 1922 he served until August 1925 as Disbursing and Commissary Officer at the Naval Torpedo Station, Newport, Rhode Island, and for two years thereafter was Supply Officer of the USS CONCORD. He had postgraduate instruction at the Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, from September 1927 until August 1929, when he received the degree of Master of Business Administration. He was next sent to Guam to be Comptroller and Cashier of the Bank of Guam. Also, from April 18 to June 16, 1930 he had temporary duty in the USS GOLD STAR, station ship at Guam.

After his return to the United States in June 1931, he served for two years as Assistant to the Chief Coordinator, Interior Department Building, Washington, D. C. From August 1933 to June 1934 he was a student at the Army Industrial College, also in Washington. He joined the USS CHAUMONT in July 1934, and for two years served as Supply Officer, transferring in June 1936 to similar duty at the Navy Yard, Boston, Massachusetts. In August 1939 he was detached to serve for a year on the staff of the Army Industrial College.

From October 1940 until November 1942 he was a member of the U. S. Naval Mission to Peru. While there, he was awarded the decoration El Sol del Peru (Order of the Sun) for supervising the installation of the industrial cost accounting system for the Peruvian Navy. Upon his return to the United States he reported to the Navy Department, Washington, D. C., for a tour of duty covering most of the World War II period, first in the Office of Procurement and Material, and from February 1943 to April 1944 in the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts. During the last year of the war, and until April 1946, he served as Supply Officer of the Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His last duty prior to his retirement on June 1, 1949 was at the Naval Supply Depot, Naval Base Annex, Bayonne, New Jersey, where he was Supply Officer in Command.

In addition to the Peruvian decoration, Captain Best has the World War I Victory Medal, Overseas Clasp; the American Defense Service Medal, Base Clasp; American Campaign Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal.