

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

REAR ADMIRAL THOMAS L. BECKNELL, JR.
SUPPLY CORPS, U. S. NAVY, RETIRED

Thomas Leonard Becknell, Jr., was born September 20, 1908, in Greenville, South Carolina, son of Thomas Leonard and Mary Josephine Montgomery Becknell. Graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Commerce from the Georgia School of Technology in June 1930, he was commissioned Ensign in the Supply Corps of the U. S. Navy on August 9, of that year. He subsequently advanced in rank to that of Rear Admiral, to date from July 1, 1954.

After his first assignment at the Naval Supply Depot, Norfolk, Virginia, he joined the USS ARKANSAS in November 1930. While aboard that vessel for the three years following, he had duty under instruction and later served as Disbursing Officer. From November 1933 until June 1936 he served as Assistant to the Supply Officer at the Navy Yard, Mare Island, California, and for two years thereafter had duty afloat in the USS SACRAMENTO, first as Supply and Disbursing Officer and finally as Head of the Supply Department.

In August 1938 he reported to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, where he had duty as Assistant Midshipman Commissary Officer until May 1940. A month later he joined the USS OMAHA as Supply and Disbursing Officer, and later served as Head of her Supply Department. He was aboard when that light cruiser, operating on neutrality patrol in the Atlantic before the United States entered World War II, captured the German Ship ODENWALD, and until September 1942, during which time she continued patrol duty.

After three months' duty as Supply Officer on the Staff of Commander Task Force TWENTY-THREE, he had duty from January 1943 until August 1944 at the Naval Supply Depot, Norfolk, Virginia. There he served as Outgoing Stores Group Officer and as Officer in Charge. He was Supply Officer in Command of Naval Supply Depot #134 in October and November of that year, and for a year thereafter he served successively as Assistant Force Supply Officer; Executive Officer; and Squadron Supply Officer on the Staff of Commander Service Force, SEVENTH Fleet.

"For meritorious service as Assistant Force Supply Officer, Service Force, SEVENTH Fleet, from December 2, 1944 to August 15, 1945..." he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. The citation commends him for solving "the difficult supply problems created by the great expansion of the SEVENTH Fleet area and forces, the advancement of rear bases and the development of new advanced bases farther from the source of supply (and assuring) the timely and adequate logistic support of Naval forces afloat and ashore in the Lingayen, South Philippine and Borneo operations against the enemy..."

Returning to the United States in December 1945, he served for six months as Officer in Charge, Ship's Store Division of the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts, Navy Department, Washington, D. C.; and as Officer in

Charge of the U. S. Navy Ship's Store Office at Brooklyn, New York, from June 1946 until August 1948. He was next assigned to the Naval Supply Center, Pearl Harbor, T. H., first as Officer in Charge, Ship's Store Division, and later as Executive Officer. In December 1949 he was transferred in the latter capacity to the Naval Supply Center, Oakland, California.

For two years, August 1951 until August 1953, he was Supply Officer at the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland. On August 17, 1953 he became Executive Officer, Ships Parts Control Center, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, and in January 1954 assumed command of that Center. On October 14, 1954 he reported as Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts for Supply Management, and on June 1, 1956 assumed duty as Deputy and Assistant Chief of that Bureau. He was Commanding Officer of the Navy Supply Center, Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, from July 22, 1958 until August 1961, when he was assigned as Executive Director of the Military Petroleum Supply Agency, Washington, D. C. (In January 1962 his title was changed to Commander Defense Petroleum Supply Center, Washington, D. C.). He served as such until relieved of active duty pending his retirement, effective July 1, 1964.

In addition to the Bronze Star Medal, Rear Admiral Becknell has the China Service Medal; American Defense Service Medal with Bronze "A"; American Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Service Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon.

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