

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

CAPTAIN WALTER F. V. BENNETT, UNITED STATES NAVY

Walter Francis Vincent Bennett was born in New York, New York, on December 29, 1919. He attended Hastings High School, Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, and Manhattan College in New York City, from which he received the degree of Bachelor of Science in Physics and Mathematics in 1942. On October 4, 1940 he enlisted in the U. S. Naval Reserve and on June 16, 1941 was appointed Midshipman. He attended the U. S. Naval Reserve Midshipman School at Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois, and on September 12, 1941 was commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Naval Reserve. Advancing progressively in rank, he attained that of Captain, to date from January 1, 1961, having transferred from the Naval Reserve to the U. S. Navy on November 5, 1946.

After receiving his commission in 1941, he attended a course in naval engineering at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. During the period May to August 1942, he had duty with the Inshore Patrol at the U. S. Naval Section Base, Corpus Christi, Texas, after which he served as Engineering Officer and Executive Officer of the USS SC-655, assuming command of that submarine chaser in March 1943. "Under his command, SC-655 participated in operations in North Africa, the Sicilian occupation and the landings at Salerno. "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity...in action against the enemy during the invasion of Italy in September 1943..." he was awarded the Silver Star Medal. The citation further states in part:

"Operating with the Amphibious Forces...(he) skillfully maneuvered his ship at night through enemy mine fields and under enemy air attacks and fire from shore batteries to anchor in an assigned position three thousand yards off the assault beaches. Establishing and maintaining this position for six hours during air attacks and shore battery barrages, he turned his searchlight beam to seaward and, by the light and by voice radio, guided the assault boat waves to the proper beaching points, thereby contributing materially to the successful landing of the invasion forces..."

In May 1944 he joined the USS WILLIAM C. COLE (DE-641) as Executive Officer and Navigator and in November 1945 assumed command of that destroyer escort. While on board that vessel, he saw action during the assault and occupation of Okinawa Gunto. In October 1946 he reported as Commanding Officer of the USS HERBERT C. JONES (DE-137), a unit of the Atlantic Reserve Fleet, and during the period January to October 1947 commanded the USS FOGG (DER-57).

He became Officer in Charge of the Navy Recruiting Station, Louisville, Kentucky, in December 1947 and for the year, June 1948 to June 1949, was a student at the Postgraduate School, Annapolis, Maryland. He continued instruction as a Graduate Student at Ohio State University at Columbus, from which he received the degree of Master of Science in Physics in 1951. In June of that year he reported

as Assistant Progress Officer at the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project, Washington, D. C., and while there also had duty at the U. S. Army Chemical Center, Edgewood, Maryland. He remained there until April 1952, when he joined the USS ALBANY (CA-123), to serve as Tactical Officer and Navigator until March 1954. He was next assigned to the Atomic Energy Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. While there he was an Instructor in the School of Engineering at the University of Virginia in 1957 and 1958. In July 1958 he joined the USS FLOYD B. PARKS (DD-884) as Commanding Officer.

Returning to duty in the Atomic Energy Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations in September 1960, he headed the Nuclear Weapons Employment Branch. In that capacity, he coordinated all research and development requirements in nuclear weapons effects areas with the Defense Atomic Support Agency and the Navy Technical Bureaus. From March 1961 until July 1964 he was Military Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Atomic Energy), Washington, D. C. While in Washington, he also was an Associate in the Mathematics Department at George Washington University in 1961 and from 1961 to 1963 was an Instructor in the Mathematics Department, School of Engineering at the University of Virginia. He was awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal and cited as follows:

"Captain Walter F. V. Bennett, United States Navy, distinguished himself by meritorious achievement during the period from February 24, 1961 to June 29, 1964...Captain Bennett...has contributed in a meritorious manner to the successful accomplishment of the mission of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (Atomic Energy). That office was primarily and continuously concerned at the highest levels, within the United States Government, with the formulation of policies and programs pertaining to atomic energy matters within the Department of Defense. The new NATO Agreement for Cooperation, now in the final stages of approval and formalization, for which Captain Bennett was the principal Department of Defense staff coordinator and representative, is illustrative of his significant contributions..."

In July 1964 he assumed command of the USS SHENANDOAH (AD-26) and in August 1965 was detached from that command for instruction at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Washington, D. C. In September 1966 he reported as Head of the Mathematics Department at the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, and in April 1968 became Commanding Officer of the USS LITTLE ROCK (CLG-4).

In addition to the Silver Star Medal and the Joint Service Commendation Medal, Captain Bennett has the American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with three stars; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with one star; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal; China Service Medal; and the National Defense Service Medal with bronze star.

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