

# Wilson D. Leggett, Jr. Papers

**COLL/697**

**1.25 cubic feet**

Updated by Roy Grossnick  
April 2010

Archives Branch  
Operational Archives Section  
Naval History and Heritage Command  
805 Kidder Breese Street SE  
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374

Papers of Rear Admiral  
Wilson D. Leggett, Jr., 1920-1955

1.25 cubic feet

Finding Aid prepared by  
Wade Wyckoff  
June 2000

Operational Archives Branch  
Naval Historical Center  
805 Kidder Breese Street SE  
Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374

## Biographical Note

Wilson Durward Leggett, Jr. was born on 18 March 1901 in Tarboro, North Carolina. After attending Tarboro High School and the Severn School in Severna Park, Maryland, he was appointed to the U.S. Naval Academy in 1917. As a Midshipman he served in World War I on the battleships *Ohio*, *Wyoming*, and *Utah*.

Graduated from the Naval Academy in 1921, he was commissioned an Ensign on 3 June. His first duty assignment began that same month, when he reported to USS *Dixie*, operating in the Atlantic. After being detached from *Dixie*, he served on USS *Columbia* and the battleship *Pennsylvania*, flagship of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. Reporting to the station ship USS *Chewink* at New London, Connecticut in April 1923, he began training for submarine duty.

Promoted to Lieutenant (jg) in June 1923, Leggett completed his training in September and reported to USS *S-51*, where he served until departing for *S-48* in January 1924. He had duty on *S-48* and *S-19* until January 1925, when he transferred to USS *Charles Ausburne*. After five months on that ship, Leggett departed to study diesel engineering at the Naval Academy's Postgraduate School. He subsequently earned a Master of Science degree at New York's Columbia University in 1927. That same year he received his next promotion, being commissioned a Lieutenant on 11 April.

With his Master's degree in hand, Leggett returned to the fleet, serving on USS *Argonne*, tender for Submarine Division 20. He remained at that assignment through April 1931 when he became Engineering Officer on USS *V-2*. Spending only one month on *V-2*, Leggett joined the Bureau of Engineering in May. He resumed duty at sea in June 1933, spent a year in command of USS *R-2*, and from June 1934 to June 1936 served as Division Engineering Officer on the staff of Commander Submarine Division 10. During his tenure with Submarine Division 10, Leggett was examined for promotion to Lieutenant Commander.

He was again assigned to the Bureau of Engineering in the summer of 1936, where he was in charge of internal combustion engine development and complete machinery installation for submarines and motor vessels. He was also instrumental in establishing a program of diesel engine development that completely freed the U.S. Navy from dependence on German designs.

He reported to Mare Island Naval Shipyard in July 1940 as Machinery Superintendent. Promoted to Rear Admiral on 30 April 1944, he joined the staff of Commander Service Force, Seventh Fleet that August, taking the additional duties of Fleet Maintenance Officer as well. He joined Seventh Fleet at Australia, and moved north with the Fleet through New Guinea and Leyte to Manila.

Leggett held these duties through the end of World War II, returning to the U.S. in November 1945. He was assigned to the Charleston Naval Shipyard in South Carolina as Planning Officer, where he served until becoming Commanding Officer and Director of the U.S. Naval Engineering Experiment Station at Annapolis, Maryland in April 1947. Beginning in February 1951, Leggett served as Deputy and Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Ships, being designated Chief of that Bureau on 27 July 1953. Admiral Leggett held this assignment for two years, and was transferred to the Retired List on 1 April 1955. He died in Washington, DC 22 years later on 2 January 1977.

## Scope and Content Note

This collection contains personal and official papers of Rear Admiral Wilson D. Leggett. Material in the collection is arranged in four series. The first series, Orders, 1920-1936, contains copies of Leggett's orders, assignments to temporary and additional duties, and the attached endorsement sheets. The material in this series is arranged chronologically.

Series II, Correspondence, 1922-1955, is divided into three subseries.

In the first, Official Correspondence, are leave requests, congratulatory notes on promotions and awards, and duty assignment requests. This subseries is arranged chronologically.

The second subseries, Personal Correspondence, contains incoming and outgoing mail between Leggett and his family, friends, and fellow Navy officers. Letters in this subseries are grouped alphabetically by the name of the author or recipient and are arranged chronologically within each grouping.

Finally, in the third subseries, Business Correspondence, are incoming and outgoing letters with manufacturing and engineering firms. Most of this correspondence relates to the design, development, and manufacture of submarine engines and equipment. Letters are grouped by the firm to which they relate, and are arranged chronologically within each folder.

In Series III, Photographs, are several black and white photographs of Leggett as a Rear Admiral. Much of this series, though, depicts submarine equipment— including interior shots of USS *Harder* (SS-257)— testing of equipment, and repair and manufacturing shops at Mare Island Naval Shipyard. The photographs are arranged alphabetically by subject.

The final series in the collection, Miscellaneous Documents, includes Leggett's notes and typescripts of several speeches and papers on the benefits of diesel engines. Also in this series are two small black notebooks containing miscellaneous handwritten notes, and several newspaper clippings. This series is arranged alphabetically.

## Box and Folder List

### Box 1

Series I: Orders, 1920-1936

1. Orders 1920-1936

Series II: Correspondence, 1922-1955

Subseries: Official Correspondence, 1922-1938

2. Official Correspondence 1922-1938

Series II: Correspondence, 1922-1955

Subseries: Personal Correspondence, 1935-1955

3. Personal Correspondence— A 1939-1943  
4. Personal Correspondence— B Folder 1 1938-1941  
5. Personal Correspondence— B Folder 2 1942-1944  
6. Personal Correspondence— C Folder 1 1935-1941  
7. Personal Correspondence— C Folder 2 1942-1944  
8. Personal Correspondence— D Folder 1 1938-1940  
9. Personal Correspondence— D Folder 2 1941-1944  
10. Personal Correspondence— E 1938-1944  
11. Personal Correspondence— F 1938-1944  
12. Personal Correspondence— G 1938-1944

### Box 2

Series II: Correspondence, 1922-1955

Subseries: Personal Correspondence, 1935-1955

13. Personal Correspondence— H 1938-1944  
14. Personal Correspondence— I 1940-1943  
15. Personal Correspondence— J 1938-1944  
16. Personal Correspondence— K 1941-1944  
17. Personal Correspondence— L 1938-1955  
18. Personal Correspondence— M 1938-1944  
19. Personal Correspondence— N 1938-1944  
20. Personal Correspondence— O-P 1939-1944  
21. Personal Correspondence— R 1938-1944  
22. Personal Correspondence— S 1938-1944  
23. Personal Correspondence— T 1939-1944  
24. Personal Correspondence— V-W 1939-1940

Series II: Correspondence, 1922-1955

Subseries: Business Correspondence, 1938-1943

25. Electromotive Corporation 1941-1943  
26. Fairbanks, Morse, and Company 1940-1942

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| 27. Farrel-Birmingham Company                        | 1940-1943 |
| 28. General Motors, Cleveland Diesel Engine Division | 1938-1942 |
| 29. General Motors, Harrison Radiator Division       | 1941-1943 |
| 30. General Motors, Research Laboratories Division   | 1940-1941 |
| 31. Hall-Scott Motor Car Company                     | 1940-1941 |
| 32. Hooven, Owens, and Rentschler Corporation        | 1941-1943 |

**Box 3**

Series III: Photographs, 1943-1944, n.d.

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| 33. <i>Barb</i> , USS (SS-220)<br>Two photos of equipment from USS <i>Barb</i> .   |      |
| 34. Flexible Pipe Connections<br>Five photographs showing the testing apparatus for flexible pipe connectors and the results of the testing. | 1943 |
| 35. <i>Harder</i> , USS (SS-257)<br>Eight photographs showing the interior of USS <i>Harder</i> and equipment installed on board.            | 1944 |
| 36. Leggett, Wilson D.<br>Six photographs of Rear Admiral Wilson D. Leggett.   |      |
| 37. Mare Island Naval Shipyard<br>21 photos of equipment and repair and production shops at Mare Island Naval Shipyard.                      |      |

Series IV: Miscellaneous Documents, 1933-1940, n.d.

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| 38. Clippings        | 1940            |
| 39. Diesel vs. Steam | 1933-1939, n.d. |
| 40. Notebooks        |                 |