

Shipmate



*Admiral Arleigh A. Burke
United States Navy
1901-1996*

1996 BALLOT

Admiral Arleigh A. Burke

Sailor

Arleigh Burke was an American hero—the old-fashioned kind. A man of “great personal courage...extraordinary heroism...indomitable fighting spirit...and conspicuous gallantry”—in the words of the men with whom he served. Old-fashioned words to describe a contemporary man whose actions and values will *never* go out of style.

The commander of World War II's most famous destroyer squadron was born on October 19, 1901—the year the U.S. Navy launched its first true destroyer. He grew up on a cattle ranch in Boulder, Colorado, many miles from the scene of his later wartime naval battles. Once asked how a landlocked kid like himself had gotten steered toward a career in the Navy, Admiral Burke said:

“I went to school in a one-room schoolhouse. But when a flu epidemic suddenly struck and classes were stopped temporarily, I went to work in the oil fields, earning a man's wage. I decided then I would not go back to high school. While working, I met an old roustabout who said, ‘You're a hard-working kid. You do a man's work and you do it well. If you just keep working the way you are, some day you'll earn as much as I do.’ I asked him, ‘How much do you make?’ He answered, ‘Fifty cents a day more than you.’ I got the point.”

So Arleigh Burke finished school after all. And when he discovered he was too young to get into West Point, he turned around and applied to his second choice—the Naval Academy. “I might have liked the Army,” he later said, “but not nearly as much as I liked the Navy.”

On 7 June 1923 he graduated from the Naval Academy and was commissioned Ensign Arleigh Burke. That same afternoon, he married Roberta “Bobbie” Gorsuch in the Naval Academy chapel. It was a joyous beginning of a marriage that endured for seven decades.

Ensign Burke's first duty was aboard the battleship ARIZONA (BB-39), where he was a gunnery turret officer. After ARIZONA, he served on PROCYON (AG-11) before returning to Annapolis for post graduate work. He later attended the University of Michigan, where he received his Master's degree in chemical engineering in 1931.

As a weaponry specialist he was assigned—between tours of duty in the heavy cruiser CHESTER (CA-27) and the destroyer CRAVEN (DD-382)—to the Bureau of Ordnance. By 1939, he had risen to the rank of Lieutenant Commander. That same year he received his first command, the 1500-ton destroyer MUGFORD (DD-389). At the age of 38, Arleigh Burke had become the youngest skipper in the fleet.

When MUGFORD earned an unprecedented, and never matched, perfect score in short-range battle practice and subsequently won the coveted Destroyer Gunnery Trophy for 1939-40, no one was surprised. For Arleigh Burke it was simple: Good guns and good gunners make good fighting ships. Therefore, *his* ship must have the *best* guns and the *best* gunners. Shipboard morale—which Burke valued as an indicator of his crew's confidence in its skill and competency—was at an all-time high. This was one Navy man who believed an officer's service reputation is made among those who serve *under* him, not those above.

He was bitterly disappointed when, at the start of World War II, he

was on shore duty as an Ordnance Inspector at the Naval Gun Factory in Washington, D.C. Arleigh Burke was not about to sit out an entire war in a comfortable shore side billet. He immediately launched an intense lobbying campaign to land himself a command, right in the thick of things. In January of 1943 his efforts paid off—Arleigh Burke received orders to the South Pacific.

He was given command of Destroyer Division 43, which operated in the Solomon Islands. In March his flagship, WALLER (DD-466), blew up an enemy destroyer. Several months later, Captain Burke shifted his command to Destroyer Division 44, where he was wounded during convoy escort. Later in the year, he briefly took over Destroyer Squadron 12. Then, in October of 1943, he became commander of Destroyer Squadron 23—the “Gallant Squadron.”

No squadron in any navy has ever won more honors in less time than Destroyer Squadron 23 (DesRon 23). They called themselves the “Little

Beavers”, after a popular comic strip character, and, under the command of Arleigh Burke, the Little Beavers covered the initial landings at Bougainville during the ferocious fighting in the Solomons. Within four months they had fought in almost two dozen separate engagements. Because their commander pushed his ships to just under gutbusting speed, Admiral William F. Halsey gave him the nickname “31-Knot Burke.” It was a name that stuck.

Commander Burke's flagship was CHARLES AUSBURNE (DD-570). He commanded eight destroyers—four of them Bath-built. In the Battle of Empress Augusta

Bay at Bougainville, 31Knot Burke distinguished himself by torpedoing and sinking a number of Japanese warships. Typically, he credited the men under him for his success. In his battle report he wrote:

“The Captains of Squadron 23 went out looking for trouble; they found it; they sank it; and then they looked for more...It is impossible for me to express the proud, paternal feeling I felt for you all during the heat of battle...There are NO officers in the United States Navy who could have done better.”

Less than a month later, DesRon 23 took on an enemy force of equal strength off Cape St. George, New Ireland. They sank three Japanese destroyers without taking a single hit. The Battle of Cape St. George has been called an “almost perfect action.” Within a four month period, DesRon 23 had blown up one Japanese cruiser, nine destroyers, one submarine, several smaller ships, and approximately thirty aircraft. Arleigh Burke rewrote Naval doctrine, using destroyers' speed and maneuverability and their torpedoes as primary offensive weapons, reserving gunfire as back-up. He helped take back the nights from the Japanese forces and for his actions he was awarded the Navy Cross.

On March 27th, 1944, Burke was detached from Destroyer Squadron 23 and ordered to report as Chief of Staff to Rear Admiral Marc Mitscher, commander of Fast Carrier Task Force 58. While serving on board flagships BUNKER HILL, and later ENTERPRISE, he experienced first hand the dreaded *Kamikaze* attacks. He was awarded the Silver Star for rescuing sailors trapped in a compartment by smoke and fire, and helping to evacu-

“The days of our lives pass all too quickly, but when we are busy and happy, as I have been during my years in the Navy, our days leave a great store of wonderful memories.”

ate injured crewmen. During this period he helped plan some of the most important battles of the war. Iwo Jima, Guam, the Marianas, Okinawa—no American should ever forget those names.

After the war, Burke became Chief of Staff of the 8th Fleet. He also served in the office of the Chief of Naval Operations. His deep involvement in the debates concerning the reorganization of the armed services into the Department of Defense, particularly his influential report on the strategic role of the Navy in combating the Soviet Union's growing submarine fleet, and a study stating the Navy should not be reduced simply because the Air Force had the mission of delivering nuclear weapons resulted in his being temporarily removed from the flag officer selection list. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, was successful in getting President Harry S. Truman to intervene and have him reinstated. His role in the "revolt of the admirals" greatly enhanced his stature with the Navy in the years to come.

Promoted to rear admiral in 1950, he went to Korea as Commander of Cruiser Division 5, and, a year later, became a United Nations delegate to the North Korean truce talks. He later related that he found the experience intensely frustrating, and it sharpened his understanding of the Communist threat facing the US, and helped him formulate his strategic doctrine.

On 17 August 1955, Admiral Arleigh Burke took the oath of office as Chief of Naval Operations. His appointment was described as the biggest promotional bombshell ever felt in the U.S. Navy. For, in walking off with the Navy's top job, Burke had zoomed past 92 other admirals who were senior to him on the eligibility list.

First appointed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Admiral Burke served an unprecedented three terms as CNO. The president hoped he would quickly bring new technology to the Navy and provide inspired leadership for the Navy, hopes that were fulfilled. Despite the fact that he had once re-

quested a job where "the bullets are a little thicker and the paperwork is a lot thinner," he was an excellent administrator. He was a major force on the Joint Chiefs of Staff in developing the Navy's Polaris submarine missile program, introducing new missile systems into the surface Navy and promoting innovations in aircraft design. Also, he pioneered a new role for the FORRESTAL class attack carrier—nuclear deterrence. Admiral Burke identified limited war as a primary task of the new Navy, a future tasking that would be called into play.

During the 1956 Suez crisis, Admiral Burke sent the combat-ready Sixth Fleet into the Eastern Mediterranean. His orders to the fleet commander were vintage Burke: "If U.S. citizens are in danger, protect them—take no guff from anyone."

In early 1961, President Kennedy offered to reappoint Burke for a fourth term as CNO. Burke declined, believing it was time for new leadership. In August of 1961—after 42 years of service—Admiral Arleigh Burke retired from the U.S. Navy.

Following his retirement, he divided his time between the private sector and public service. He helped found, and served as the Director for 15 years, the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University, which became an influential foreign and defense policy think-tank. His community service efforts include work with veterans' organizations, educational institutions, the Boy Scouts of America, and others. In January of 1977, President Gerald Ford awarded him the nation's highest civilian honor, the Medal of Freedom.

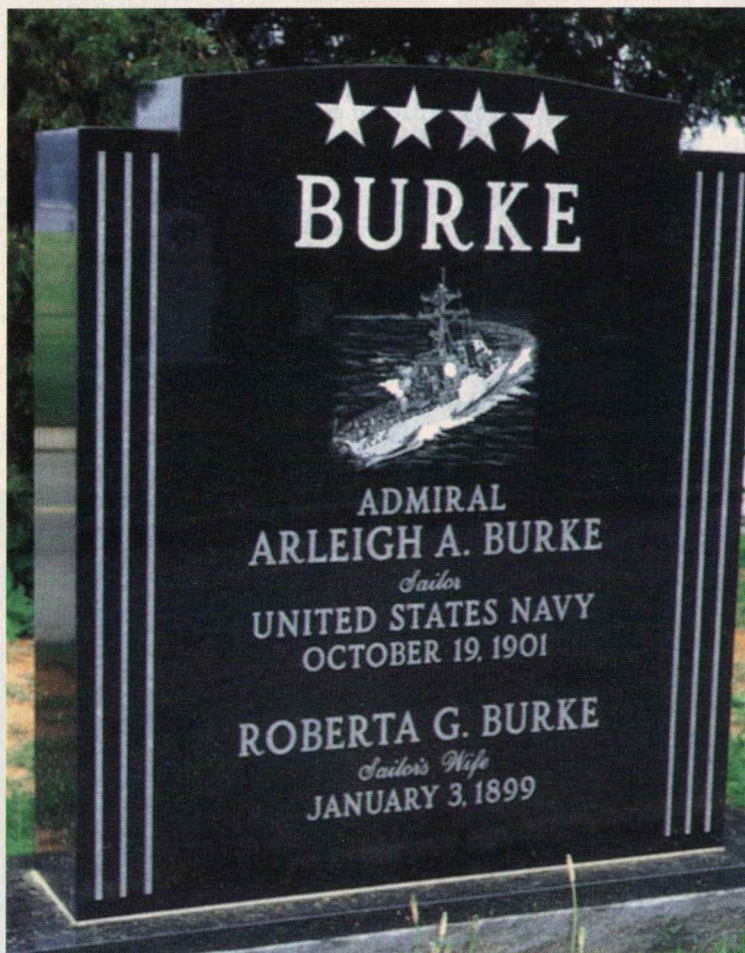
In addition to the Navy Cross, the Medal of Freedom and the Silver Star, Admiral Burke was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal with two Gold Stars, the Legion of Merit with two Gold Stars and Oak Leaf Cluster (Army), the Commendation Ribbon, the Purple Heart Medal (for wounds received while serving on board CONWAY during July 1943), the Presidential Unit Citation Ribbon with three stars, and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon. Admiral Burke earned the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two silver stars and two bronze stars (twelve engagements); the American Campaign Medal: World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal, Europe Clasp; the National Defense Service Medal; the Philippine Liberation Ribbon; Korean Service Medal, and United Nations Service Medal. He also has been awarded the Uchi Medal and the Presidential Unit Citation from the Republic of Korea and the Order of the Rising Sun, First Class by the Government of Japan.

This old-fashioned contemporary hero describes his philosophy of life as: "an old-time philosophy—a philosophy of realism. You must always ask the question, 'What is important in life?'...I think that I did my best and even tried to do a little more. But I don't think it's very important that I be remembered...*the ideas I stood for should be remembered.*"

Admiral Arleigh A. Burke was honored in a formal military service at the Naval Academy he loved. His funeral was the nation's largest and most impressive military funeral in the last thirty years. It was attended

by his widow, Mrs. Bobbie Burke, family and friends, "Little Beaver" survivors, fellow officers and men, and Washington dignitaries, lead by President Bill Clinton, the leaders of the military services, foreign delegates, and the crewmen of the USS ARLEIGH BURKE. Admiral Burke, under a clear blue sky, was borne on a horse drawn caisson in a procession from the Chapel. A 19 gun salute and a fly-over by four F-14s, in the missing man formation, honored the Admiral. He was buried in the Naval Academy cemetery, beneath a 4 1/2 foot black granite monument that, at his instruction, bears only four stars, and an etching of the USS ARLEIGH BURKE, and the words "Admiral Arleigh Burke, Sailor", and "Roberta G. Burke, Sailor's Wife."

Continued on page 8



Remarks by President Bill Clinton

Commander-in-Chief

We gather today to honor the life of one of the Navy's finest sailors and greatest leaders. Every life is a lesson, but his life particularly so, for in 94 years on this earth, at sea and on land, Arleigh Burke gave nothing less than everything he had for his cherished Navy and his beloved country.

Born at the dawn of this century, on a hardscrabble farm at the foot of the Colorado Rockies, educated at this great Academy, wed to his wife 72 years ago here in this very chapel, Arleigh Burke stood swatch over our freedom for more than four decades.

Late this summer, just before I traveled to Pearl Harbor to commemorate the end of the Second World War, I had the honor of spending an evening with Admiral Burke at the Pentagon. This hero of long nights and long days of the Pacific War gave me his wise counsel. And like so many of my predecessors, I came away far richer for it in an evening I will never forget.

As a Navy Captain in 1943, it was Arleigh Burke who understood the full potential of the Navy's destroyers — its "Tin Cans." In so doing, he helped turn the tide in freedom's favor -- at Empress Augusta Bay, off Cape St. George and across vast stretches of the South Pacific. During one campaign that spanned 22 separate engagements, Burke and his squadron of "Little Beavers," some of whom are here with us today, accomplished astonishingly big feats. They demolished an enemy cruiser, nine destroyers, a submarine, nine smaller ships, and downed some 30 aircraft.

Later, while serving under Admiral Marc Mitscher, Arleigh Burke pulled shipmates from the flaring aftermath of kamikaze attacks and helped plan the war's concluding battles at Philippine Sea, Leyte, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. For that extraordinary heroism and grand vision, he earned the Navy Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star and the Purple Heart.

Like all good sailors, Admiral Burke had the ability to see over the horizon. He taught the Navy to fight at night, attacking with torpedoes as well as guns. As Chief of Naval Operations for those unprecedented three terms, he created the most balanced, versatile fleet in history, one that enabled us to preserve the peace and safeguard our freedom throughout all of the hard days of the Cold War. He built nuclear submarines so that our Navy would be as strong below the ocean's surface as it was above it. He armed them with Polaris missiles so we could better deter Soviet attacks. He took from blueprint to shipyard the idea of a fleet propelled by the power of the atom.

The Navy all Americans are so proud of, the Navy that stood up to fascism and stared down communism and advances our values and freedom even today -- that Navy is Arleigh Burke's Navy.

Today, we mourn the passing of a great American. But his spirit is all around us. We see it in a promise of the young midshipmen who will take on the challenge of living up to his magnificent example. We see it in the fine men of the ship that bears Admiral Burke's name and who will soon "man the rails" on the road to his gravesite. We see it in all the "Arleigh Burke Class Destroyers" that are protecting peace and helping democracy take root from the Persian gulf to Haiti, to the former Yugoslavia.

These destroyers, each named for a naval hero, a naval leader such as John Paul Jones, John Barry and, just recently, Winston Churchill, are a special class of ships, the class of Arleigh Burke. Admiral Burke was the inspiration for these ships. They were meant to be feared and fast, the very attributes that earned their namesake, the nickname "31-Knot Burke." And they are both feared and fast. Today, in memory of this

"Destroyerman," I have ordered all the Burke class and Little Beaver squadron ships currently underway to steam at 31 knots for five minutes beginning at noon.

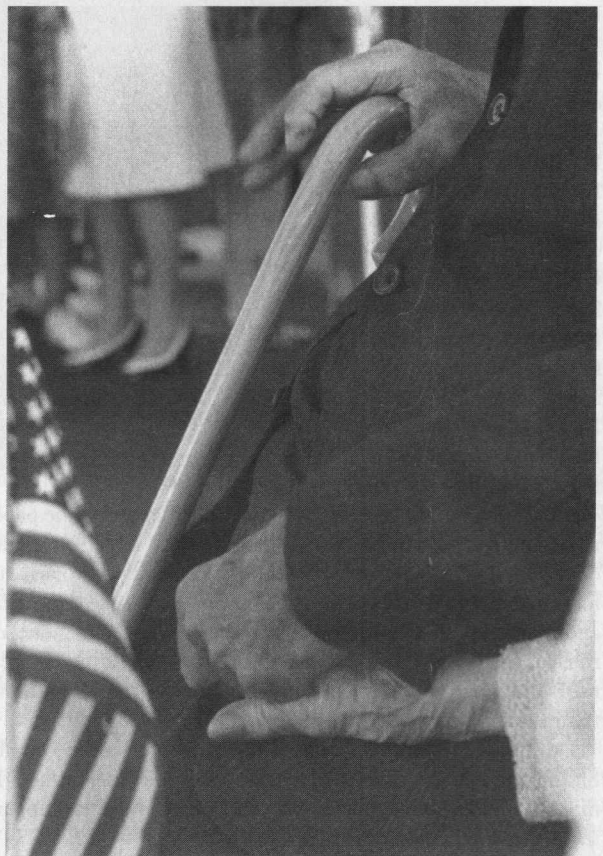
Arleigh Burke's life spanned what has come to be called the American century, one in which the American people understood our nation's special place in the world as a force for freedom and hope and peace. As the new century approaches, it is fair to say that no American did more to act upon that responsibility than Arleigh Burke. The freedoms we cherish, the peace we enjoy were sustained by his vision and his labors. Those freedoms and that peace are his greatest legacy. As long as we remain devoted to them, we will stay faithful to him and to the remarkable generation of Americans he helped to lead.

My fellow Americans, the challenges we face today are new. The foes who oppose us have changed. But the values and the interests we must stand for are the same ones Arleigh Burke dedicated his 18-hour days to preserve -- the same freedom and peace and democracy and human dignity.

With Arleigh Burke's passing we change the watch. A new generation takes the helm. May it find guidance and inspiration in the lessons of his long life so well lived. And may it stay true to the course Admiral Burke set of peace through strength, of freedom through sacrifice, of success through tireless devotion to duty.

Mrs. Burke, you were the Admiral's partner throughout his long and rich life. You blessed him greatly with your love, as his powerful quote on the front of our program so clearly says. In turn, he blessed America with his service.

May God now bless Arleigh Burke in the warm embrace of his eternal love. In the timeless words of the sailor, "Fair winds and following seas."



Remarks by RADM Donald. K. Muchow, CHC

Chief of Chaplains

President Clinton, Distinguished Guests, Mrs. Burke, Dr. Ward, Family and Friends of Admiral Burke.

It is for us to gather here to surround and uphold you, Mrs. Burke, and all the others who mourn the loss of your dear husband. While we have cause for sorrow, we do not despair. For the Psalmist whose writings your husband chose for this occasion reminds us that our strength and hope rest in the Lord. The same Lord who forgives our sin, and who, as our guardian, neither slumbers nor sleeps.

It is proper, also, for us to gather here because it has been the scene where major milestones have occurred in the life of Admiral Burke:

- four years he studied and worshipped here as a midshipman.
- from this Academy he graduated in the 913 member Class of 1923.
- in the afternoon of his graduation, Ensign Burke married you, his beloved Bobbie.
- at this Academy in 1929, he received post graduation instruction in ordnance engineering.
- In August of 1955, on these grounds, Admiral Burke succeeded Admiral Carney as Chief of Naval Operations.
- Six years later he passed his authority to his friend and successor, Admiral George Anderson.
- and now, just as the new year begins, Admiral Burke has answered the call from his Creator for a permanent change of duty at this final resting place.

"ADM Arleigh A. Burke, USN, Sailor". Those are the words etched into his tombstone;

- NOT brilliant naval gunnery and ordnance officer;
- NOT Commodore of Destroyer Squadron 23, World War II's famous "Little Beavers";
- NOT "31-Knot" Burke, victorious warrior at Empress Augusta Bay and other battles;
- NOT major architect of the Korean War's surprise Inchon amphibious landing;
- NOT famous military armistice committee negotiator at the Panmunjon talks;
- NOT the major force of the Polaris missile program;
- NOT Chief of Naval Operations for an unprecedented three terms;
- NOT head of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University;

Just "ADM Arleigh A. Burke, USN, Sailor"

Why, among all of his achievements is the word "sailor" chosen for his tombstone? Was he that humble? Indeed, he was always a humble man. Was he not proud of his other achievements? As a great patriot, he delighted in serving his Nation and his Navy. Many among us happen to believe, however, that the title "sailor" best encapsulates the integrity and essence of this great warrior and inspiring leader. "Sailor" defines best what he wanted others to know about him. And just what is a sailor? In today's Navy even the newest recruit can answer that question by saying:

"I am a United States Sailor. I represent the fighting spirit of Navy Bluejackets who have gone before me to defend freedom and democracy around the world. I proudly serve my country's Navy combat team with honor, commitment and courage. I am committed to excellence and the fair treatment of all. I will obey the orders of my superiors. I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America" Who cannot visualize Admiral Burke as the epitome of those words?

While we could recount for days the extraordinary character and achievements of Admiral Burke, the psalmist summons our attention

elsewhere, to the Creator of Arleigh Burke and us all. Through the psalmist God speaks three words for us who gather to give honor and share our sorrow.

First, in the face of death, this world offers no ultimate comfort. Whether we work in the Pentagon, or the State Department, on a high-tech weapons platform or on the plains of Ancient Palestine, the human question is the same, only the psalmist has merely written it first: "I will lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come?"

The psalmist knew true help does not come from the hills or from anything else this earth offers. Oh, some things might soften the blow of death, or sedate us for a while. Friendship can do that. So can human compassion. But lasting help comes only from God, the maker of heaven and earth, our guardian day and night. Though in grief we must now walk through this valley of the shadow of death, God promises we need fear no evil, for God is with us. The journey is bearable because death never has the last word. God does. Let that be our comfort, says the psalmist. For Christians, the resurrection of Jesus Christ confirms that.

Second, help comes in the sure knowledge of God's forgiveness of us. God removes people's sin from them as far as East is from the West. Even before people trust in God, God has acted to remember their sin no more. The Cross of Jesus Christ confirmed that. That truth has not changed with modern times. When we prepare to face our maker, this is good news. It was so for the psalmist; it is so for us.

Finally, help comes in knowing God walks with us in good times and bad. Admiral Burke once said he prayed to God most earnestly as he was about to marry his dear "Bobbie," asking God to make him a worthy husband. He also spoke of praying earnestly again, as the Bay of Pigs invasion was getting underway, asking God to spare the lives of those involved. Good times and bad, the Lord will keep our going out and our coming in, now and forever. People who trust God have always found the presence and providence of God to be dependable. The psalmist knew it, countless others know it, and so do we, as we hand our lives into God's eternal care.

Now may we embrace bear you, Mrs. Burke, with the words of the psalmist, "My help comes from the Lord...Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever " Amen.

"Life has been good to me. I didn't die young. I wasn't killed in the war. I did most everything I wanted to do, and some things I didn't want to do. I had a job I liked and a woman I loved. Couldn't ask for more than that. "

Arleigh A. Burke