

CAPTAIN LYLE OLIVER ARMEL, U. S. NAVAL RESERVE, DECEASED

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

Captain Armel was born in Holton, Kansas, on June 13, 1895. He was graduated from Holton High School, the Valedictorian of his class, in 1914, and attended Baker University at Baldwin, Kansas, in 1914-1916. Enlisting in the U. S. Naval Reserve Forces on December 11, 1917, as Seaman, Second Class, he advanced to Quartermaster, Second Class, and was selected for officers' training. He was graduated with the Tenth Class at the Naval Officers' Material School, Pelham Bay, New York, and was commissioned Ensign, USNRF, on August 10, 1918,

Reporting on August 26, 1918, to the Naval Auxiliary Reserve, New York, New York, he was assigned duty as watch and division officer with additional duty as communication officer, aboard the USS SANTA ROSALIA, engaged in transport duty in the North Atlantic, and after the cessation of hostilities in November, 1918, to South America, Argentine, and Uruguay. He was detached from the SANTA ROSALIA on June 26, 1919, and following temporary duty with Naval Overseas Transportation Service at New York, was released from active duty on July 31, 1919.

Captain Armel continued his education, interrupted by the war, at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, where he was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1920. While in college he was active in baseball, receiving his college letter in that sport; played tennis, golf, and handball; and was a member of the University of Kansas Debating Team. He was also a member and manager of the K. U. Glee Club.

Remaining a member of the U. S. Naval Reserve Forces, in inactive status, Captain Armel was promoted to Lieutenant (jg) on August 9, 1919, after which he was honorably discharged on December 10, 1921. On October 2, 1924, he re-enrolled in the Naval Reserve Forces, and accepted an appointment to the rank of Lieutenant (jg), and on July 1, 1925, was transferred to the U. S. Naval Reserve. He was promoted to Lieutenant on February 9, 1931, and from that date to July, 1941, was a member of the Naval Reserve, maintaining status and qualifications through the required drills and training cruises on the Great Lakes.

In July 1941 Captain Armel was called to active duty, and thereafter had the following promotions: Lieutenant Commander, February 16, 1942; Commander, February 11, 1944; and Captain, to rank from March 20, 1945.

During the years preceding World War II, Captain Armel was engaged in work in the Educational, Welfare, and Public Relations fields including the following assignments: Circuit Manager for Dominion Chatauquas of Calgary, Canada, in 1920-1923; General Secretary of the

Young Mens Christian Association of Topeka, Kansas, 1923-1933; Relief Administrator of Shawnee County, Kansas, serving successively as CWA Administrator and Federal Disbursing Officer, FERA Administrator, Registrar for CCC and the Certifying Agency for WPA, 1933-1937; travelled as Aide to the National Commander of the American Legion in 1936 and 1937, and was a member of the official party of Legionnaires to visit England, France, and Belgium during the summer of 1937, and as such attended the dedicatory ceremonies of American Battle Monuments of World War I in those countries in July and August, 1937; Director of Development for Washburn College, Topeka, Kansas, 1938-1940; Assistant Secretary, and later Secretary, of the Endowment Association of the University of Kansas, and Coordinator of the National Defense Program for that University, 1940-1941.

Called to active duty in the Naval Reserve in July 1941, Captain Armel reported on July 19, to Headquarters, Twelfth Naval District, San Francisco, California, where he was assigned duty in connection with fitting out the USS ST. MIHIEL (AP 32) and on board when that transport was placed in commission. He served as senior watch officer, gunnery officer, and executive officer, with additional duty as morale and public relations officer of the ST. MIHIEL during the Aleutians operations, including the initial landings at Adak, Amchitka, Atka, Attu, and Kiska. In November 1943, he was detached to Headquarters, Third Naval District, New York, for temporary duty.

On December 17, 1943, Captain Armel reported to the USS DOROTHEA L. DIX (AP 67) for duty as executive officer, with additional duty as assistant morale and education officer. He supervised the refitting of that vessel as an attack transport, and she subsequently served in the North Atlantic on transport-convoy duty. She later became a part of the Assault Forces in amphibious operations, participating with the first waves of Allied forces in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day.

He returned to Headquarters, Twelfth Naval District, on June 21, 1944, and remained there for temporary duty in connection with the conversion and fitting out of the USS TELFAIR (APA 210), and assumed command upon her commissioning at San Francisco on October 31, 1944. After her shake-down cruise, the TELFAIR reported to the Pacific Fleet for duty with Transport Division 51, Transport Squadron 17, Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet. She participated in the assault operations on the Western Ryukyus in March 1945, and in the capture of Kerama Rhetto, Ie Jima and Okinawa Gunto the following month. She later assisted in the landing of occupational forces on the Japanese Mainland at Wakayama, Hiro-Wan, and Kure, Honshu, Japan. For services as Commanding Officer of the TELFAIR during assault operations on Okinawa on April 2, 1945, Captain Armel was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device "V," and cited as follows:

BRONZE STAR MEDAL:

"For heroic achievement as Commanding Officer of the USS TELFAIR, during the assault on enemy Japanese-controlled Okinawa, April 2, 1945. When his ship was attacked by from eight to ten hostile suicide planes, one of which crashed into the vessel and started fires, Captain (then Commander) Armel skillfully maneuvered his ship to carry out its assigned mission in addition to organizing his damage control party which swiftly extinguished the flames. By his courageous and outstanding action, he saved the personnel and cargo from further damage, and his devotion to duty was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

On November 28, 1945, following "Magic Carpet" duty - transporting point personnel from the Pacific war areas to the United States - Captain Armel was relieved of command of the TELFAIR and reported for temporary duty in the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. On January 8, 1946, he reported to the Office of the Coordinator of Public Relations, Executive Office of the Secretary, Navy Department, where he was assigned duty as Assistant Director of the Civil Relations Division, Office of Public Relations, with responsibility for liaison, principally with veterans' organizations.

Captain Armel died of a heart attack at his home in Washington, D. C., on December 5, 1948. He was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery on December 9, 1948. [REDACTED]

In addition to the Bronze Star Medal, Captain Armel had the Victory Medal, Transport Clasp; and is entitled to the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the European-African-Middle Eastern Area Campaign Medal, with one star; the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal; the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one star; and the World War II Victory Medal; and the Navy Occupation Service Medal, Asia Clasp. He also has the Naval Reserve Medal with one Star.

At the time of his death Captain Armel was a member of Dorsey-Liberty Post No. 14, American Legion, Lawrence, Kansas; Forty and Eight; Rotary Club; the Post Mortem Club (Washington, D. C.); Masons (32d Degree and Shrine); Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity; Delta Sigma Rho; Phi Alpha Delta; the Reserve Officers of the Naval Services; and the Naval Order of the United States.

23 December 1948

* * * *