

RADM Edward H. "Iceberg" Smith, USCG (Ret.)
(1889-1961)



The following is a press release issued by the U. S. Coast Guard's Public Information Division shortly after the death of Rear Admiral Edward H. "Iceberg" Smith. It is produced as written, with the exception of corrections to minor typographical errors.

Public Information Division U. S. Coast Guard Headquarters Washington, D. C.

RADM EDWARD H. "ICEBERG" SMITH, U. S. COAST GUARD (RET)

Rear Admiral Edward H. Smith, U. S. Coast Guard, retired, internationally recognized figure in scientific and maritime circles for his knowledge of the Arctic and oceanography, died on his birthday, Sunday, October 29, 1961, of cerebral vascular accident at his home 437 Sippewissett Road, Quisset, Massachusetts. He was 72, and had been critically ill for the past several months.

Rear Admiral Smith was born in 1889 at Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts, a descendent of a long line of Martha's Vineyard whale men. His parents were Edward J. and Sarah Elizabeth (Pease) Smith. After attending Vineyard Haven High School and New Bedford High School, he spent a year studying at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Appointed a cadet on May 4, 1910, he entered the U. S. Coast Guard Academy when it was known as the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service School of Instruction and classes were held aboard the Revenue Practice Cutter ITASCA at Arundel Cove, Maryland. He was graduated and commissioned an Ensign on May 17, 1913, and subsequently advanced in rank as follows:

Lieutenant (jg), June 7, 1918;
Lieutenant, January 12, 1923;
Lieutenant Commander, April 21, 1924;
Commander, October 1, 1934;
Captain, December 1, 1941;
Rear Admiral, June 30, 1942; (permanent rank as of January 1, 1948).

EARLY ASSIGNMENTS

He served his first assignment as junior engineer and line officer aboard the Cutter SEMINOLE, based at Wilmington, North Carolina. From February to November of 1915, he served aboard the Cutter ACUSHNET out of Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and then reported to the Cutter APACHE at Baltimore, Maryland. In January 1916, he was reassigned to the Cutter SEMINOLE.

From August 1917 to January 1919, during World War I he was navigator of the Cutter MANNING in the Atlantic Patrol Force which performed convoy escort duty between England and Gibraltar. He received the World War I Victory Medal for that period. His next tour of duty lasted six months with the Cutter TALLAPOOSA of Boston, after which he was assigned briefly as navigator of the Cutter ANTIGONE of the Newport News Division Transport Force.

In November 1919, he was assigned to the Coast Guard Cutter SENECA, and in the spring of 1920 when that cutter was ordered to conduct the International Ice Patrol he was detailed with her as scientific observer and navigator. From this point on, the main part of his career was devoted to specializing in research and work in the Arctic and in the field of oceanography. As a result of his intensive early work in International Ice Patrol, his associates nick-named him "Iceberg" Smith and others conferred upon him honors for contributing greatly to man's present knowledge of the Arctic and in the science of oceanography.

He continued carrying on the duties of observer with the Ice Patrol until August 1924. During off-seasons he studied at Harvard University and annually prepared for publication the Coast Guard bulletins on the work of the Ice Patrol. In recognition of his work on the Ice Patrol, Harvard University awarded him the Master of Arts Degree in 1924. At this time he was also awarded a Fellowship in Oceanography by the American-Scandinavian Foundation, by which he studied oceanography at the Geo-Physical Institute at Bergen, Norway, from August 1924 to August 1925. From there he spent three months with the British Meteorological Office in London obtaining scientific data and information of value to the Coast Guard in its work of conducting the Ice Patrol.

Returning to the United States, he resumed working with the Ice Patrol throughout the seasons 1926 to 1928. During that time he reorganized the scientific programs for the International Ice Patrol and introduced the modern methods of dynamic oceanography predicting and tracing the movements of the dangerous icebergs. He also began a service of iceberg forecasting whereby the numbers of bergs annually drifting south of Newfoundland are predicted. During off-seasons he continued research work at Harvard University and in 1926 gave lectures on oceanography and Arctic ice at Clark University.

Between January 1928 and June 1936, he was commanding officer of various vessels of the Destroyer Force which the Coast Guard operated during that period in suppression of smuggling. But he was absent from those duties much of the time to perform work in connection with the Ice Patrol, and other special assignments. His commands at that time, however, included the destroyers HENLEY, DOWNES, SHAH, TUCKER, GEORGE E. BADGER, and also command of Base 18 at Woods Hole.

One of his special assignments occurred in the summer of 1928, when he was leader of the Coast Guard Cutter MARION expedition, which made thorough oceanographic surveys in the Labrador Sea, Davis Strait, and Baffin Bay, visiting some of the most important iceberg producing glaciers in West Greenland. This was the most comprehensive oceanographic survey ever made by the United States, from which RADM Smith prepared a report for publication.

In July 1929, he was recommended by Harvard University, the American Geographic Society, and the National Academy of Science as a scientific member of the Graf Zeppelin polar flight proposed by the Central Office of Aeroarctic in Berlin. He was the only American invited by the sponsors of the expedition. The flight was made from July 24 to August 1, 1931, with RADM Smith, then a Lieutenant Commander, acting as observer and navigator of the dirigible. It was the longest non-stop flight ever made by the Graf Zeppelin, constituting a cruise of six days and coverage of 8,000 miles in the area of the Arctic Circle for the purpose of collecting data on terrestrial magnetism, atmospheric electricity, and aerogeodesy. From this expedition, he gathered much information which was of importance to the Ice Patrol.

Prior to that trip, on June 19, 1930, he was awarded the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in geologic and oceanographic physics by Harvard University as a result of original work and extensive thesis.

By June 1936, he was in command of the Cutter TAHOE, and in February 1937, took command of the newly built Cutter JOHN C. SPENCER, both of which were assigned duties in Alaskan waters. While with the latter he was cited by the Navy Department for his rescue of the crew of the USS SWALLOW from Kanaga Island in February 1938.

In October 1938, he became Commanding Officer of the Cutter CHELAN of Boston. He then was designated Commander, International Ice Patrol for the seasons of 1939 and 1940.

WORLD WAR II

On June 1940, he was assigned as commanding officer of the Cutter NORTHLAND and as Commander of the Greenland Patrol. This patrol consisted mainly of Coast Guard cutters which assisted the Army and Navy in establishing the military defense of Greenland. In its earliest days, the Patrol's mission consisted of surveying the area and estimating the probable actions of the Nazis. At that time RADM Smith prepared and placed into effect a plan for defenses which involved the evacuation of Danish and Norwegian civilians scattered over the territory, and the organization of these trappers into a Greenland government operated sledge patrol. As a direct result of this administration, the first violation of the United States- Greenland agreement was foiled when in September 1941, a German agent and secret codes were captured in Northeast Greenland by the Greenland Patrol. Enemy forces were repeatedly prevented from establishing a foot- hold in Greenland during the ensuing war years.

He remained in command of the Greenland Patrol until November 1943, during World War II, during which he advanced to Captain then to Rear Admiral. He then served as Commander, Task Force 24, U. S. Atlantic Fleet until the end of the war. Rear Admiral Smith was the first Coast Guards- man awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for World War II service, for which he was cited as follows:

"For exceptionally meritorious service to the Government of the United States in a duty of great responsibility as Commander of the Greenland Patrol and later as Commander of a Task Force in the Atlantic Fleet from December 1941 to November 1944. During the critical years of 1942 and 1943, Rear Admiral Smith planned, built, organized and efficiently administered the naval bases and stations in Greenland and in the Arctic for the support of the Army in those areas and the Naval control of the North Atlantic. Under extremely difficult conditions, the forces of his command successfully operated patrol and escorts, maintained a system of weather stations and provided full logistic and tactical support for the Army. As Commander of a Task Force in these strategic waters, he skillfully directed vital weather, patrol and escort services which were of inestimable assistance in connection with the ferrying of aircraft and the operation of transport planes to

and from the European theaters of war and effectively protected valuable convoys. In all his negotiations and contacts, Rear Admiral Smith distinguished himself by his splendid diplomacy, sound judgment and intelligent planning and consistently maintained excellent relations with other United States forces and those of the Allied Nations. His superior tactical knowledge and steadfast devotion to duty throughout these important years were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

/s/ JAMES FORRESTAL

His other service campaign medals and ribbons included the American Defense Service with Sea Clasp, European-African-Middle Eastern Area, and World War II Victory. He also received the Cross of the Commander of the Order of Danneberg First Class from the King of Denmark for services in Greenland.

In August 1945, Rear Admiral Smith was assigned as Commander, Third Coast Guard District, New York, and later (in May 1946) was designated the additional post of Commander, Eastern Area. He was also Captain-of-the-Port of New York, having supervision of all activities in this respect in the states within the Third District boundaries. In addition to these duties he served on the Staff of Applied Physics Laboratory of the John Hopkins University from 1946 to 1949. He was also Project Leader, Weapons System Evaluation Group, Office of the Secretary of Defense from 1949 to 1951. He retired from his New York post on June 30, 1950, with more than 40 years of Coast Guard service. At that time he accepted the position of Director of the internationally famous Oceanographic Institution at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, of which he had been a trustee for several years, and where he remained until 1956. He was appointed to the Naval Research Advisory Committee, Department of the Navy, on February 15, 1953. From the first of his retirement on, he continued to be active in promoting the Coast Guard's safety program with shipping and with aircraft flying over water areas.

Rear Admiral Smith was a member of the American Geophysical Union, the Arctic Institute of North America, the Aero-Arctic Society, and the Propeller Club of New York. He held an unlimited master's license in the American Merchant Marine. He also lectured at the University of Washington. Rear Admiral Smith leaves his wife, Mrs. Isabel B. Smith, formerly Miss Brier of Malden, Massachusetts, and three children, Porter Hulsart, Stuart Edward, and Jeremiah.

The remains of Rear Admiral Smith are being shipped to Boston for cremation, after which services will be held at the Church of Messiah, Woods Hole, Massachusetts, at 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, November 1, 1961. Burial will be conducted at Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, on Thursday November 2.