

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

VICE ADMIRAL HOWARD FITHIAN KINGMAN
U.S. NAVY, RETIRED

Howard Fithian Kingman was born in Hillsboro, North Dakota, on May 5, 1890. He attended Hillsboro High School and Wilmers Preparatory School, Annapolis, Maryland, before his appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, from North Dakota in 1907. Graduated in June 1911 he served at sea, as then required by law, before being commissioned Ensign, March 7, 1912. He subsequently attained the rank of Rear Admiral, May 10, 1942, and Vice Admiral to date from December 10, 1945. He was transferred to the Retired List of the Navy in the rank of Vice Admiral on February 1, 1947.

After graduation in 1911, he served successively in the USS WEST VIRGINIA and the USS OREGON until December 1912. Ordered to Asiatic Station, he had duty aboard the USS CHAUNCEY from February 1913 until January 1915, and in command of the USS MONADNOCK until March 1916. In May of that year he joined the USS NEW YORK which operated during World War I from 1917 until November 1918, as flagship of Battle Squadron 6, Battleship Division 9, with the British Grand Fleet. Detached from the NEW YORK in January 1919, he served as First Lieutenant of the USS ARIZONA until May 1919. From June of that year until September 1920 he had duty with the General Board, Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

In September 1920, he was assigned to the USS KANSAS as Aide on the staff of the Commander, Battleship Division 4, Atlantic Fleet. A year later he was transferred to the USS ARIZONA for duty first as Aide and Flag Secretary, and later Flag Lieutenant, on the staff of the Commander, Battleship Division 7, Pacific Fleet, redesignated Battleship Division 4, Battle Fleet. In June 1923, he reported for instruction at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, for a year, after which he had duty in the Office of Naval Communications, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., from June 1924 until August 1925.

He served as Aide on the staff of Commander in Chief, Battle Fleet, USS CALIFORNIA, for a year from September 1925, and later had duty as Aide and Flag Lieutenant on the staff of Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet the USS SEATTLE, flagship. He commanded the USS DOYEN from November 1927 until August 1928, and in September of that year reported for duty as Assistant Naval Attache at the American Embassy, London, England. During that assignment, which extended to August 1930, he served as United States Representative in revising the International Code of Signals.

After his return to the United States in September 1930, he joined the USS MISSISSIPPI in October, to serve as Gunnery Officer until June 1932. Following duty as Aide to the Commandant, Navy Yard, Washington, D.C., he again had a tour of duty in the Office of Naval Communications, Navy Department. In August 1935 he joined the USS MINNEAPOLIS, and served as Executive Officer of that cruiser until June 1937. He then had duty as District Intelligence Officer, Third Naval District, New York, New York, until April 1939.

Returning to sea in May 1939, he served as Commander, Destroyer Squadron 5, redesignated Destroyer Squadron 29, Asiatic Fleet, until May 1941. Upon his return to the United States, he again had duty in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department. On August 24, 1942, he assumed command of the USS NEVADA, commanding that battleship until January 25, 1943, when he was designated Commander, Battleship Division 2. For his services in the latter command, which extended to October 6, 1944, he received a Letter of Commendation, with authorization to wear the Commendation Ribbon, from the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, and was awarded the Legion of Merit, and a Gold Star in lieu of the second Legion of Merit, with Combat "V" and citations in part, to follow: Letter of Commendation: "For distinguishing himself as the commander of the fire support group which bombarded enemy-held Bititu Island, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands immediately before the assault and during the capture and occupation of the atoll....His personal leadership and the fine efficiency with which he handled his ships, combined with a thorough knowledge of this phase of amphibious operations, contributed in a large measure to the successful capture of Tarawa. His conduct throughout was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."


Legion of Merit: "For especially meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services. He was the commander of a fire support section which bombarded the enemy-held islands of Roi and Namur, Kwajalein Atoll, and later Eniwetok Atoll of the Marshall Islands, during the assault phases. In constricted waters he effectively maneuvered the ships of his group close to known shoals, and delivered the supporting gunfire which reduced to a minimum the enemy opposition to the assault of our forces....."

Gold Star in Lieu of Second Legion of Merit: "For exceptionally meritorious conduct....as commander of a fire support bombardment group of vessels participating in the attack and capture of Japanese held islands during the period 14 June 1944 to 1 August 1944. Due to his initiative, perseverance, and outstanding ability he was highly successful in dealing devastation to the enemy and protection to our own ever-advancing troops. The highly efficient and effective manner in which (his) units accomplished their many missions contributed materially to the success of the operation....."

After his return to the United States he became Commandant, Fifteenth Naval District, Balboa, Canal Zone; Commander, Panama Sea Frontier; and Commander, Southeast Pacific, serving from November 3, 1944, until August 1945. He was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of a Third Legion of Merit for "exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States as Commandant of the Fifteenth Naval District, during the crucial period from November 3, 1944, to August 23, 1945....The accelerated and orderly flow of shipping from Ocean to Ocean was evidence of his strong leadership and administrative ability and contributed to the successful prosecution of the war."

In August 1945, Vice Admiral Kingman assumed duty as Commander, Battle Division 9, Pacific Fleet. On November 22, 1945, following the capitulation of the Japanese the preceding August, he relieved Fleet Admiral (then Admiral) William F. Halsey, Jr., USN, as Commander, Third Fleet, hoisting his flag in the USS SOUTH DAKOTA in the harbor at San Pedro, California. He was detached from command of the Third Fleet on November 30, 1946, and relieved of active duty pending his retirement on February 1, 1947.

In addition to the Legion of Merit with two Gold Stars, and the Commendation Ribbon, Vice Admiral Kingman has the Victory Medal, Grand Fleet Clasp (USS NEW YORK); the China Service Medal (USS BLACK HAWK); the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the American Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal. He also was awarded the Order of the Liberator, Grade of Official, by the Government of Venezuela, and Abdon Calderon, First Class and Diploma, by the Government of Ecuador.



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