

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

COMMANDER WELLS R. BILL, JR., UNITED STATES NAVY

Wells Rood Bill, Jr., was born in Hartford, Connecticut, on July 18, 1916, son of Wells R. and Lucia (Sharp) Bill, both now deceased. He graduated from the New York State Maritime College in February 1938 and on March 2, that year, received his license as Third Mate. He was employed by the Bull Steamship Line as Fourth Officer on the SS MAE from March until May 1938, after which he worked in the Marine Department at the Home Insurance Company, first as a Clerk and later as Assistant Underwriter in the Cotton Division. He was commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Naval Reserve on August 1, 1941 and subsequently advanced in rank attaining that of Commander, to date from July 1, 1953, having transferred to the Regular Navy in 1946.

Ordered into active Naval service, he was assigned in September 1941 to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. From January to March 1942 he was attached to the District Communications Office, Third Naval District and to the Armed Guard, Brooklyn, New York, after which he served as Communication Liaison Officer on board the United States Army transport NORMACTIDE. In October 1942 he joined the U. S. Army transport MARIPOSA and while on board saw action during the landings in North Africa in November 1942.

Between May and August he had training at the Sub-Chaser Training Center, Miami, Florida. In October 1943 he reported as Communication Officer on board the USS STRIVE and in April 1944 became Executive Officer of that minesweeper, which participated in minesweeping operations at Anzio, Southern France and Okinawa. In October 1945 he assumed command of the USS PEREGRINE, school ship at the Naval Mine Warfare School, Yorktown, Virginia, and in March 1947 joined the USS HENLEY as Executive Officer. He commanded the minesweeper HOBSON for a year, July 1947-July 1948, after which he had instruction (five-term student) at Columbia University, New York, New York.

In June 1950 he joined the staff of Commander Mine Squadron THREE to serve as Operations Officer and Chief Staff Officer until September 1951. He was awarded the Legion of Merit with Combat "V," and cited as follows:

"For exceptionally meritorious conduct...as Operations Officers on the Staff of Commander Mine Squadron THREE during operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea from August 3, 1950 to September 15, 1951. A capable and inspiring leader, Lieutenant Commander Bill was highly successful in obtaining maximum efficiency from the limited minesweeping forces available during a period when the mine menace was a primary threat to friendly shipping and naval forces. In addition to his regular duties,

he ably discharged the responsibilities of Task Element Commander during the Hungnam evacuation, the Bokuko-Samchok, Yangyang to Pohang, Chinhae-Masan, and the Wonsan reoccupation minesweeping operations, and maintained a high standard of morale and esprit de corps within his command. Although his unit was frequently taken under hostile fire, (he) completed his assigned missions with marked success..."

In October 1951 he was assigned to the staff of the Commander in Chief Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean with headquarters in Naples, Italy. He remained there until January 1954, when he became Officer in Charge of the U. S. Naval School, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Naval Powder Factory, Indian Head, Maryland. In July 1957 he assumed command of the destroyer HICKOX and in September of that year transferred to command of the destroyer WADLEIGH.

In addition to the Legion of Merit with Combat "V," Commander Bill has the American Defense Service Medal, the American Campaign Medal; the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with three stars; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two stars; the World War II Victory Medal; the Navy Occupation Service Medal; the National Defense Service Medal; the Korean Service Medal with six stars and the United Nations Service Medal. He also has the Korean Presidential Unit Citation.

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Biographies Branch
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