

Vintage Oakleaf Spotlight: RADM Joseph Howard, SC, USN, (Ret.)

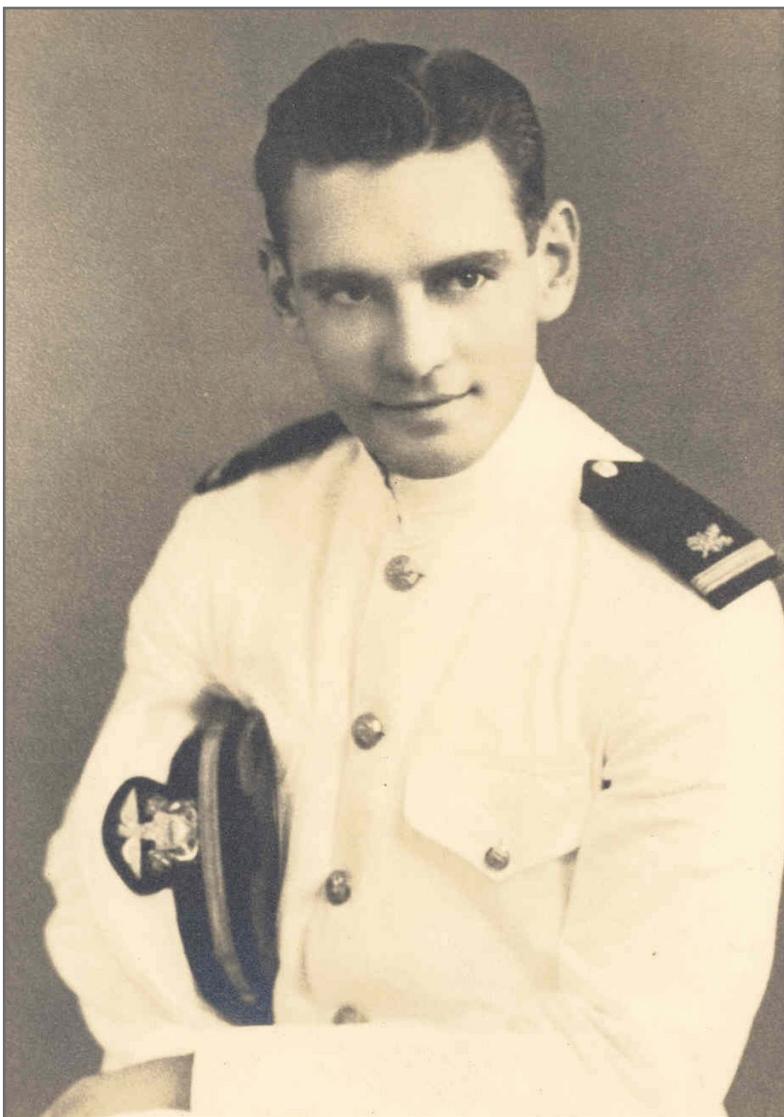
By CAPT Tiffany Schad, SC, USN (Ret.), Board of Directors

Mr. John Howard, esq recently spoke with me about his father, RADM (ret) Joseph Howard, who had quite a unique and fascinating career in the Supply Corps. RADM Howard was a pioneer in the Supply Corps—paving new paths for future Supply Corps Officers.

Joe Howard grew up in a family closely tied with the Navy. He was admitted to the Naval Academy but chose not to go. He graduated from the University of California with a degree in Economics and was interested in the Supply Corps from the very beginning. His first assignment was on a small ship in Pearl Harbor in October 1941. Joe did not talk about what happened specifically on December 7, 1941 for quite some time. Eventually, he shared the story with his son John. Joe was planning to go golfing with a buddy assigned on the USS OKLAHOMA (BB-37) that day. Joe and his friend saw the Japanese planes approaching and realized that what was being dropped were bombs. His friend ran back to the OKLAHOMA and below decks to tend to his ledgers, and unfortunately, died that day along with 428 other crew members when the OKLAHOMA was sunk by the Japanese.

Ensign Howard was on his pier and wound up being the senior officer in

charge of triage and, sadly, having to make life and death decisions regarding which injured sailors would be sent to an already overwhelmed hospital. Very tough decisions to make for a young man of 25 years of age.



Ensign Joe Howard

While Lieutenant Howard was continuing his tour of duty in the Pacific, he met and became friends with Captain Arleigh Burke. After the war, CAPT Burke was detailed to the CNO's

Office and invited Joe to join him. During his time in the CNO's office, CAPT Burke along with Joe organized "OP-23", which was a subversive part of the Navy trying to preserve Naval Aviation in the Navy. During this time, the Army

was trying to take over the Marine Corps, and the Air Force wanted to take over all aviation. Clearly, Burke, Howard, and others in OP-23 were successful.

While CDR Joe Howard was the officer-in-charge of a Construction Battalion in Port Hueneme, CA, he received a letter from the CNO, ADM Arleigh Burke, asking Joe if he would be his speech writer. (View this fascinating letter and several speeches CDR Howard wrote with ADM Burke's comments on the NSCF website.) CDR Howard spent four stressful, but life-shaping years as the CNO's speechwriter.

CDR Howard was promoted to Captain and became Commanding Officer of Navy Supply Center San Diego—one of his favorite assignments. Then, he was called back to Washington and became the

Chief of Procurement and Deputy Chief of Navy Material. He became a specialist in Procurement and Contracts, writing several articles on the importance of procurement in the Navy. During that



CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

3 January 1957

Dear Joe:

Once a man gets tagged as being able to work like hell, he never gets a soft job. Ralph Williams, whom you know very well, has been writing most of my speeches for the last six months or so but he is due to be detached sometime next spring or summer. There are several people who could possibly fill this arduous job. One of these is you, but before we do any more considering I'd like to know what you think about it.

I'll tell you a little bit about the job. It's awful. In the first place, you know how difficult it is to write speeches for me, because I'm not a very good speech-maker and I have just one method of delivery. I can't tell jokes, and I'm liable to stick my foot in my mouth if I start ad libbing. Also I run out of ideas on speeches most of the time, which means that somebody else has got to generate the ideas. This means that whoever does the drafting of the speeches has got to steam around in the Navy Department; know what's going on; sit in on a lot of the conferences; be able to determine what's important and what isn't; determine trends and what can be done to influence trends (in other words, establish trends ourselves); and a lot of other similar activities with which I am sure you are familiar.

Another thing is that there are a lot of speeches. I don't like to give them, but sometimes I average as many as three a week--although I suspect the annual rate is somewhere around fifty. Many of them are repetitious, which is not bad from the work-load angle--but still, that's a lot of speeches! The hours are not good, although sometimes there is nothing to do for as long as two or three hours. But usually you are fighting a deadline with me on your back because I want to see it early enough to study the ideas before I have to give a speech.

You know that I'm a little short-tempered (and this job hasn't made me any better), so whoever takes the job will catch a lot of hell--most of the time undeservedly, which doesn't make much difference.

Ralph can give you a little more dope on the details, since I will turn this letter over to him to forward to you.

If you are interested in this sort of a rough billet, let me know soon so that we can make a decision.

Best regards to you and Irene, and with the hopes that you had a happy holiday season, including music, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Arleigh Burke
ARLEIGH BURKE

Commander J. L. Howard, U.S. Navy
Yards and Docks Supply Office
U.S. Naval Construction Battalion Center
Port Hueneme, California

assignment, Joe was deep-selected for admiral and sent to the Defense Center for Supply. From there, Joe was to be the Supply Officer of the Atlantic Fleet in Norfolk as a two-star, but was diverted to lead the Navy Supply Center in Charleston because a North Carolina congressman did not like the Supply Corps admiral who was slated. NSC Charleston was RADM Howard's final duty station in the Navy. In retirement, RADM Howard moved to Spain and wrote novels. 🍂

1957 letter from CNO RADM Arleigh
Burke to CDR Joe Howard.