

Adm. James L. Holloway III, Who Led the Naval Historical Foundation and Made So Much History Himself, Dies at Age 97



Then-CNO Adm. Jonathan Greenert (right) and Adm. James Holloway look through a commemorative book during a 2015 centennial celebration for the Office of the CNO and Navy staff at the Washington Navy Yard. U.S. Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Nathan Laird

ARLINGTON, Va. – Adm. James L. Holloway III, the 20th chief of naval operations and a combat veteran of World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, died Nov. 26, according to the Naval Historical Foundation (NHF), an organization he headed after his retirement from active duty.

The NHF confirmed his death early on Nov. 26 in a phone call.

“It is with great sadness that the Naval Historical Foundation announces the passing of Admiral James L. Holloway III, the 20th chief of naval operations, a true Navy legend, son of a four-star admiral and former chairman of the Naval Historical Foundation,” the NHF said in its release on Holloway.

“The NHF is humbled to pay homage to this incredible warrior and public servant. Admiral Holloway’s life was an inspiration, full of heroic accomplishments and achievements to which many might aspire, but few achieve. Admiral Holloway’s life was one of exemplary service, dedication, sacrifice, leadership and honor.”



Adm. James L. Holloway III (left) congratulates Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Robert Walker in June 1975. U.S. Navy

Holloway served as a surface warfare officer in WWII, as a naval aviator in the Korean War and as a carrier skipper, task force commander and numbered fleet commander during Vietnam.

According to the Historical Foundation's announcement and obituary on Holloway, he was born in Charleston, S.C., on Feb. 23, 1922, to James L. Holloway Jr. and Jean Gordon Hagood. His father was a member of the U.S. Naval Academy Class of 1919 and attained the rank of Admiral – distinguishing the Holloways as the only father-son pair in the Navy's history to achieve that rank during active service.

James L. Holloway III attended Saint James School near Hagerstown, Maryland, and upon graduation in 1939 entered the Naval Academy himself, graduating in 1942 as a member of the accelerated Class of 1943, where he was a member of the wrestling team.

Adm. James L. Holloway III reminisces in a 2012 interview about the daring 1972 raid into Haiphong Harbor by four U.S. Navy warships.

Interview courtesy of Aerocinema

He served in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters during World War II, including North Atlantic convoy duty and in the western Pacific at Saipan, Tinian, Palau and Leyte Gulf campaigns as gunnery officer of the destroyer USS Bennion, according to his obituary.

During the Battle of Surigao Strait in October 1944, the Bennion was heavily engaged and helped sink the battleship Yamashiro with torpedoes in addition to shooting down three Japanese aircraft. For his actions during the battle, Holloway received the Bronze Star Medal, the Navy Commendation Medal

and the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation.

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Naval Historical Foundation

Following WWII, Holloway reported for flight training and was designated a naval aviator, according to his NHF obituary. During the Korean War, he flew many combat sorties in a Grumman F9F-2 Panther, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross, three Air Medals and the Korean Presidential Unit Citation.

He was a pioneer in this early era of carrier-based jet aviation and completed two tours in the heavily contested war zone. During one particularly challenging time, the commanding officer of his squadron, Fighting Squadron 52, was shot down and Holloway found himself in the leadership role as commander.



Adm. James L. Holloway III’s official U.S. Navy photo.

Shortly after the war, he served as a technical expert in the production of the critically acclaimed movie, “The Bridges at Toko-Ri,” a film that generated public awareness of the Korean War and the sacrifices of those who fought in it.

From 1965 to 1967, he commanded the USS Enterprise, the Navy’s first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier. Holloway was the third commanding officer of the ship but the first to take her into combat. He was subsequently promoted to rear admiral and then vice admiral in 1970, commanding the U.S. 7th Fleet through the end of the Vietnam War.

Holloway served as CNO from 1974 to 1978, including periods

where he was acting chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, during a particularly challenging time in the history of our nation. His accomplishments as a flag officer earned him four Navy Distinguished Service Medals and two Defense Distinguished Service Medals.

Admiral James L. Holloway III discusses his role during the Battle of Surigao Strait at Leyte Gulf in October 1944.

Video courtesy of the Naval Historical Foundation

Following his naval service, Holloway continued in public service and authored "Aircraft Carriers at War: A Personal Retrospective of Korea, Vietnam, and the Soviet Confrontation," a book that reflected his passion for analyzing history to better understand the present and future.