

## **COMMANDER GEORGE CORNELIUS**

Commander George Cornelius, U.S. Navy (Retired) died March 28, 2006. Born in South Toms River, NJ on July 27, 1920 he graduated from Toms River High School in 1937 and won a scholarship to play trumpet in the band at the Pine Beach NJ Admiral Farragut Academy.

A competitive Congressional appointment won in 1939 sent him to the U.S. Naval Academy where he contributed cartoons and illustrations to the undergraduate publications, the Log and the Trident, and served on the Design Committee of the 1943 Class Crest.

He graduated in 1942 in the wartime Class of 1943. He was inducted into the Toms River Regional Schools Hall of Fame in 1991.

In 23 active duty Navy years he saw battleship service, destroyer duty in WW II including the Battle of the North Atlantic, two-ocean submarine service and 15 years as a Naval Aviator, piloting 28 different aircraft types.

In 1954 he wrote the words and music of the Naval Aviation's official theme march, Navy Wings of Gold.

He wore both the submarine officer's Gold Dolphins and the carrier pilot's Golden Wings.

A Navy Photographic School graduate, he wrote, produced and directed naval training films, supervised aerial photographic research, and represented the U.S. Navy in NATO weapons development programs.

He served on the Steering Committee guiding successful international development and production of the Atlantic, NATO's Maritime Patrol Aircraft. As a photo-reconnaissance pilot he was decorated for hazardous missions over hostile territory. He was awarded the Secretary of the Navy Commendation, the Atlantic, Pacific, European Theater, National Defense Service and China Station medals. He held French and Russian Interpreter-Translator Certificates.

After Navy retirement in 1963 he represented, in Paris and Brussels, U.S. aerospace firms. In 1980 he was appointed to a Department of Defense civilian post in avionics development at NATO Headquarters in Belgium, where he won three annual Outstanding Performance awards.

He was a life member of the U.S. Naval Institute and frequently authored articles for its Proceedings and Naval History magazines. An essay, My Job: Protecting America's Freedom, was a winner in an American Heritage Freedom Foundation writing contest. The American National Library of Poetry published his poem,

Eternal, Vernal Spring. Another poem, The Epic of '43, brought him unofficial recognition as "The Poet Laureate of the USNA Class of 1943."

He was a life member of the Association of Navy Photographers and the Association of Naval Aviation.

Final retirement in 1985 took him and his wife, Sally Stevens Cornelius, to San Diego, CA, then to Jacksonville, FL where he pursued a part-time career as a freelance writer. In 1996 the Navy Chief Photographers Association made him an Honorary Chief Petty Officer, a rare distinction for a commissioned officer.