

NEWS RELEASE

National Gallery of Art
Washington, D. C.

FOR RELEASE:
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WASHINGTON, November 22: An unusual group of war portraits of personnel of the Naval Services is being exhibited at the National Gallery of Art, for three weeks, opening tomorrow, David E. Finley, Director, announces.

It represents many of the more prominent leaders and men of our Naval Services during one of the most trying and threatening periods of our National existence. It is the first time this entire group of military portraits has been shown.

The portraits are official only in that they are public property, created by the Navy Department, during and since the war, as an historic record for eventual installation in the proposed National Museum of Military and Naval History.

They are the combined work of three official Navy Combat Artists, Commander Dwight Shepler, Commander Albert K. Murray and Lt. Commander William F. Draper. Oil, charcoal, pastel and crayon are the media chiefly used.

The list of subjects is a representative cross-section. The group runs from the top of the Navy and Marine Corp Registers on to representative gallant enlisted men, and even a few colorful tribal guerillas who greatly helped our forces attain their objectives. Also included are a few portraits representing the legion of women who helped keep our fighting men in action.

The approach to them is, for the most part, casual and straight-forward. Collectively, as portraits, they possess a wide and varied approach in lighting, composition and equipment. Individually, they are rich in character, in background, and in historical properties - exciting, authentic, vivid. Some are groups, others single figures. Some were painted aboard their flagships, or drawn in the field beside their tented headquarters or at advanced base quarters. Some were done after or in between the sweat of battle campaigns.

Of particular interest to the observer will be the several occasions when two artists have portrayed the same man - often in different localities, under widely different conditions and often months or years apart.

At Noumea, Christmas, 1942, Commander Dwight Shepler made a vital portrait drawing of Admiral Halsey. He shows the haggard look of heavy responsibility and the exhaustion, anxiety and determination of those early days. Lt. Commander Draper painted a vigorous oil of the Admiral in the South Pacific with an appropriate Japanese print background in which Japanese figures run for shelter in the ensuing storm.

There are also two portraits of Marine General Vandegrift - one done at Guadalcanal by Commander Shepler and one by Commander Murray in Washington - over three years apart.

Also shown are portrait sketches of three leaders of the Bikini Atomic tests - Admiral W. P. H. Blandy, Rear Admiral W. S. Parsons and Dr. R. A. Sawyer by Captain Charles Bittinger, war-time camouflage expert.

Commander Shepler served in both Pacific and Atlantic Theatres, participating in actions at Guadalcanal and Santa Cruz, the Normandy invasion, the Philippine campaign at Ormoc, Leyte, and Lingayen Gulf and finally Okinawa.

Commander Murray's principal activities were centered in the Caribbean, South Atlantic and Mediterranean.

Lt. Commander Draper's first action was in the Aleutians, then at Bougainville, Saipan and Guam.

The collection, as a whole, is a documentation of many of the officers and men who helped to write some of the most brilliant chapters in the history of the mightiest Navy the world has ever known.

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