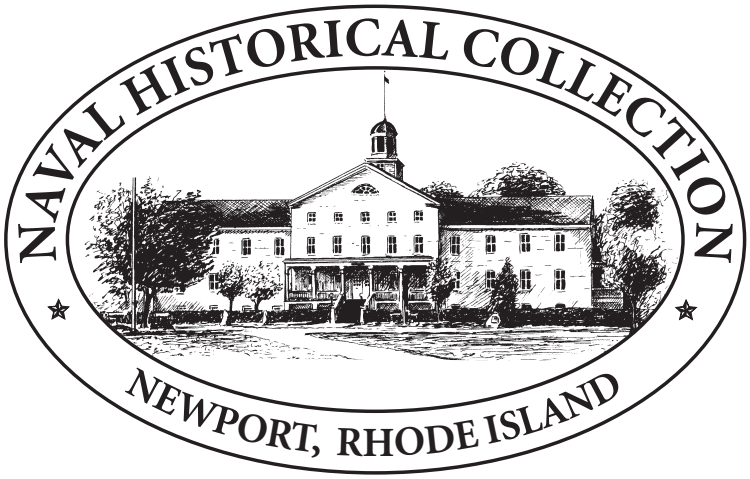
Register of the
Ernest J. King Papers



Naval War College
Newport, RI

REGISTER OF THE PAPERS
OF
ERNEST J. KING

Compiled by
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Biography

Ernest J. King, future CNO and Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Fleet during World War II, was born to working class parents in Lorain, Ohio, on November 23, 1878. A good student, he graduated first in his high school class and then went on to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Graduating in 1901, he was assigned to the Naval Torpedo Station in Newport, Rhode Island, where he attended a course in Torpedo design and development. This was followed by assignments in the USS EAGLE in the Caribbean; in the USS CINCINNATI in the Asiatic Fleet; in the USS ILLINOIS, a ship of the European Squadron; and, in 1905, in the USS ALABAMA, flagship of the Second Division, Atlantic Fleet.

In October 1905, he married Martha Egerton, a Baltimore belle whom he had met during his Naval Academy days. The couple eventually had six daughters and one son, Ernest Jr. The first three years of their married life were spent at the Naval Academy where he taught ordnance, had a executive staff position, and also took advantage of the opportunity to write, winning the 1909 U.S. Naval Institute essay prize contest for his article on shipboard organization.

From 1909 to 1912 King served in battleships of the Atlantic Fleet before his promotion to lieutenant commander. He went on to his first command, the destroyer USS TERRY, which he considered one of the highlights of his career, then to the new destroyer CASSIN and an assignment as part-time aide to William S. Sims. By 1915, King had joined the staff of Vice Admiral Henry T. Mayo, Commander, Battleship Force, Atlantic Fleet, with whom he served for the duration of World War I, detaching in 1919. Although he did not see action, he learned much about war during his tenure, mainly through conferences with political leaders and admirals and tours of bases, fleets and battlefields. This would prove invaluable experience during his leadership role in the Second World War.

At the war's end, he was named Head of the Post-Graduate School in Annapolis, a post he held from 1919-1921. Together with William Pye and Dudley Knox, King authored a report on naval education, charting an officer's progression, which became official policy. Anxious to return to sea, he took command of USS BRIDGE in 1921. This proved to be one of his last assignments with the surface line Navy before he entered the submarine service.

In 1922, King enrolled in Submarine School in New London, Connecticut; however, he never took the qualifying exams, fearing failure. Nevertheless, he commanded both Submarine Divisions Nine and Eleven prior to assuming command of the Submarine Base at New London, a prestigious post which served him well with regard to promotion to flag rank.

From submarines King transitioned to aviation, obtaining his wings as a naval aviator at age forty-eight after flight training in Pensacola. After this, he returned as commanding officer of USS WRIGHT and then, in 1930, was ordered to take command of the aircraft carrier USS LEXINGTON assigned to the Pacific Fleet. Two years in the LEXINGTON earned him a recommendation for promotion to rear admiral.

King relished an assignment at the prestigious Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, where he had the opportunity to study the art of naval warfare undisturbed by the pressures of

command. Graduating in 1933, he went on to become Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics on the death of William Moffet. In 1936, he became Commander, Aircraft Base Force, with headquarters on the west coast, where he integrated patrol seaplanes in his command. Aviation related billets continued, and with promotion to vice admiral in 1938 he became Commander, Aircraft Battle Force in USS SARATOGA.

Disappointed that he wasn't selected as CNO in 1939, King was assigned to the General Board, only a year later to take command of the Atlantic Fleet, and then promotion to vice admiral. From that position, he pursued the undeclared anti-submarine warfare against Germany in 1941. By December 1941, Roosevelt had named him Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet and in March 1942, Chief of Naval Operations. He wielded more power than any other naval officer in U.S. history before or since. King also had a seat on the Joint Chiefs of Staff and was on the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff, attending every major wartime planning conference. With these twin posts, King exercised total control over the Navy's bureaus, offices, and operating forces and was the chief advisor to FDR on the naval conduct of the war.

King successfully prosecuted the war in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters and was promoted to the newly established rank of fleet admiral in 1944, a five star rank reserved for select naval leaders. With the war over in August 1945, King was relieved as CNO by Chester W. Nimitz in mid-December, but retained an office in the Navy Department where he wrote his memoirs and served as an advisor to the Secretary of the Navy.

In 1947, King suffered a stroke and his health deteriorated over the years. He spent the next nine years in and out of hospitals and died on June 25, 1956, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. He was buried in the Naval Academy cemetery in Annapolis.

King's medals include the Navy Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Spanish Campaign Medal, the Sampson Medal, the Mexican Service Medal, the Victory Medal, the American Defense Service Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal, as well as many foreign decorations.

His honorary degrees were from the College of William and Mary, Harvard University, Northwestern University, Princeton University, Miami University, Oxford University and Bowdoin College.

Career Outline

1878	Born, November 23, 1878, Lorain, Ohio
1901	Graduated, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland
1901-1903	USS EAGLE (PY); USS CINCINNATI (C-7); USS ILLINOIS (BB-7)
1903	Commissioned Ensign; USS CINCINNATI (C-7)
1905-1906	USS ALABAMA (BB-8)
1906	Promoted to Lieutenant
1906-1909	U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, Executive Staff and Instructor, Department of Ordnance
1910	USS NEW HAMPSHIRE (BB-25), Engineering Officer
1911-1912	Aide, Flag Secretary, CIC, U.S. Atlantic Fleet
1912-1914	Engineering Experimental Station, Annapolis, MD
1913	Promoted to Lieutenant Commander
1914	USS TERRY (TBD-25), CO; USS CASSIN (DD-43), CO
1915	Sixth Division, Torpedo Flotilla, Atlantic Fleet, CO
1915	USS ARKANSAS (BB-33), Engineering Officer and Assistant Chief of Staff
1916-1918	USS WYOMING (BB-32) and USS PENNSYLVANIA (BB-38)
1917	Promoted to Commander
1919-1921	Postgraduate School, Annapolis, MD, Head
1921	USS BRIDGE (AF-1), CO.
1922-1923	Submarine Division 11 and Submarine Division 3, CO.
1923-1926	U.S. Submarine Base, New London, CT, CO
1926-1927	USS WRIGHT (AV-1), CO
1927	Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, Flight Training

1927-1928	USS WRIGHT (AV-1), CO
1928-1929	Bureau of Aeronautics, Assistant Chief
1929-1930	Naval Air Station, Norfolk, VA, CO
1930-1932	USS LEXINGTON (CV-2), CO
1933-1936	Bureau of Aeronautics, Chief; Promoted to Rear Admiral
1936-1937	USS WRIGHT (AV-1), Aircraft Scouting Force, CO
1938	Promoted to Vice Admiral
1938-1939	USS SARATOGA (CV-3), Aircraft [Carriers] Battle Force, CO
1940	USS TEXAS (BB-35), CO
1941	Atlantic Fleet, Commander-in-Chief; U.S. Fleet, Commander-in-Chief in USS AUGUSTA (CA-31); Promoted to Admiral
1942-1945	Chief of Naval Operations
1944	Promoted to Fleet Admiral
1945	November 20, retired from the U.S. Navy
1956	June 25, died, Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Description of Papers

The research source materials collected by Thomas Buell for his biography of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King entitled *Master of Seapower* were presented to the Naval War College Foundation for deposit in the Naval Historical Collection in July 1979.

The collection consists of materials gathered by Buell, as well as documents used by Walter Whitehill for his biography of King, *A Naval Record*. Correspondence files, mainly letters to Buell from retired naval officers who served with King throughout his career, letters between the author and King's family, and miscellaneous correspondence with former King associates form a significant part of the materials. Equally important are photocopies of King's typescript memoirs and miscellaneous letters that document his early life, naval career and retirement.

The material collected by Whitehill for the King biography consists of copies of letters in King's personal correspondence file now held by the Library of Congress and arranged by subject, as well as specific subject files, including a notebook of meetings of King with journalists at the home of Cornelius Bull during World War II, memoranda regarding conversations with King, and correspondence regarding the employment of aircraft in anti-submarine warfare during the Battle of the Atlantic.

Another significant segment of the collection contains copies of King materials from his papers in the Library of Congress, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, NY, and the Operational Archives of the Naval Historical Center in Washington, DC. These files include memoranda of conversations between King and Whitehill as well.

Draft and revised portions of the manuscript with comments by the Little, Brown editorial staff and others are contained herein.

Oral histories, including extracts from flag rank biographies conducted by the U.S. Naval Institute and synopses of interviews with the King family, his flag secretaries and other King associates, contain useful insights.

Other materials include photographs of King, his family, and incidents from his naval career, and index and research cards used by Buell in writing this biography.

The collection of 22 boxes comes with certain restrictions imposed by the author. Researchers may not photocopy, either by camera or xerox, any portion of the material. The sources must be used on site and only notes may be taken. Scholars cannot conduct "fishing expeditions"; they must specify their interests to the curator. Most of the collection is open; however, the drafts and revisions of the manuscript as well as tape cassettes of interviews conducted by Buell and others require his permission to use.

An appendix to other research sources lists books and articles by and about King and items in Naval War College archival record groups and manuscript collections referring to King.

Arrangement of Papers
Ms.Coll. 37

Correspondence Files

Box	Folder	
1	1	USS BRIDGE, 1922
	2	Staff Flot Lant (Fulton), 1922-1923
	3	Submarine School, New London, CT, 1924-1925
	4	USS WRIGHT, 1926
	5	Naval Air Station, Pensacola, FL, 1927
	6	USS WRIGHT, 1927-1928
	7	Naval Air Station, Norfolk, VA, 1929
	8	USS LEXINGTON
	9	USS LEXINGTON, 1930-1932
	10	Naval War College
	11	Hysk-Baer, 1933
	12	Aircraft Base Force, 1937
	13	Aircraft Scouting Force, 1938
	14	Aircraft Battle Force, 1939
	15	General Board, 1940
2	1	COMINCH/CNO, 1942-1945
	2	King family
	3	Retirement, 1946-1956
	4	Correspondence, A-B, Letters sent and received by CDR Thomas Buell from King associates
	5	Correspondence, C

	6	Correspondence, D-E
	7	Correspondence, F-G
	8	Correspondence, H-J
	9	Correspondence, K-Mc
	10	Correspondence, M
	11	Correspondence, N-O
	12	Correspondence, P
	13	Correspondence, Q-R
	14	Correspondence, S
	15	Correspondence, T-V
	16	Correspondence, W-Z
3	1	Copies of E.J. King's typescript memoirs. Before Joining the Navy, 1878-1897
	2	Naval Academy, 1897-1901
	3	Passed Midshipman, Ensign, 1901-1903, 1903-1906
	4	Lieutenant, 1906-1913
	5	LCDR, Commander, 1913-1917, 1917-1921
	6	World War I, 1917-1919
	7	Captain, 1921-1926
	8	Captain, 1926-1933
	9	Bureau of Aeronautics, 1933-1936
	10	Aviation, Patrol Planes, 1936-1939
4	1	General Board, Atlantic Fleet, 1939-1941
	2	COMINCH, 1941
	3	1942

	4	1943
	5	1944
	6	1945
	7	1946
	8	1947
	9	1948
	10	1949-1956
	11	Atlantic Fleet, 1941
	12	Battle of the Atlantic
5	1	Material gathered by Walter Muir Whitehill for his research for *A Naval Record*. Boyhood
	2	USNA - Babbitt
	3	Early years, 1902-1921
	4	General
	5	Early life, Lorain, Ohio
	6	Pre-1941
	7	Atlantic Fleet
	8	Basic Principles
	9	COMINCH - CNO
	10	USS DAUNTLESS
	11	Unity of Command, Sea Frontiers, Shore Establishments
	12	Progress of the War
	13	Relations with Enlisted Personnel and Navy Hangers-On
	14	Relations with SecNav
	15	Relations with Army

	16	Relations with British
	17	Relations with Press Publicity-Security
	18	Personnel Promotions - Use of Retired Officers
	61	Material gathered by Walter Muir Whitehill for *A Naval Record*. Awards and decorations.
	2	Austerity
	3	Speaking No Pain
	4	Sparing No Punches
	5	Kind remarks from old friends and others
	6	Personal tastes and habits
	7	Miscellaneous writing
	8	Memoranda of conversations with FADM King
	9	Diary of Cornelius Bull
7	1	Material copied from King papers in the Library of Congress, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and the Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center. Aviation Policy
	2	Army Air Force
	3	Aircraft Production
	4	Anecdotes
	5	Atlantic Convoy, Conference Report, 1943
	6	Battle of the Atlantic
	7	British views
	8	Byrd
	9	CCS
	10	Cairo
	11	Casablanca

	12	COMINCH's final months
	13	COMINCH staff
	14	Congress
	15	COMINCH early days
	16	DE Program
	17	Family
	18	Five stars
	19	Flag personalities
	20	Forrestal
	21	Friends
	22	Greece
	23	Hopkins
	24	JCS functions
	25	JCS organization
	26	Japan invasion and surrender
	27	Knox
	28	Lend-Lease
	29	Leyte Gulf
	30	Logistics - General Policy
	31	Marshall
8	1	Material copied from the King papers in the Library of Congress, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and the Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center. MacArthur.
	2	Manpower
	3	Marine Corps

	4	McCrea
	5	Midway
	6	Miscellaneous, 1945
	7	Naval Operations chronology, 1921-1941
	8	New Zealand
	9	Nimitz
	10	Normandy
	11	Organization, Navy Department
	12	PR
	13	Pacific Strategy
	14	Pearl Harbor Investigation
	15	Pentagon Building
	16	Personal data
	17	Philippine strategy
	18	Philosophy
	19	Personnel Promotion Policy and Assignment
	20	Personality and characteristics
	21	Policy statement
	22	Postwar plans
	23	Potsdam
9	1	Photocopies of material from the King papers in the Library of Congress, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and the Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center. FDR/EJK Appointments
	2	FDR/JCS conferences
	3	Quebec, 1944

	4	Race relations
	5	Quebec, 1943
	6	FDR Navy relationships
	7	Rosters
	8	Shipping
	9	Ship names
	10	Strategy of WW II
	11	Routine (trips)
	12	Stark
	13	Teheran
	14	Torch Preliminaries
	15	Trident (Washington 1943)
	16	Uniforms
	17	Weapons development
	18	Writing
	19	WBP
	20	Yalta
10	1	Extracts of U.S. Naval Institute oral histories of retired naval officers Bogan, Felt, Horton, McCollum, Ofstie, Riley, Stroop, Van Deurs, Wellborn and Wheeler
	2	Extracts of U.S. Naval Institute oral histories of retired naval officers Dennison, Dyer, Hart, Hedding, James, Lee, Masterton, Miller, Pirie and Royer; of retired Marine General Krulak and military writer Hanson Baldwin; and HQ USMC oral history extract of retired Marine Pfeiffer
	3	Synopses of interviews between Buell and Charlotte Pihl, Paul Pihl, Becky Matter, E.J. King Jr., Elizabeth King Van Den Berg and Boynton Brown

	4	Copy of memoirs of F.S. Low; article on King by Clark Reynolds; synopses of recorded reminiscences of John Moreno, A.R. McCann and of interview of Neil K. Almgren and Marilyn Buell
11	1	Correspondence between Buell, Robert Sherrod, Phelps Adams and Glen Perry concerning King's wartime meetings with journalists; Adams' description of those meetings and copies of wartime letters from Perry to his editor describing those meetings
	2	Synopses of interviews by Buell of King's wartime flag secretaries Russell, Crem and Dietrich
	3	Extracts of the Columbia University oral history of Charles J. Moore, and extracts of the Naval Institute oral history of W.R. Smedberg III
	4	General index of contents of files #10 and #11.
12	1	Index cards used to locate material by topic
13	1	Photographs of E.J. King
	2	Photographs of E.J. King
	3	Photographs of E.J. King
	4	Photographs of E.J. King
	5	National Archives microfilm
	6	Buell-Whitehill miscellany
	7	Buell-Whitehill miscellany
	8	Buell-Whitehill miscellany
	9	Buell-Whitehill miscellany
	10	Buell-Whitehill miscellany
	11	Buell-Whitehill miscellany
	12	Buell-Whitehill miscellany
	13	Buell-Whitehill miscellany
14	1	First draft of *Master of Seapower*
15	1	Revised first draft of *Master of Seapower*

	2	JCS organization manual
	3	Microfilm of King-Nimitz Pacific Conference, 1942-1945
	4	Microfilm correspondence relating to King from the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
16	1	Drafts of *Master of Seapower* annotated by Louie Howland, 1977-1978
	2	Comments of Robert Ginna on portions of the preliminary draft, 1978
17	1	Preliminary draft annotated by Professor Gerald Wheeler, 1978
18	1	Preliminary draft annotated by Herman Wouk, 1978
19	1	Revision of preliminary draft
20	1	Tape cassettes of interviews with Admiral Robert Rice on Frank Knox; John Moreno on King; C.M. Keys on King; Marilyn Buell on Neil K. Almgren; A.R. McCann on E.J. King; Thomas Buell interview with General and Mrs. Frederick Smith; Thomas Buell's interviews with E.J. King Jr. and J.J. Ballentine Jr.; RADM and Mrs. Boynton Braun; Recording of 1975 AHA session on Strategy in the Pacific; Buell interviews with E.J. King Jr. and Elizabeth King Van den Berg; Thomas Buell interview with Mrs. A.R. Matter, with Neil Dietrich, Howard Orem, George Russell and Paul and Charlotte Pihl.
21	1	Research and address card file
22	1	Photographs of E.J. King and his naval career

Books

The War Reports of General of the Army George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, General of the Army H.H. Arnold, Commanding General, Army Air Forces [and] Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations. Philadelphia: Lippincott, [1947].

King, Ernest J. and Walter Muir Whitehill. *Fleet Admiral King*. New York: W.W. Norton, [1952]

King, Ernest J. and Dudley Knox. *U.S. Bureau of Navigation. Report and Recommendations of a Board Appointed by the Bureau of Navigation Regarding the Institution and Training of Line Officers...*

U.S. Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. *U.S. Navy at War, 1941-1945. Official Reports to the Secretary of the Navy, Washington, 1946, by Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, U.S. Navy, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations.* Washington: U.S. Navy Department, 1946.

Buell, Thomas. *Master of Seapower*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1980.

Articles

Eadow, F. "A German View of the Strategic Importance of the Panama Canal". Translated. by E.J. King. U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, May-June 1914, pp. 803-807.

King, E.J. "Combat Operations, March 1944 to March 1945". U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, May 1945, pp. 599-643.

_____. "Our Navy at War". U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, June 1944, pp. 757-815.

_____. "Salvaging USS S-51". U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, February 1927, pp. 137-152.

_____. "Some Ideas About the Effects of Increasing the Size of Battleships". U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, March 1919, pp. 387-406.

_____. "United States Navy at War, Final Official Report to the Secretary of the Navy", covering the period March 1, 1945 to October 1, 1945. U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, January 1946, pp. 129-204.

_____. "A Wrinkle or Two in Handling Men". U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, March 1923, pp. 427-434.

King, E.J. and Walter Muir Whitehill. "Admiral King and the Naval High Command". U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, October 1952, pp. 1073-1079.

Stubbs, A.K. "Fleet Admiral King". U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, March 1959, p. 103.

_____. "Portrait of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King". U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, May 1969, p. 115.

_____. "Portrait of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King". U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, September 1969, p. 101.

_____. "Portrait of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King" U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, October 1969, pp. 120-121.

Appendix:
Sources in the Naval Historical Collection

Manuscript Collections

Manuscript Collection 12, Raymond A. Spruance Papers
Typed manuscript to E.J. King from R.A. Spruance, June 16, 1942.
Typed manuscript to E.J. King from R.S. Spruance, November 12, 1944.

Manuscript Collection 24, William Veazie Pratt Papers
Typed letter signed from William Veazie Pratt to E.J. King, April 5, 1955.

Ms.Item 166 King, Ernest J. Typed letter signed to L.J. Sylvor, New York, NY
January 15, 1948, thanking him for sending some hand-lettered cards.

Archives

Record Group 4, Publications
Lecture entitled "The Education of Naval Officers", May 16, 1925

Record Group 13, Student Theses
The Influence of the National Policy on the Strategy of a War, 1933, 35 pp.

Record Group 29, Student, Faculty and Staff
Letter, King to VADM Richard L. Conolly, March 19, 1951

Unpublished manuscript entitled "Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King" by Robert Previdi, June 14, 1984

Fleet Admiral King's Final Report in *All Hands*, January 1946

"U.S. Navy at War" by Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King covering March 1, 1944 to March 1, 1945; March 1, 1945 to October 1, 1945.