



ARCHIE R. CLEMINS

1943–2020

Elected in 2006

“For the creation and initial fielding of the US Navy’s transformational use of information, which has enabled net-centric operations.”

BY JAMES O. ELLIS JR.
WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM
HIS COLLEAGUES, FAMILY, AND FRIENDS

Retired US Navy Admiral ARCHIE RAY CLEMINS, oldest child of Archie Cornell Clemins and Earline Pepple Clemins, died at home in Boise, Idaho, on March 14, 2020, at the age of 76, in the presence of his loving family.

Born November 18, 1943, in Mount Vernon, Illinois, Archie graduated from Urbana High School and received both his bachelor of science and master of science degrees in electrical engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Commissioned into the US Navy through the Naval Reserve Officer Training Program, he completed the Naval Nuclear Power Program and served on both ballistic missile and attack submarines before tours as the executive officer on the USS *Parche* (SSN 644) and commanding officer of the USS *Pogy* (SSN 647).

As he rose through the Flag (Admiral) ranks in the Navy, follow-on commands included Commander–Submarine Group Seven (Yokosuka, Japan), Commander–Pacific Fleet Training Command (San Diego), Deputy Commander–US Atlantic Fleet (Norfolk, Virginia), and Commander–US Seventh Fleet (Yokosuka). Upon promotion to the rank of 4-Star Admiral, he assumed command of the US Pacific Fleet (Pearl Harbor).

Archie Clemins was a quiet combatant during a time of wars both hot and cold and when the difference between the

two was often just a matter of semantics. His critical early leadership roles encompassed some of the most demanding of Cold War operational scenarios, and he became known throughout the submarine force as a man of extraordinary competence, integrity, moral courage, and calm in the most stressing circumstances.

Despite all his professional success, Archie always believed that his most important job was to produce the leaders of tomorrow. Known for his ability to turn around failing or flailing organizations, his impact as a charismatic leader at the tactical and operational level was far reaching and shaped a generation of submariners, many of whom rose to operational leadership or command positions themselves. To this day, the lore of those junior officers and sailors that he taught, mentored, and led is filled with comments such as “All I needed to know, I learned from Archie Clemins.” They have produced a litany of his questions and principles that, while they have the sound of aphorisms, are reflective of the standards Archie set for himself, the trust he placed in subordinates, and the exceptional and unique way in which he led and served others. They include: “You’re either getting better or worse; there’s no such thing as staying the same”; “I don’t want someone who tells me what he can’t do. I want someone who tells me what he can do”; and, in times of constrained budgets, “There is always enough money if you really need something. You just have to find it.” My personal favorite, which Archie would quietly and patiently say after any less-than-positive outcome, is: “What did you learn?”

Archie touched the lives of so many in the Navy, and, in many cases, inspired them to their own careers of service. In the words of Jack Burdick, Chief of the Boat (COB; senior enlisted leader) in Archie’s first submarine command and his lifelong friend: “In my first conversation as COB Archie told me the Navy has sent us the best and the brightest and it was our responsibility to challenge them every day, to not only do their best but always do the right thing. He didn’t tell us what the right thing was, he showed us. He set high standards for himself and inspired us to do the same.... Archie Clemins

never took credit for accomplishments and success. It was always the crew that was given the credit.”

For Archie, the coin of the realm was *trust*. He was an outstanding teacher and mentor who also knew, perhaps instinctively and often before you knew yourself, when to allow you to make your own choices and spread your wings. Though I suspect he was often quietly watching from the sidelines, his joy and greatest reward lay in seeing you succeed and then ensuring that you and your team received the lion’s share of the credit.

Known as a visionary and tech-savvy leader, Admiral Clemins is widely credited with bringing Naval operations into the digital age in the 1980s and 1990s. The late Senator Daniel Inouye called him “the father of Naval high technology” as a tribute to Archie’s role in implementing the Navy’s Information Technology for the 21st Century program (IT-21). Most of the shipboard innovations in computers for command, control, communications, and intelligence (C4I) that entered the fleet so significantly and impactfully in those years can be traced to his inspired vision for how the fleet could and should operate differently.

He retired from the Navy in December 1999 after 34 years of active duty service. Admiral Clemins and the commands he led received many military honors, including two Presidential Unit Citations, three Distinguished Service Medals, seven Legions of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, and awards from the governments of Japan and Korea. Again, always known for accepting responsibility but sharing credit, he was quoted in his CINCPACFLT biography as noting, when asked, that he was “most proud of the two Presidential Unit Citations, two Navy Unit Commendations, and the Meritorious Unit Commendations, because they recognize the participation and accomplishment of all crew members.”

After retirement from the Navy, Archie and his wife Marilyn settled in Boise, Idaho, where he founded Caribou Technologies Inc., an international consulting firm. His specialty was alliance building, with a focus on using innovative commercial technologies to solve intrinsic problems in the government.

He also served on the board of directors of two publicly held corporations and several startup companies. His leadership and technical skills were in constant demand and he generously gave of his time to advise and inform Navy and private sector technological initiatives and to thoughtfully help the many of us who still sought his wise counsel.

Accolades continued to flow to Archie during his time in the private sector. Civilian recognitions include the David Sarnoff Award from the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association and the Naval Order of the United States–Distinguished Sea Service Award. His alma mater, the University of Illinois, honored him with a Distinguished Service Award, Alumni Achievement Award (1998), Distinguished Alumni Award from the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering (1999), and honorary doctor of engineering degree (2005).

Archie was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 2006 and served on both the Section 12 and NAE Peer Committees and, after 3 years as vice chair, chaired Section 12 (2012–13). As section chair, he led successful efforts to broaden the diversity and increase the number of qualified candidates for election to the NAE. In addition, he was appointed to several study committees of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine: Mainstreaming Unmanned Undersea Vehicles into Future US Naval Operations (2015–16), C4ISR for Future Naval Strike Groups (2004–06), and FORCENet Implementation Strategy (2003–06).

Marilyn Clemens recalls Archie's last change of command ceremony upon his departure from the Pacific Fleet and his retirement from the Navy. The guest speaker was Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig. After recounting Archie's remarkable career, his myriad contributions to the service, and his unequalled professional reputation, the secretary noted that "some people lead with the sun shining brightly on them while others lead by reflecting that sunshine onto others." Archie Clemens clearly fell in that latter category and it is a perfect description of his character and his life, not just as a naval officer, colleague, and friend, but as a human being.

The memories of him and all that we shared will be with us always.

Archie is survived by his wife of 52 years, Marilyn (née Paddick); their children, Becky (Dan) Lewis of San Diego and Travis (Urszula) Clemins of Boulder; and four grandchildren, all of whom he loved deeply.

“Your legacy is not measured by your accomplishments. It is measured by the accomplishments of the children you raise and the people you train.”

– Archie Clemins