

MERRIMACK'S ADMIRAL FORREST PERCIVAL SHERMAN

Merrimack, NH had a Navy Admiral and Chief of Naval Operations during and after World War II. Forrest P. Sherman was born October 30, 1896 in the Reeds Ferry section of town to his parents, Frank James Sherman and Grace Gibbs Allen Sherman. He learned to love ships from his grandfather, an old New Bedford MA whaling captain. He was a direct descendant of John and Priscilla Alden of Mayflower fame. His father was the headmaster at the McGaw Normal Institute, in Merrimack, from which Forrest graduated in 1914, before attending the US Naval Academy at Annapolis, MD. He graduated in 1917 with second honors. His class of 1918 graduated early due to the start of WW I. He served on the USS Reid, USS Utah, and Murray.

He became a pilot in 1922 and served in naval aviation after that, serving on the USS Lexington, Saratoga and Ranger. He skippered the aircraft carrier Wasp, which was sunk by a Japanese submarine off the Solomon Islands in 1942. He took part in the Japanese surrender aboard the battleship Missouri in Tokyo, returning to Washington as deputy chief of naval operations. When the military was debating about combining all the services, he took a leading role in that debate, working out a compromise in 1947 leading to unification and creating the Department of Defense. He was awarded the Navy Cross, Distinguished Service Medal and Purple Heart among others. He then became commander of the Mediterranean forces as a Vice admiral and was then called, as an Admiral, to take the position of US Chief of Naval Operations, in 1949 the youngest, at age 53, to ever hold that post. He was promoted over nine other admirals for this honor and responsibility. He was frequently called "the flying admiral" and highly respected as an administrator, planner and negotiator.

He was on a tour of Europe's Atlantic Pact Defense areas, coming from Madrid, London and Paris. He had just worked out an agreement with Generalissimo Francisco Franco, setting up US Naval and Air bases in Spain, during this trip. He and his wife, Dolores had dinner in Pompeii before going to Naples, Italy to return to Washington shortly after, when he was struck by a heart attack in his hotel room followed by another, fatal one on July 22, 1951. At his side were his wife and Admiral Robert Carney, American commander of Allied forces in Southern Europe. His body was removed to the USS Mt. Olympus, Admiral Carney's flag ship in Naples to be returned to the US for military burial in Arlington, National Cemetery after lying in State at the National Cathedral, with President Harry Truman in attendance.

Forrest had five brothers who served their country in World War II and beyond. Lieutenant Commander Ernest L Sherman served in the Mediterranean area and lived in Meredith, and the Lake Sunapee area; Lieutenant Colonel Edward A Sherman lived in Melrose MA; Lieutenant Commander Kenneth Sherman in Andover, MA; Brigadier General Paul D. Sherman in the Boston area; and Col. Frank J Sherman, in Cleveland, O.

He married Dolores Bronson and they had a daughter Elizabeth Ann, who married Lt. Commander John Fitzpatrick, former Assistant Naval Attaché in Madrid, Spain and took part in the dedication of the second USS Forrest Sherman.

A monument honoring Admiral Sherman is being erected in Veteran's Park, in Merrimack by Eagle Scout candidate, Harrison Faust from Troop 424, and the dedication is planned for November 12, following the Veteran's Day parade.

