

GENE PAUL KESLER

Captain Gene P. Kesler, USN (Ret.), passed away on 7 January 2003 of complications following surgery. Captain Kesler was born in Salisbury, NC, on 8 May 1937. After graduation from Boyden High, where he was a state wrestling champion, he completed one year at North Carolina State before receiving a congressional appointment to the Naval Academy.

Graduating in 1960 after a brilliant career as a Navy wrestler, Captain Kesler briefly pursued the Navy "Wings of Gold" at Pensacola. He then reported to BARRY (DD-931), serving in the Weapons/Ops Departments. In 1963, he attended Destroyer School and reported to HARWOOD (DD-861) in Mayport, FL. In 1964, after 20 months of operations in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, Caribbean, and Northern Europe, he was assigned to the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey for study in the weapons curriculum. Graduating with a B.S. in electrical engineering, he was assigned to the Naval Guided Missile School, Dam Neck, VA, for the Tartar Officers Course. He then reported to RICHARD L. PAGE (DEG-5) under construction at Bath, ME, as prospective weapons officer.

In 1968, Captain Kesler reported to SKILL (MSO-471) as commanding officer after attending the Mine Warfare School in Charleston, SC. He was promoted to lieutenant commander in 1969. In 1970, Captain Kesler reported to Commander Antisubmarine Warfare Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet to serve as ASW Weapons Officer, during which time he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. In 1973, Captain Kesler became the assistant anti-air warfare officer on the staff of Commander Third Fleet. In 1975, Captain Kesler reported to BADGER (FF-1071) as commanding officer and was promoted to commander later that same year. In 1977, following triple bypass heart surgery, he, again, reported to Naval Postgraduate School, graduating with a master's degree in financial management. He was then assigned to the ASW Systems Project Office, Alexandria, VA. Promoted to captain in 1981, he was assigned as director of Saudi Naval Expansion Projects, Alexandria, VA. He retired from naval service in 1985 and returned to his hometown of Salisbury.

An active member of the Milford Hills United Methodist Church, Captain Kesler is survived by his wife, Mary Louise, and four children: William Kesler and Cynthia Kesler of Maryland; Thomas Kesler of Virginia; Patricia Kesler of Salisbury; three grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and a lifetime collections of friends that will miss him very much.

*Kesler Family & Classmates
Shipmate, March 2003*