

ARTHUR STANTON ADAMS

By Ellen Knight¹

Behind every name on the Roll of Honor there is a story. As time passes, those stories may fade from community memory and even be forgotten. Yet they are well worth preserving.

Take, for example, Arthur Stanton Adams, whose name appears second on the World I list and reappears under World War II, not only a local son in whom the community could take pride but also a national figure who played a distinctive part in American history.



Born in 1896, Adams was a native of Winchester, the son of Charles and Grace Adams and a great-grandson of a selectman from the Civil War era, Hatevil K. Stanton. A graduate of Winchester High School's Class of 1913, Adams intended to make the military his career. He entered the Navy as a midshipman at Annapolis in 1914 and served on the U.S.S. *Nevada*, at the U.S. Naval Academy, at the submarine base at New London, Conn., and on the U.S.S. *R-16* during the years of the First World War.

As a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and the U.S. Submarine School, Lt. Adams appeared to have a fine career in the Navy ahead. But in 1921, the Navy invalided him out, after a diagnosis of tuberculosis (or, according to a 1950 article in *Time*, poisoning by corrosive gases on board ship). Returning to college, Adams graduated in physics from the University of California and earned a Sc.D. in metallurgy from the Colorado School of Mines. He taught at both schools and in 1941 became an Assistant Dean of Engineering at Cornell University. A promising career in education lay ahead.

WORLD WAR II

Then World War II intervened, and his talents and experience with education were put to use in preparing a new generation of officers. On Nov. 12, 1941, the Navy recalled him to active service to become the chief planner and administrator of the V-12 Officer Training Program and promoted him to Lt. Commander.

The V-12 program was initiated to meet the Navy's immediate and continuing needs for trained, commissioned officers for its ships, planes, and command positions. The V-12 program coordinated the resources of over 100 colleges and universities, medical and dental schools, and some theological seminaries. The trainees included men who were already in college, enlisted men, and high school seniors who passed a qualifying examination. The program provided 150,000 junior officers for the Navy and additionally helped many men get a college education.

Henry C. Herge, author of *Navy V-12*, wrote, "To Arthur Stanton Adams more than any other individual in the Navy during World War II, was due the honor and credit for blueprinting and administering the V-12 College Training Program, the most comprehensive educational undertaking in American higher education."

"The program is for the needs of the Navy," Adams stated. "It is my guess, if I am not wholly out of touch with the youth of America, that we are going to have real difficulty with some of these lads in getting them to go to college. They want to go out and shoot Japs tomorrow. So do I. However, once they are in the service, their choice in the matter will not operate to determine just what they will do, and if they have the capabilities for developing themselves into capable leaders, it is to the best interest of the Navy that they do so, and they will do so. It will be your college instructors' high responsibility, and perhaps your grave concern, to see that their morale is held at the highest peak and that they are constantly realizing that they are not in college to benefit themselves. They are there to make themselves more useful to our very urgent needs."²



In 1945, when Adams again retired from active duty, he had achieved the rank of Captain and was awarded the Legion of Merit.

AFTER THE WAR

After the war, Adams returned to Cornell. Although elected provost in 1944, he did not serve as such until after the war. He remained in that position for three years. Instead of preparing students for the military, one of his assignments was to prepare the school for the military, that is for the influx of returning veterans who now needed housing as new students.

From 1948 to 1950, Adams was President of the University of New Hampshire. He again received some national attention due to the anti-Communist hullabaloo of the era. In January 1949, State Representative Harold Hart initiated efforts to investigate the university and to administer a loyalty oath to faculty members. Adams defended university policy and academic freedom in his testimony before the legislative committee examining Hart's bills. However, the loyalty oath passed.

Adams was reportedly very popular at UNH. When he left, the students gave him a large and enthusiastic rally. Adams Residential Tower was named in his honor. In Dec. 1950 and Jan. 1951, Adams' parents, who were still living in Winchester, died, severing his closest connection with his home town.

Adams left UNH at the end of 1950 to accept an appointment as President of the American Council on Education. He was chairman of the Reserve Forces Policy Board at the United States Department of Defense from 1953 to 1955. He also served, from 1962 to 1965, as the second president of the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies, a non-profit organization whose mission is to challenge current and future leaders to develop creative ideas for solving global problems. In 1965, Adams returned to New Hampshire and served as a consultant to the President of UNH for three years and as a consultant to the New England Center for Continuing Education for the next eight years, ending in 1976.

Adams died in Concord, N.H., in 1980. He was accorded full military honors and buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

¹ This article © 2019 is a revision of an earlier article by the author, Ellen Knight, published in the *Daily Times Chronicle* on Jan. 2, 2008. This revision supersedes all previous articles.

² Quoted in Henry C. Herge, *Navy V-12*, Turner Publishing Company, 1996.