

# Class of 1951

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Kinnaird McKee was born in Louisville, Kentucky and grew up in the Deep South, along the shores of Gulfport, Mississippi. At the Naval Academy, as a member of the Class of 1951, Midshipman McKee considered all of his options. The *Lucky Bag* noted that “he was headed for one extreme or the other after graduation – submarines or aviation.” In the end, he chose submarines.

After serving in *USS Picuda*, *USS Sea Cat* and *USS Marlin*, Lieutenant McKee took command of *USS X-1*, the Navy’s only experimental midget submarine. His leadership led to the first dive by the small submarine with its five-man crew. Selected for the second nuclear power training class, McKee next joined the commissioning crew of *USS Skipjack*, the Navy’s first high performance nuclear attack submarine as the engineer. This was followed by tours as Executive Officer of *USS Nautilus* and *USS Sam Houston*.

After a stint with the Atomic Energy Commission, McKee took command of *USS Dace*, guiding the ship to two Navy Unit Commendation awards and two Battle Efficiency pennants. Ordered back to Washington, McKee founded the Chief of Naval Operations Executive Panel and became its first Director, assisting the CNO and Secretary of the Navy in forming policy. At age 42, McKee was selected for flag rank.

McKee next commanded Submarine Group 8 and NATO’s submarine forces in the Mediterranean, where he adapted new tactics for submarines to support battle groups, playing a pivotal role in support of Sixth Fleet operations during the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

In July 1975, he became Superintendent of the Naval Academy at a critical moment in the history of his *alma mater*. During this tour, women were admitted to the service academies. With skillful planning and management, McKee and his staff, along with a selected cadre of midshipmen, were able to achieve brigade and service acceptance of this historical transition. He also improved the curriculum and revitalized the sail training program.

Next, McKee assumed command of the U.S. Third Fleet, then returned to Washington to serve as the first Director of Naval Warfare. Upon the retirement of Admiral Hyman Rickover, McKee was nominated and approved by Congress to become Director, Navy Nuclear Propulsion, succeeding a legend without missing a beat. Under his management, work began on *Seawolf*, a new class of attack submarine.

By the time of his retirement in 1988, McKee had earned two Distinguished Service Medals and five Legions of Merit, among his many awards. In retirement, McKee remained very active in the field of education and nuclear power, also serving as a Director of two major nuclear utility companies and consultant to commercial engineering firms.

McKee and his wife, Patti, have a large, loving family – six children and fourteen grandchildren. Admiral Kinnaird McKee was always selected for the Navy’s toughest assignments and always earned the highest respect for the way in which he performed his duty.