



Edward O. McDonnell, Vice Admiral, USNR

Edward Orrick McDonnell was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 13, 1891, son of Eugene and Ann Chilton McDonnell. He attended Loyola High School and Baltimore Polytechnic Institute before his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from his native state in 1908. As a Midshipman he was active in athletics, winning crew numerals in 1910, the orange "N" in lacrosse for three years, and the bronze medal as Special-weight Boxing Champion his First Class year. Graduated and commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Navy on June 8, 1912, he progressed in rank to that of Lieutenant Commander, to date from September 21, 1918. He resigned his commission in the U. S. Navy on January 11, 1920, and was commissioned Lieutenant Commander in the U. S. Naval Reserve from January 20, 1920. Through subsequent promotions, he attained the rank of Rear Admiral, from December 7, 1942, and upon retirement on December 1, 1951, was advanced to the rank of Vice Admiral on the basis of combat citations.

Upon graduation from the Naval Academy in June 1912, he was ordered to the USS *New Jersey*, and during the next two years also served in the USS *Montana* and USS *Florida*, with temporary additional duty in the USS *Montgomery* under instruction in torpedoes. In March 1914 he joined the USS *Prairie*, and was awarded the Medal of Honor with the following citation: "For extraordinary heroism in battle, engagements of Vera Cruz, April 21 and 22, 1914; posted on the roof of the Terminal Hotel and landing; established a signal station there and day and night maintained communi-

cation between the troops and the ships. At this exposed post he was continually under fire. One man was killed and three wounded at his side during the two days' fighting. He showed extraordinary heroism and striking courage and maintained his station in the highest degree of efficiency. All signals got through, largely due to his heroic devotion to duty."

Detached from the *Prairie* in December 1914, he had two months, instruction in aeronautics at the works of the Wright Company, Dayton, Ohio, before reporting on February 1, 1915, to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, for flight, training. He was designated an "actual flyer of heavier than aircraft," January 15, 1915, and Naval Aviator on March 22, 1915. He was appointed Navy Air Pilot No. 16 on October 14, 1915, and on January 19, 1918, became Naval Aviator No. 18.

During his service at Pensacola, after completing flight training, he was an instructor and conducted flying tests for officers under his command to determine their qualification as naval aviators. In June 1917 he continued duty as an instructor of fledgling aviators at Huntington, Bay, Long Island, and New London, Connecticut, and during that three months period of duty in the early part of World War II he commanded the first Yale Aviation Unit.

On September 14, 1917, he reported to the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., and was assigned duty in charge of the Naval Aviation Detachment, Hampton Roads, Virginia. He remained there until December 1, 1917, when he proceeded to London, England, to report to the Commander, U. S. Naval Forces Operating in European Waters. During 1918 he was in active air combat in France and Italy, and engaged in bombing German submarine bases at Bruges, Ostend and Zeebrugge. For his World War I service, he was awarded the Navy Cross, with the following citation: "For distinguished and heroic service as a pilot attached to U. S. Naval Aviation Forces Abroad. Took an important and valuable part in organizing U. S. Northern Bombing Group. Made several extremely hazardous flights over the Alps, in, machines which were known to be structurally imperfect."

Detached from the Northern Bombing Group in November 1918, he had brief duty at U. S. Naval Headquarters, London, England, in connection with the installation and delivery of aircraft for the USS *Texas* and duty on board that battleship in December 1918. Upon his return to the United States he reported for duty in connection with aircraft in the Bureau of Navigation and the Office of Naval Operations, Navy Department. At the end of a year there he tendered his resignation, because of physical condition, which became effective January 11, 1920. Later that month he accepted appointment as Lieutenant Commander in the U. S. Naval Reserve Force (Aviation).

During August 1920 and in December 1922 he had active training duty at the Naval Air Station, Rockaway Beach,

Long Island, New York, and the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, and in July 1923 had active temporary duty on board the USS *Wright*, Flagship of Commander Aircraft Squadrons, Scouting Fleet. He had periods of training duty at the Naval Reserve Air Station, Fort Hamilton, New York, and the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, in 1924, and other periods in the years to follow.

During August and September 1940 he acted as Naval Observer on the first flight of Pan American Airways to New Zealand, Australia and the Dutch East Indies. In October of that year he reported to the Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, for active duty, and subsequently had refresher courses at the Pensacola and Miami, Florida, Naval Air Stations. From January to March 1941 he served as Assistant U. S. Naval Attaché and Naval Attaché for Air at the American Embassy, London, England, and in May and June of that year had similar duty at the American Embassy, Peiping, China, where he was also a naval member of the United States Mission to China. He was awarded the Air Medal, with citation to follow: "For meritorious achievement in aerial flight as a Member of the First Air Mission to China. May and June of 1941. As naval member (of that mission), Commander McDonnell participated in numerous hazardous flights in Chinese Air Force planes over enemy Japanese-held territory despite intense opposition from hostile forces and thereby gained information of great value in establishing a better understanding between the military air forces of China and the United States. His outstanding professional knowledge, unwavering devotion to duty and gallant conduct throughout this vital mission reflect the highest credit -upon Captain (then Commander) McDonnell and the United States Naval Service."

Returning to the United States in July 1941, he assumed command of the Naval Air Station, New York, N. Y., and of the Naval Reserve Aviation Base there in August. A month later he was relieved of command of the Reserve Base and assigned additional duty as District Aviation Officer for the Third Naval District, Headquarters in New York. N. Y. On February 25, 1943, he was detached from the latter duty with orders to Headquarters, Eastern Sea Frontier, for duty as Air Officer.

On June 20, 1943, he reported as Chief of Staff and Aide to the Commandant, Naval Air Training Center, Corpus Christi, Texas, and from February to May 1944 he also served as Chief of Staff and Aide to the Chief of Naval Air Intermediate Training Command, at Corpus Christi. On May 7, 1944 he was detached to Headquarters, Twelfth Naval District, San Francisco, California, thence to the USS *Long Island* (CVE-1) for duty as Commanding Officer. He commanded that vessel in the Pacific Area from July to December 1944, when he was transferred to command of the USS *Nehenta Bay*. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, with Combat "V," and the following citation: "For heroic service as Commanding Officer of the USS *Nehenta Bay* during a series of fueling operations in support of the THIRD Fleet attacks on enemy Japanese forces in the South China Sea, January 9 to 20, 1945. operating as a part of a screening

force in a high speed fueling and plane replacement group, Captain McDonnell directed his ship in supporting the first penetration of the South China Sea by United States surface forces since the early days of the war. Although the success of the mission was endangered on several occasions by hostile aerial attacks in which three Japanese planes were destroyed by Combat Air Patrol over the fueling groups and others shot down outside of visual range of the formation', Rear Admiral McDonnell (then Captain) by his professional skill, initiative and leadership, effectively executed the many complex details of his assignment not only to insure the safety of his ship but also to render the logistic support essential to the success of the operations, His conduct throughout this period was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

He returned to the United States and, ordered to the Navy Department, Washington, D. C., served from November 8 to December 18, 1945, as Special Assistant to the Flight Pay Board, in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air). He then reported to Naval Officers Separation Center, where on December 27, 1945, he was relieved of all active duty. His transfer from the Naval Reserve Inactive List to the Naval Reserve Retired List became effective December 1, 1951.

Admiral McDonnell was killed in the crash of a National AirLines plane (DC-6) on January 6, 1960, near Bolivia, Brunswick County, North Carolina. He is survived by his wife, Helen Fisher McDonnell, to whom he was married in 1915, and two daughters Mrs. Donald M. Kendall of Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York and Mrs. Arthur R. Barry, of Annapolis, Maryland. A son, Second Lieutenant Edward O. McDonnell Jr., AAF, USA, was killed in action in 1942. Mrs. McDonnell's present address is P. O. Box 222, Hobe Sound, Florida,

In addition to the Medal of Honor, the Navy Cross, the Bronze Star Medal, the Air Medal, the Italian War Cross, awarded by the Government of Italy for his service there in World War I, Vice Admiral McDonnell had the Mexican Service Medal; the Victory Medal, Aviation Clasp; American Defense Service Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; American Campaign Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal. He also held the Naval Reserve Medal with Bronze Star for twenty years' honorable service in the Naval Reserve.

A destroyer escort vessel., the USS *Edward McDonnell* (DE-1043) has been named to honor Admiral McDonnell. Launching date at Avondale Shipyards, Inc., Westwego, Louisiana, was February 15, 1964.