

# NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

REAR ADMIRAL DELMER S. FAHRNEY, UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED

Delmer S. Fahrney was born in Grove, Oklahoma, on October 23, 1898, son of Albert Frank and Lillian (Pugh) Fahrney. He graduated from Vinita (Oklahoma) High School and entered the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, on appointment from his native state in 1916. As a Midshipman he won his Letter in track and held the Naval Academy javelin record. Graduated on June 6, 1919, with the Class of 1920, he was commissioned Ensign and subsequently progressed in rank to that of Captain, to date from June 18, 1942. He was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy on November 1, 1950 and was advanced to Rear Admiral on the basis of combat awards.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy in 1919, he joined the USS UTAH, flagship of Commander Battle Force, Atlantic Fleet to serve for two years in the Deck and Engineering Departments. In July 1921, he transferred to the USS WADSWORTH, reserve destroyer, in which he had duty as Engineer Officer until June 1922, after which he had similar duty in the USS STEWART on China Station.

He reported in December 1923 for flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida and in November 1924 was designated Naval Aviator (heavier than air). In January 1925 he joined the USS WEST VIRGINIA, flagship of Commander Battleship Divisions and Division FIVE, Battle Fleet, as Officer in Charge of the Aviation Unit. Detached from that battleship in January 1927, he was next Assembly and Repair Officer at the Naval Air Station, Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, and in June 1928 returned to Annapolis, where he had instruction in aeronautical engineering at the Postgraduate School. He continued the course, June 1929 to October 1930, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, from which he received the degree of Master of Science in Aeronautical Engineering.

He served as Assembly and Repair Officer in the USS WRIGHT, operating on the East Coast as flagship of Commander Aircraft, Scouting Force, U. S. Fleet and Carrier Division ONE. He became Inspector of Naval Aircraft at the Wright Aeronautical Corporation, Peterson, New Jersey, in July 1932 and in July 1934 joined the USS LEXINGTON, at San Pedro, California, as Engineer Officer, Main Engine Division. As such, he had additional duty as Ship's Secretary. Designated an Aeronautical Engineering Duty Only Officer in November 1935, he returned to the Pensacola Air Station for a six months' refresher course in flying.

In April 1936 he was assigned to the Naval Aircraft Factory, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where for six months he headed the Inspection Division and for three and a half years was Officer in Charge of the

radio-controlled aircraft targets. During this period, the first radio controlled flights of man carrying aircraft and the first firings by antiaircraft guns of the fleet against these radio controlled aircraft were accompanied in this country. These accomplishments marked the first steps by the United States in the development of guided missiles.

He was assigned in June 1940 to the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., where he headed the Special Design Branch, having cognizance of radio-controlled aircraft, assault drones, gliders and training planes. In April 1941, Secretary of the Navy Knox commended him in a letter stating: "The Secretary of the Navy wishes to take this opportunity to commend you for your leadership, technical knowledge, and outstanding zeal which have made this project of such great benefit to the Navy."

He later received a Letter of Commendation, with authorization to wear the Commendation Ribbon, from Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, citing him as follows: "For outstanding performance of duty while serving as Head of the Special Design Branch in the Bureau of Aeronautics from June 1940 to July 1943. A leader of exceptional initiative and creative ability, (he) contributed substantially to the development of at least two types of special weapons which were successfully employed against the enemy. He was also instrumental in the development, procurement and delivery to the Fleet of improved radio controlled target aircraft, thereby materially improving the anti-aircraft gunnery proficiency of the Fleet. By his technical skill and devotion to duty, Captain Fahrney rendered invaluable services toward the effective prosecution of the war."

In June 1943 he became Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Modification Unit, Naval Air Material Center, Naval Base, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit and cited as follows: "For exceptionally meritorious conduct... while serving with the Bureau of Aeronautics and later as Commanding Officer Naval Aircraft Modification Unit...during the period April 3, 1943 to March 4, 1944. Rear Admiral (then Captain) Fahrney was primarily responsible for the development of a reliable, radio-controlled assault drone for combat use. Assigned the leading role in the preparation of requirements and specifications for this new weapon and the equipment to control and operate it, he carried out these complex tasks with distinctive success..."

During the period June 1944 to September 1945 he was Material Officer and Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics on the Staff of Commander Aircraft, SEVENTH Fleet, and as such participated in the campaigns for the Bismarck Archipelago and in the liberation of the Philippines. "For exceptionally meritorious conduct...in connection with operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Southwest Pacific Area from June 30, 1944 to August 8, 1945..." he was awarded the Legion of Merit with Combat "V." The citation further states in part:

"Serving as Material Officer on the Staff, Commander Aircraft, SEVENTH Fleet from June 30, 1944 to March 28, 1945, Captain Fahrney was responsible for providing aircraft units with the latest technical advice and the allocation of critical aviation material. As Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics from March 29 to August 8, 1945, he represented Commander Air, SEVENTH Fleet in type command matters involving logistics, administration and personnel. By his able planning and efficient administration of the aviation logistic requirement program, he contributed materially to the success of our forces in the Pacific..."

After the cessation of hostilities, he returned to the United States and in October 1945 reported as Director of the Pilotless Aircraft Division, Special Design Branch. In July 1949 he assumed command of the Naval Air Missile Test Center, Point Mugu, Port Hueneme, California. He was so serving when relieved of active duty pending his retirement, effective November 1, 1950.

In addition to the Legion of Merit with Gold Star and Combat "V," and the Commendation Ribbon, Rear Admiral Fahrney has the Victory Medal; American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon.

He is a member of the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences, New York City; the Print Club and the Art Alliance, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and the Army and Navy Club, Washington, D. C. He also holds patents on several devices in use by the Navy relating to radio-controlled aircraft.