

CAPTAIN WILLIAM P. GADDIS, U. S. NAVY, RETIRED

William Peace Gaddis was born in Wetumpka, Alabama, on March 7, 1883, son of William P. and Cynthia Estelle (Bass) Gaddis. He attended Fifth District Agricultural School of Alabama in Wetumpka, and the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa prior to entering the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, as a Naval Cadet from Alabama on September 27, 1901. Completing the four year course (his title changed to Midshipman in 1902), he was detached from the Naval Academy for the two years at sea, then required by law, and returned for final graduation on January 30, 1907, at which time he was commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Navy. He subsequently advanced to the rank of Captain, to date from July 1, 1929, and was retired in that rank of June 30, 1940.

After graduation with the Class of 1905 on January 30, that year, he had sea duty as a Passed Midshipman on board the USS MAINE and USS WORDEN, and when commissioned Ensign was ordered to the USS TRUXTON, a unit of the Second Torpedo Flotilla. In 1908 he was assigned to the USS VIRGINIA, of the Second Battleship Division, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, which he joined at Rio de Janeiro to make the World Cruise with the Great White Fleet. In 1910 he served in the USS DOLPHIN and USS EAGLE, a dispatch boat and gunboat on special service, and when detached from the latter in September 1911, he was ordered to the Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., for temporary duty in connection with recruiting.

In October 1911 he reported as Assistant to the Officer-in-Charge, Navy Recruiting Station, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Des Moines, Iowa, soon serving as Officer in Charge, then he had additional duty in charge of the Navy Recruiting Station, Minneapolis, Minnesota, during the absence of that officer in 1912. In August 1913 he was ordered detached and to duty as Navigator of the USS JUPITER, a fuel ship of the Atlantic Fleet. Early in 1915 he was assigned as Executive Officer and Navigator of that vessel, and in November of that year was transferred to the USS PROMETHEUS for similar duty, when she was assigned to Pacific Station, via San Francisco, California.

For several months in 1916 he was on board the USS MARYLAND, armored cruiser of the Pacific Reserve Fleet, then became Navigator and Gunnery Officer of the USS PITTSBURGH, operating off the West Coast of Mexico. Duty at the Naval Training Station, San Francisco, later in 1916, continued throughout most of the World War I period, April 1917 to July 1918, when he was ordered detached for duty in the Receiving Ship, New York, N. Y. He later had brief duty as Executive Officer of the USS VON STEUBEN, and when the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, he was serving as Executive Officer of the USS ALABAMA, having joined that battleship in September.

Continuing duty in the ALABAMA throughout 1919, while she operated as Flagship of Division A, Battle Force, he was detached in December for temporary duty in the Receiving Ship, San Francisco, in January and February 1920. For five months thereafter he served as Executive Officer of the USS GEORGIA, Flagship of Division 2, Battleship Squadron ONE, Pacific, operating from San Francisco. When that battleship was decommissioned in July 1920, he was ordered to fit out the USS WASMUTH, building at the Navy Yard, Mare Island, California. He assumed command of that destroyer when she was placed in commission

on December 16, 1921, and remained in command until October 1922 when he was transferred to command of the USS SOMERS, another destroyer, which was assigned to Division 31, Destroyer Squadron 11, Battle Fleet.

The SOMERS was slightly damaged, as was the USS FARRAGUT, on the night of September 8, 1923, when seven destroyers of Squadron 11 were lost and twenty-three men were drowned as the ships piled up on the rocky coast of California at Point Honda due to "errors in judgment and faulty navigation." Four officers were found guilty by a General Court-Martial on charges of "Culpable Inefficiency in the Performance of Duty"; the others (of 11 tried) were exonerated by the Court. (of one Vice Admiral, two Rear Admirals and four Captains).

Captain (then in rank of Commander) Gaddis was transferred to Headquarters Twelfth Naval District, San Francisco, in December 1923, where he remained on duty until February 1926. He was then ordered to command of the USS SIRIUS, a vessel of the Naval Transportation Service, and in June was transferred to command of the USS ARCTIC, a unit of Training Squadron 2, Fleet Base Force. In November 1927 he was ordered to shore duty as Officer in Charge of the Branch Hydrographic Officer, San Francisco, California, and there until 1930, had additional duty as Inspector-Instructor of the Fleet Division, Oakland, California.

In September 1930 he reported to Headquarters, Sixteenth Naval District, Cavite, Philippine Islands, and soon thereafter was assigned as Commanding Officer of the USS BLACK HAWK, tender for Destroyer Squadron 5, Asiatic Fleet. Under his command the BLACK HAWK participated in operations on the Yangtze River, China, and at Shanghai, China in 1931 and 1932. Returning to the United States in June 1932, he served as Personnel Officer at Headquarters, Twelfth Naval District, San Francisco, with additional duty in 1935 as Port Director, Naval Transportation Service, Twelfth Naval District.

In August 1935 he was ordered to sea as Commanding Officer of the USS MISSISSIPPI, operating with Battleship Division 3, Battle Force, U. S. Fleet. After two years in that command, he reported to the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, where he was a student from September 1937 until June 1938. He then returned to the Twelfth Naval District to again serve as Port Director, Naval Transportation Service, until his transfer to the Retired List of the Navy and release from active duty on June 30, 1940.

Later that year he was recalled to active duty, and continued to serve in the Twelfth Naval District, after the outbreak of World War II in December 1941, assigned first to the Office of the Port Director, NTS, and later as Operations Officer, Twelfth Naval District. During the war he was sent to the Fourteenth Naval District Headquarters, Pearl Harbor, T. H., for General Court Martial duty.

Captain Gaddis has the Mexican Service Medal (USS JUPITER); the World War I Victory Medal (USS ALABAMA); American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal.