

7/13/57

REAR ADMIRAL CHARLES BUTLER McVAY, II,  
UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED

Charles Butler McVay, son of the late Admiral Charles B. McVay, Jr., USN, and Mrs. Edith Reno McVay, was born in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, August 31, 1898. He attended Yates Academy in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, before his appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy by President Woodrow Wilson in 1916. While a Midshipman he was a member of the tennis, soccer and swimming teams, and served in the summer of 1918 in the USS FREDERICK operating on escort duty with the Atlantic Fleet. Graduated and commissioned Ensign in June, 1919 with the Class of 1920, he progressed in grade until his promotion to Captain on June 18, 1942. He was transferred to the Retired List of the Navy on June 30, 1949 in the rank of Rear Admiral on the basis of combat citations.

After graduation and detachment from the Naval Academy, he was assigned to the USS NORTH DAKOTA for duty until June, 1921, when he had duty in connection with fitting out the USS MARYLAND, serving in that battleship from her commissioning, July 21, 1921 until December, 1923. From that time until January, 1926 he had consecutive duty in the USS MILWAUKEE, USS RAPPAHANNOCK, USS TANAGER, and USS BURNS. From March, 1926 until February, 1927 he was on duty in the Navy Department, Washington, D.C., Bureau of Navigation (now Bureau of Naval Personnel), and served there in the Enlisted Personnel Division, Discipline Section.

Returning to sea, he commanded the USS SYLPH, yacht of the Secretary of the Navy, until April, 1928, and the three succeeding years he served consecutively as Executive Officer of the USS BURNS and USS RAMSAY, destroyers. He again had duty in the Navy Department from April, 1931 until May, 1933, serving in the Office of Naval Intelligence. In May, 1933 he reported for duty as Aide and Flag Lieutenant on the staff of Commander Destroyers, Scouting Force, in the USS RALEIGH, flagship. That assignment completed in March, 1935, he assumed command of the USS ELLIS, serving until September, 1936.

From October 1936 until June 1938, he had duty at the Navy Yard, Washington, D. C., in connection with the Naval Reserves. For one year following he commanded the USS LUZON, flagship of the Commander of the Yangtze Patrol, Asiatic Station, and the succeeding year he served as Naval Aide on the staff of the U.S. High Commissioner, Manila, Philippine Islands.

Returning to the United States in September, 1940, he assumed command of the USS KAWEAH, on duty in the James River, and when detached in March, 1942, he assisted in fitting out the USS CLEVELAND and served as Executive Officer of that cruiser from her commissioning, June 15, 1942 until April 2, 1943. The CLEVELAND participated in the landings in North Africa in November, 1942. Transferred to the Pacific the following month, the CLEVELAND assisted in covering transport groups moving from Noumea to Guadalcanal in January, 1943, and in March participated in operations in the New Georgia area. He was awarded the Silver Star Medal "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity . . . in action against enemy Japanese forces in Kula Gulf and in the Vila-Stanhope Area of Kolombangara, Solomon Islands on the night of March 5, 1943. . . ."

Detached from the CLEVELAND, he returned to the United States, and from May 21, 1943 until October 18, 1944, he served as Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Staff, Office of the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department. On November 18, 1944 he assumed command of the USS INDIANAPOLIS. Under his command that cruiser participated in the early attack upon and seizure of Iwo Jima, in the first air strikes on Tokyo, and attacks on the Japanese home islands in March 1945. While participating in the pre-invasion bombardment of Okinawa on March 31, his ship was heavily damaged by a Japanese Kamikaze plane, and returned to the Navy Yard, Mare Island, California, for repairs. She sailed again from San Francisco, July 16, 1945, on a special high-speed run to Tinian. After delivering her atomic cargo, the INDIANAPOLIS was dispatched to Guam and onward to Leyte. She was attacked by enemy torpedo at night and sank in the Philippine Sea on July 30, 1945 with great loss of life.

Following the loss of the INDIANAPOLIS, he was hospitalized, and in September 1945 was ordered to report to the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy Department, for temporary duty during the investigation of the loss of his ship. In April 1946 upon completion of court martial proceedings, he was ordered to duty as Chief of Staff and Aide to the Commandant, Eighth Naval District, New Orleans, Louisiana, and to the Commander Gulf Sea Frontier (until the latter command was disestablished in July 1948). He was so serving when his retirement became effective, June 30, 1949.

In addition to the Silver Star Medal, and Purple Heart Medal, Rear Admiral McVay also has the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V," for the assault upon Okinawa; Victory Medal with Fleet Clasp; the Navy Expeditionary Medal; the China Service Medal; the American Defense Service Medal with bronze "A"; the American Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with one bronze star; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with four bronze stars; and the World War II Victory Medal.

