

COMMANDER ROBERT WRIGHT CABANISS  
U.S. NAVY, DECEASED

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

Robert Wright Cabaniss was born in Union Spring, Alabama on January 3, 1884. He was appointed Naval Cadet from Alabama and entered the U.S. Naval Academy on September 23, 1902. Graduated on February 12, 1906, he served the two years at sea then required by law, and was commissioned Ensign on February 13, 1908. He was subsequently promoted at various intervals, attaining the rank of Commander to date from June 3, 1922.

After graduation from the Naval Academy in 1906 he sailed in April for Asiatic Station aboard the battleship WISCONSIN. From August of that year until January 1908, he served successively in the USS CONCINNATI, USS RALEIGH and the USS WILMINGTON. Detached from duty with the Asiatic Fleet, he served consecutively at sea, except for two leave periods at home, for the next five years, with duty aboard the USS CALLAO for seven months; USS MAINE at the Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire; USS TENNESSEE, Flagship of Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, from July to December 1909; and the USS RAINBOW, of the Third Squadron, Pacific Fleet, until October 1910. After four months' instruction aboard the USS BAINBRIDGE, he assumed command of the USS BARRY, and four months later was transferred to the USS ALBANY in which he served until October 1912.

In January 1913 he returned to the Naval Academy for duty and during that summer made the Midshipman's cruise aboard the USS SOUTH CAROLINA. During that year he had additional duty under instruction at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island. He was tried by a General Court Martial at the Naval Academy and with the loss of five numbers was restored to duty, reporting to the Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in connection with fitting out the USS LEONIDAS.

Upon her commissioning, April 1, 1914, he joined the USS LEONIDAS as Engineering Officer, and served in that capacity until December 1915. In January 1916 he was ordered to the Naval Aeronautic Station, Pensacola, Florida, where he had instruction, and later duty, until December 1917, being designated Naval Aviator #36 on March 17, 1917. For eight months after his detachment, he commanded the Naval Aviation Detachment, Massachusetts Institute of Technology at Cambridge, Massachusetts.

He reported in August 1918 to the Commander, U.S. Naval Aviation Forces, Paris, France, and was assigned command of the U.S. Naval Air Station, at Moutchic-Lacanau (Gironde). In December shortly after the signing of the Armistice, he was transferred to the Naval Air Station at Pauillac, where he had temporary duty until February 1919. He then reported to the Naval Post Office, Bordeaux.

France, and returned to the United States for further assignment in the Bureau of Navigation, Navy Department.

From April until October 1919 he was in command of the Naval Air Station, Rockaway Beach, Long Island, New York. In November of that year he reported to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, where he had duty until June 1921. Duty in connection with fitting out the USS WRIGHT was followed by duty aboard as Executive Officer from her commissioning on December 16, 1921 until December 1923. He next served at the Naval Aircraft Factory, Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, until May 1926, when he assumed command of the USS AROOSTOOK, aircraft tender.

Commander Cabaniss was killed on March 31, 1927, in the crash of a PN-9 plane, near Navassa Island, West Indies, while still in command of the AROOSTOOK.

He had the Victory Medal, Overseas Clasp; and the Order of the Bust of Bolivar, awarded by the Venezuelan Government in 1909.

Commander Cabaniss was survived by his wife, Mrs. Martha Ryan Cabaniss of 640 North Rose Street, Burbank, California, and four children: Robert Wright, Martha Rebecca, Juliet Harmon, and Arthur Ryan Cabaniss.

25 April 1950