

REAR ADMIRAL JAMES MERRILL FERNALD,
UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED

James Merrill Fernald was born in Rockland, Maine, June 7, 1897, son of George W. and Henrietta Sylvester Fernald. Graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Tufts College, Medford, Massachusetts, he was enrolled in the U.S. Naval Reserve Force in June, 1918, was called to active duty and commissioned Ensign in April, 1919, and served continuously until commissioned Ensign in the regular Navy dating from November 14, 1921. He was subsequently advanced in the grades to that of Captain to date from June 17, 1942. Placed on the Retired List of the Navy on June 30, 1949, he was promoted in rank to Rear Admiral on the basis of combat citations.

During the prewar years most of his service was at sea in minecraft and cruisers, including the USS HURON, USS SHAWMUT, USS DETROIT, and USS NEW ORLEANS. He served three tours of duty on the staff of Commander in Chief, Asiatic Fleet, his first command being the destroyer tender USS BLACK HAWK, of Destroyer Squadron 5, Asiatic Fleet. He had duty under instruction at the U.S. Naval Academy, Postgraduate School for the course in radio Engineering, continuing the course at Yale University, where he obtained the Master of Science degree in 1927. Other shore assignments include the Office of Naval Communication, Navy Department, with additional duty as Aide at the White House, and Naval Gun Factory, Washington, D.C.

At the outbreak of World War II, he was serving in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department. In 1943-1944 he commanded the USS APPALACHIAN, destroyer tender, serving as flagship during two amphibious assault landings. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with combat distinguishing device "V", and cited "For meritorious service as Commanding Officer of the USS APPALACHIAN serving as the Communication Headquarters Ship during two assault landing operations against enemy Japanese-held islands in the Pacific during January and June, 1944. A superb seaman and gallant leader, Captain Fernald, by his skillful direction of training and operation of his ship contributed essentially to the success of the Naval phase of these eminently effective attacks. . . ."

When relieved of command of the APPALACHIAN, he returned to the Navy Department, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, and had duty as Assistant Director of Naval Communications for Plans and Operations, until ordered detached in September, 1945 and to duty on the West Coast in command of the USS ROCKY MOUNT. He transferred in January, 1947 to command of the USS DAYTON, light cruiser, attached to the Atlantic Fleet. He was serving in that capacity when relieved of active duty pending his retirement on June 30, 1949.

In addition to the Bronze Star Medal, Rear Admiral Fernald has the World War I Victory Medal, China Service Medal, American Defense Service Medal, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and World War II Victory Medal.