

1970

## Admiral Joseph Mason Reeves, USN

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### Recommended Citation

Hayes, John D. (1970) "Admiral Joseph Mason Reeves, USN," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 23 : No. 9 , Article 6.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol23/iss9/6>

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*The contributions of many men have been overlooked in the chronicles of our history. One of these was Adm. Joseph Mason Reeves, who commanded the aviation units of the Pacific Fleet during the crucial period of their early development and training. His dynamism, leadership, and professional competence are responsible to a great extent for the splendid record of U.S. naval aviation in the Second World War.*

## ADMIRAL JOSEPH MASON REEVES, USN (1872-1948)

### PART ONE—TO 1931

#### THE ENGINEERING, GUNNERY, AND AVIATION YEARS

An article

by

Rear Admiral John D. Hayes, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Superiority of material strength is given a commander gratis.  
Superior knowledge and superior tactical skill, he must himself acquire.  
Superior morale, superior cooperation he must himself create.

*J. M. Reeves, Lecture, Army War College, 1925*

Thirty-five years ago, as the world was on its course toward World War II, the name of Adm. Joseph Mason Reeves was a veritable watchword in the U.S. Navy. Today that name is almost unknown outside the senior flag ranks. Such is the fate of the memory of an officer destined not to lead the Navy in World War II, but to prepare it for that great trial.

A man of one generation to be remembered by another must either do something worth recording or write something worth reading, for the only thing that truly lasts is the written word. Moreover, in the military profes-

sion, the only deeds that seem to get fully entered into the record are those of war. Today the names of King, Nimitz, and Halsey are known nationwide, but historians have chronicled the records of only two deserving men of the period between the rebirth of the U.S. Navy in the 1880's and World War II. One was Alfred T. Mahan, the other William S. Sims who was lucky enough to have a major part in World War I. Almost forgotten are such worthies of the period as Luce, Chadwick, Taylor, Evans, Fiske, Benson, Gleaves, Hilary P. Jones, Yarnell, Taussig, and, in a class by himself, Joseph Mason Reeves.

Reeves served as Commander Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet,<sup>1</sup> during naval aviation's most formative years. He came to that command in 1925 as a captain after 3 months of aviation familiarization. The carrier force then consisted of the experimental *Langley* operating eight aircraft from her flight deck. When he left 6 years later, he had hammered out an aircraft tactical doctrine that was to stand the test of World War II; carriers *Saratoga* and *Lexington* were recognized combat units in a big-gun fleet, and the concept of the modern carrier task force was already evolving.

In 1933 Reeves was the first aviation officer to command the U.S. Fleet, and in the last 3 years of his active career he left a mark on that fleet which it carried triumphantly through World War II and still has not yet entirely lost.

J.M. Reeves was perhaps the most accomplished extemporaneous speaker that the U.S. Navy has produced among its senior ranks. Anyone who ever heard him speak before an audience never forgot it. Sailors, midshipmen, young aviators, members of his staff, and the entire officer personnel of the U.S. Fleet all came under his spell. In 1931, at an otherwise tiresome critique following a Fleet Problem, he gave a singular demonstration of this gift when he held his audience spellbound for almost an hour, speaking only from notes written on the back of a calling card. His addresses to officers of the aircraft squadrons at the Naval Air Station, San Diego, in November 1925 and to those of the fleet at the Naval War College in June 1933 are milestones in American naval history, although it is doubtful if a record of either has been preserved.

Reeves had this gift, because to him the oral word was the means for truly communicating, for transferring ideas, convictions, enthusiasm between living men. It was a God-given tool by which men could be inspired to perform beyond themselves, to reach heights they

did not believe they were capable of reaching. On the other hand, Reeves had little use for the written word, and this was nowhere better indicated than in *Who's Who in America, 1941* where his eight-line biography was one of the shortest in the volume. In his opinion, words preserved in books tended to make men look backward instead of forward, to turn them from the real world to the unreality they were able to create or find in books. The written word, with its power to preserve the truth, in his view, was too often used to twist it.

**Early Career.** Joseph Mason Reeves was born on 20 November 1872 in Tampico, Ill., a small farming community about 100 miles west of Chicago. He was the second son, in a family of five boys, of Joseph Cunningham and Frances (Brewer) Reeves. His ancestors had come to Massachusetts from England about 1640. The Reeves family moved to Newark, N.Y., probably after both the War of 1812 and the Erie Canal had opened western New York to migration from New England. Joseph Cunningham Reeves was educated at Ithaca College, New York, and was wounded during the Civil War while serving in the 8th New York Cavalry. After the war he migrated to Illinois where he took up farming.

Joseph, called "Mason" in the family, received his early education at the local schools in which his father sometimes taught while a member of the school board. The elder Reeves was an avid reader, and, according to family tradition, the son early became well versed in Shakespeare and Milton, a fact that no doubt contributed in later years to his splendid command of the English language.

During his senior year in high school, young Mason took a competitive examination for West Point. Another received this appointment, and he, as well as his contemporaries William D. Leahy,

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also the son of an Army Civil War veteran, and William H. Standley had the second choice and became midshipmen at the then lesser known Naval Academy.

Cadet Engineer Reeves graduated in 1894, standing 34 in a class of 47, his academic performance no doubt haudicapped by his avid participation in competitive sports, notably football and crew. He played right tackle on the team that defeated West Point in 1893. At Annapolis his athletic prowess earned him the nickname "Bull" which he retained throughout his service career.

Reeves' first ship was the cruiser *San Francisco* in which he served until 1896, when he was commissioned assistant engineer. His next assignment was to the new battleship *Oregon* at San Francisco. He served in her through the Spanish-American War, in charge of her main engines during the famous voyage around Cape Horn and in the naval battle off Santiago, Cuba. During the latter, *Oregon* exceeded her designed speed, and for this Reeves was advanced four numbers in grade, as was his chief engineer, Robert W. Milligau, who was primarily responsible for the ship's outstanding performance. Shipmates with Reeves in *Oregon* were three other officers who would reach the top of their profession, Lt. (jg.) Edward W. Eberle, who had graduated from the Naval Academy in 1885, and Cadet Engineers William D. Leahy and Harry E. Yarnell, both of whom were 3 years junior to Reeves.<sup>2</sup>

In February 1899 the Engineer Corps was amalgamated into the line of the Navy, and Reeves, after passing the necessary examination, received a new commission as lieutenant (junior grade). His career from then until 1923 was not unlike that of other line officers. His earlier duty assignments were in gunnery in the battleships *Kearsarge* and *Wisconsin* and again in the cruiser *San Francisco*. In these ships he showed a

remarkable ability to train guncrews to make numerous hits in record time. The major factors in these achievements were his power of concentration and an enthusiasm which he could transfer to others. He was, no doubt, familiar with the time-motion efficiency techniques of Frederiek W. Taylor.<sup>3</sup>

In 1906 Reeves requested and was assigned duty at the Naval Academy where he served 2 years as instructor in physics and chemistry and also as assistant football coach under the famous "Skinny Paul" Dashiell. As a mark of appreciation for his personal interest in helping midshipmen, especially athletes, with their academic studies and "his unfailing courtesy and kindness," the class of 1909 dedicated their Lucky Bag yearbook to him.

From the Naval Academy, Reeves went to be gunnery officer of the battleship *New Hampshire* where his magic touch in training guncrews resulted in this ship winning the battle efficiency pennant in the first year after her commissioning. He then became gunnery officer on the staff of Commander, Atlantic Fleet, at the time when the apostle of gunnery, William S. Sims, commanded the battleship *Minnesota* in that fleet.

A commander by 1910, Reeves was assigned to his first command in 1913, the new collier *Jupiter*, first ship in the Navy fitted with electric drive. *Jupiter's* chief engineer and executive officer was Samuel Murray Robinson, then on his way to become one of the foremost of the Navy's engineers. Reeves in this duty became associated with William LeRoy Emmet, the General Electric engineer who pioneered warship electric drive design. *Jupiter* was later converted into the first carrier, *Langley*, in which Reeves would break his rear admiral flag in 1927. Converted a second time to an aircraft tender, *Langley* was to die in battle, sunk by Japanese carrier planes south of Java in February 1942 while attempting to bring reinforcement air-

craft from Australia. But her significance in 1913 was as a tested prototype for five electric drive battleships and the carriers *Saratoga* and *Lexington*.

During the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, Reeves commanded the recommissioned *Oregon*. He received his captain's commission in October 1917 at the age of 45. During World War I, he commanded the battleship *Maine* in the Atlantic Fleet and after was naval attaché at Rome. In 1921 he took command of the battleship *North Dakota* which participated in the midshipmen's practice cruise of 1923. The midshipmen aboard gave the bearded gentleman the inappropriate, but nevertheless affectionate, nickname "Billy Goat."

The Naval War College. With the completion of his *North Dakota* cruise, the star of Joseph Mason Reeves began to ascend. In the fall of 1923 he was ordered to instruction at the Naval War College, and he remained a second year as a member of the faculty. An activist, the game board attracted him more than the library, but the papers he prepared there still make profitable reading. Two, written while a student, have the titles "Policy" and "Tactics." The second of these may have turned his attention, as a faculty member, to the Battle of Jutland, which he endeavored to analyze in terms of the principles of war. The result was a 60-page lecture which he delivered at the Army War College, Washington, D.C., in 1925.<sup>4</sup> With his inimitable speaking style, already well known in the Navy, he must have kept the soldiers enthralled. But mammoth, indecisive Jutland was such a wholesale violation of one principle of war, simplicity, that it made the efforts by Reeves to apply the other principles almost fruitless.

It is difficult for officers today to understand the fascination that Jutland held for the naval profession of that time, and it is well for us to be reserved

in our criticism. Perhaps it was the wealth of data available which resulted in this action getting far more attention than it deserved as author after author, following World War I, wrote about it. This literary deluge helped preserve the myth of the battleline engagement for another 20 years after the submarine and airplane had changed the whole nature of naval warfare. What study of the battle should have revealed but did not was that technical advances had outdistanced the commander's means of controlling his forces. The Reeves' analysis intimates this; it is also a biting criticism of British naval leadership of the time. But the treasurable statement that he made in it, which appears at the head of this article, was not derived from any study of the principles of war as applied to the Battle of Jutland; this came from a lifetime of knowledgeable leadership and unreserved devotion to his profession.

Following his 2 years in Newport, Reeves was ordered to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola to take the naval aviation observer's course which included all but actual instruction in the control of aircraft. His biographer, Adolphus Andrews, Jr., states that he was induced to make the choice of aviation because he saw in it the means of gaining information about an enemy by getting past the barrier of distance which had been represented by the screen across the Naval War College game board.<sup>5</sup>

Reeves, years later, may have convinced himself of this in his conversations with Andrews. However, the late Vice Adm. Frank D. Wagner, who served with him and who enjoyed his confidences, offered a far different explanation. In a letter to the author in 1964, Wagner wrote:

As he told me, at the height of the Billy Mitchell controversy, Captain Reeves was ordered to command Submarines, Battle Fleet

but the Navy Department was in need of a man to act as liaison officer between the Department and Capitol Hill. Reeves had been an engineer, a gun club man, a Bu Nav man, etc., so he was selected. At the end of this duty the then C.N.O. told Reeves that he, Reeves, had acquired such a knowledge of aviation that he was to be Commander Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet.

The CNO at this time was Adm. Edward W. Eberle who, as previously mentioned, had been a shipmate with Reeves in *Oregon* in 1898. He had also been head of the Eberle board which in 1925 investigated the future of seapower in terms of the battleship and the airplane. In any case, before Reeves went to Pensacola he was slated for the Pacific Fleet Aviation Command.<sup>6</sup> At this time the then Bureau of Navigation, now Naval Personnel, was searching the captains' and commanders' lists for those willing to accept aviation duty. The law of July 1921, which still applies, required that officers who were qualified as naval aviators and naval aviation observers only could command aviation units at sea and on shore.

This ordering of senior nonflying officers to aviation duty, after an abbreviated course at Pensacola, hardly pleased some long-time naval aviators, a few of whom favored a separate air force. Nothing comparable to this action took place in the Army where the separation of branches and the already partial independence of the Army Air Corps inhibited it. The Navy's move proved farsighted for it placed naval aviation both before and during World War II in the hands of seasoned men like Reeves, Yarnell, King, and Halsey and insured that its development would be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. In the Army, senior officers lost control of their most effective weapons system.

So Reeves, at the age of 53, started a new career when most officers were reaching a professional dead end. In this he might be compared with Robert Blake, the British general who, three centuries before, had created the modern naval profession. Blake was 50 years old when he first stepped aboard a warship.

Reeves could not have taken over the Navy's most important fleet aviation unit at a more critical time. Only a few weeks before, Gen. William (Billy) Mitchell had made the charge for which he was court-martialed, that the then supposed loss of a seaplane en route to Hawaii with Comdr. John Rodgers as pilot and the tragic wreck of the Navy dirigible *Shenandoah* were due to "the incompetency, criminal negligence, and almost treasonable administration of the national defense by the War and Navy Departments."

**Commander Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet.** Whatever the merits of the charge, there can be little doubt that the naval aircraft segment in the Pacific at the time was a lackadaisical outfit. Its officers were concerned mainly with testing the new Lawrence air-cooled engine, aerial surveying, breaking records, and stunt flying. Reeves was to recast it into a combat-conscious command by the same methods that he formerly used to produce record-breaking guncrews in the old *San Francisco*, *Wisconsin*, and *New Hampshire*.

During the first 6 weeks in his new job, he did little more than modestly observe. Then one day in November 1925, he gathered his officers in the auditorium at North Island and delivered the epoch-making lecture previously referred to. He bluntly told them that from what he had seen, it was evident that they had no conception of the capabilities and limitations of their weapons and that therefore Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet, were incapable of conducting fleet air tactics. He

followed this with some pointed questions and then frankly stated that no one had the answers. Following this scolding, more questions kept pouring out of his office on mimeographed sheets to be circulated within the squadrons. These now became a school with lessons learned on the flight deck of *Langley* and in the cockpits of aircraft in flight. The mimeographed sheets acquired the popular label of "Reeves Thousand and One Questions."<sup>7</sup>

Among the most critical of these questions was "How can we bomb effectively?" This was answered, according to the record, by Lt. Frank D. Wagner, at the time Commander of Fighting Squadron 2. He did so by applying dive bombing, which the U.S. Marines had pioneered in Nicaragua, to naval aviation. He made his first dive from 7,000 feet in March 1926, at the Naval Air Station, San Diego. After a month's training in the new technique, his squadron made the first simulated dive bombing attack on a battleship column, completely surprising these ships and getting off before the anti-aircraft crews could train their guns. Adms. Charles F. Hughes, then Commander of the Battle Force, and Richard H. Jackson, Commander Battleships, were thoroughly impressed. Jackson remained an ardent supporter, and since he held major fleet commands until 1928, naval aviation had a friend in high places during these difficult years.<sup>8</sup> Wagner soon after became operations officer on the staff of Commander Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet. He remained the commodore's right-hand man in this position as long as Reeves was directly connected with naval aviation.

The answers to most of the "Thousand and One Questions" were finally collected in a 161-page official letter which Reeves sent to the Chief of Naval Operations, via Commander Battle Fleet and Commander in Chief U.S. Fleet. It opened with the statement: "The

following report, dealing with aircraft tactics, is based entirely upon actual and practical operating experience." This letter or its sequel, *Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet Tactical Instructions, 1928*, may be the pamphlet referred to by Turnbull and Lord (see footnote 7). According to Adm. Arthur K. Doyle, the *Tactical Instructions* reflected the "Thousand and One Questions" as this pamphlet "was prepared in detail in order to record why certain tactics and procedures were recommended."

By the summer of 1926, with tactical doctrine well on its way to formulation, Reeves concentrated on increasing the number of aircraft that could be operated from a carrier and in improving techniques and times of takeoffs and landings. One of the first directives he issued after taking over command was to increase the number of aircraft embarked in *Langley* from eight to 14. A few months later he had Lt. Gerald F. (Jerry) Bogan's Fighting Squadron 1 make as many landings and takeoffs as was possible in one day, clocking them on the bridge with his stopwatch as he once did his guncrews. Vice Admiral Jerry, himself one of the Navy's greats, can better tell this story.

Commodore Reeves . . . sent for Commander Mitscher, the ship's air officer and me to issue his order. I explained that the ship was pitching 25 or 30 feet, that the wind was over 50 knots, that our planes landed at 55, and that with *Langley's* necessary speed for steerage way, the conditions were not exactly favorable. The Commodore was equal to the occasion. He replied, "Well then, we shall steam down wind." We did not, but at the cost of several broken landing gears and one airplane, the squadron did execute 128 takeoffs and landings on that date.<sup>9</sup>

On the basis of this accomplishment, Reeves recommended that *Langley's*

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experimental status be ended, and it was. During the winter of 1927, the converted carrier was handling 30 aircraft on her flight deck. By the following summer this number had been increased to 36 with 42 normally embarked, two 18-place fighter-homber squadrons, plus six radio-equipped scouts.

Some aviators, among them John Towers, commanding *Langley*, were alarmed by the crowding of the flight deck. However, according to Wagner, "Pete" Mitscher, then executive and air officer of *Langley*, when asked why he did not protest, answered, "For the simple reason that it can be done." But it was not done without accidents that sometimes resulted in deaths. Lt. (jg.) William H. Reddington was killed in a crash of his aircraft shortly after taking off from *Langley* on 21 May 1928 near Honolulu, Hawaii.

Reeves knew that military progress can only be procured at a price. The Navy's gunnery advances during the early years of the century had come at terrifying loss of life in such accidents as the explosions in gun turrets and casemates of *Missouri*, *Georgia*, and recently (1923) *Mississippi*. He convinced the young aviators of the old gunnery axiom that safety precautions are written in blood, that theirs was a challenging profession, that many would lose their lives in it, but this was the price of having a part of the great naval revolution of the century. Reeves knew how to capture and stimulate the enthusiasm of young men who, caught by his spell, responded with zeal. Soon other ships in the fleet, especially the destroyer plane guards, became conscious of the increased rapidity of the landings and takeoffs aboard *Langley*. In battleships, men looked up to see dive bombers and torpedo planes come suddenly out of the sun.

**Saratoga, Lexington, and the Fleet Problems.** This new phenomenon in the

gunnery conscious Battle Fleet first came into striking evidence in the spring of 1928 during Fleet Problem VIII which was conducted in the Hawaiian Islands area. This was the second in which *Langley*, with Reeves, participated. Fleet problems were held annually, usually in Hawaiian or Panama Canal waters. They were generally strategic in concept and character. For the Battle Fleet, much of the remainder of the year was spent in the San Diego-San Pedro, Calif., area, conducting type training, except for 2 days each month when the various type units operated together for fleet tactical training. During these periods *Langley* operated with other types, normally with her assigned squadrons embarked.

The carrier's paramount duty at this time, however, was to afford flight deck training to the flyers who would compose the squadrons of the two giant carriers then fitting out, *Lexington* and *Saratoga*. This training had commenced at Norfolk, Va., where *Langley* remained for several months during the summer of 1927, following Fleet Problem VII and the visit of the Battle Fleet to east coast ports. Reeves had expected to personally supervise these activities; instead from June until early August he was in Geneva, Switzerland, serving as adviser to the U.S. delegates at the Limitation of Naval Armaments Conference. His rear admiral's commission was awaiting on his return, dated 16 August 1927. He broke his flag 2 weeks later in *Langley*. Shortly thereafter she proceeded on her return passage to San Diego.

The *Lexington* and *Saratoga* squadrons, 144 aircraft in all, also proceeded to North Island via cross country. Throughout the winter of 1927-28, these squadrons used *Langley* for intensive training under Reeves' personal direction. This continued even more strenuously after the two big carriers joined the Battle Fleet in mid-1928. The Reeves' technique of flight deck



stowage and handling soon resulted in an increase of from 72 to 90 in the number of aircraft embarked in each of these ships. Genial and able John Halligan, *Saratoga's* skipper, laughingly complained that the flight deck crews pushed the planes farther than the aviators flew them. Concurrent with the improvement in flight deck operations was the development of the tactical concepts that would eventually result in the airplane rather than the big gun becoming the determinant in naval battle and the carrier replacing the battlewagon as the capital ship.

The initial steps to this end had been taken in the early months of 1927 during Fleet Problem VII. Reeves was ready to use *Langley's* two fighter-bomber squadrons to demonstrate the tactical capabilities of naval aviation. Out in the Gulf of Panama, 30 planes took off from *Langley* well before dawn and at daybreak made a coordinated dive bombing attack on the Pacific entrance to the Panama Canal without being intercepted by any defending Army aircraft. The success of this maneuver led to a Reeves recommendation, which was approved, that Commander Aircraft Squadrons be given complete freedom of action in the tactical employment of carrier units.

*Lexington*, first of the two large carriers ready, arrived on the west coast in June 1928 while the Battle Fleet was engaged in Fleet Problem VIII in Hawaiian waters. Instead of allowing her to leisurely await the fleet's return, Reeves ordered her to join at highest sustained speed. In doing so, the "Minute Man" ship set a speed record that still stands, a 2,225 mile passage in 72.6 hours, at an average speed of almost 31 knots. After the fleet problem was completed, the Army commander in the area asked for the service of carrier planes for an air defense exercise. In complying, Reeves transferred *Langley's* squadrons to *Lexington*, took the big carrier 250 miles from Oahu, made a

night run in, a predawn launch, and a dawn attack—all without detection. This exercise set the pattern for the independent carrier operation in Fleet Problem IX.

Reeves and his chief staff officer, Comdr. Eugene E. Wilson, have left accounts of this notable event. Both, however, were recorded from memory and understandably contain significant errors which make them unreliable as historic documents.<sup>10</sup> Fleet Problem IX was conducted in January 1929, mostly in the waters of the Gulf of Panama on the Pacific side of the canal. The two fleets were divided into opposing forces, Blue defending the canal, Black attacking. The Blue Force was composed of battleships and other types from the Scouting Fleet (Atlantic) plus *Lexington* and Army units stationed in the Canal Zone. The Black Force was the Battle Fleet, including *Saratoga*. *Langley* did not participate due to a delayed navy yard overhaul.

Adm. William V. Pratt, then Commander Battle Fleet, was the Black Commander. During preliminary discussions of the Black plan, Reeves argued against *Saratoga* accompanying the main body during direct attack, claiming the carrier would soon be lost. Instead he proposed that she act independently under his command, making a wide sweep and an approach from the south to avoid detection before launching her aircraft for a coordinated attack on the Pacific locks of the canal. *Saratoga* would use a light cruiser for plane guard. Pratt feared the possibility of aircraft and pilot losses in such an operation but nevertheless agreed.

There is no need here to review all the exciting details of this problem which Reeves and Wilson recorded. *Saratoga*, with *Omaha*, was in the vicinity of the Galapagos Islands at the beginning of the problem. She made her run north at high speed and was 150 miles from Panama at time of launching, 2 hours before dawn on 25 January

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1929. The dawn attack by a carrier group, comprising 17 dive bombers, 17 torpedo-bombers, 32 fighters, and three radio planes, was undetected and completely successful. Only nine Army aircraft got into the air. All attackers returned safely. This was the high point in Reeves' naval career; even his tour as Commander in Chief U.S. Fleet was an anticlimax.

However, at dawn *Saratoga* herself came under theoretical fire of enemy battleships and was destroyed. The previous day, umpires had reduced *Lexington's* speed to 18 knots after she had come within range of Black battleships while launching her aircraft. The problem, therefore, did not prove a complete vindication for naval aviation.

**Commander Carriers, Battle Fleet.** Reeves did not participate in the 1930 fleet maneuvers, being on duty ashore. But in May of that year, he again took over the major aviation command in the Pacific, with his new title Commander Carriers, Battle Fleet. Fleet Problem XI was ambitious, involving not only the defense of the Panama Canal but also a hypothetical second canal in Nicaragua. The two were separated, 400 nautical miles by air and almost 600 by sea. Reeves as Blue Commander with two carriers and supporting forces was assigned the defense of both canals. He himself undertook that of the Nicaraguan canal with *Saratoga*, and he assigned Capt. Ernest J. King, with *Lexington*, to the Panama area. The extended requirements of this problem resulted in almost exhausting the fuel of both carriers, requiring a decrease in operating speed which reduced their effectiveness 50 percent. Fueling at sea was not then as regularly practiced as today. Moreover, aircraft conducted searches and made attacks at distances up to 150 miles from their carriers, and in two cases returning squadrons had serious difficulties in finding their ships.

This left many of the participating

flag officers with less than a favorable impression of the capabilities of naval aviation. Reeves himself admitted at the critique that aircraft alone could not stop the advance of attackers or keep them from landing and that planes and ships were still mutually dependent. Admiral Pratt, then Chief of Naval Operations, in his endorsing comments stated that air attack as defense against approaching fleets was of less value than had been expected. Reeves, however, immediately submitted a strong and carefully worded report to the Navy Department which kept aviation from receiving severe cuts in the limited naval appropriations of that year.<sup>11</sup>

On his return to San Diego from this fleet problem, he asked the Navy Department for a change of duty. His reasons were mixed. He did not wish to become another Moffett who was then on a second tour as Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics and would be assigned a

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### BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Rear Adm. John D. Hayes, U.S. Navy (Ret.) is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy in 1924, holds a master's degree from the University of California, has done advanced work at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate

School, and has attended the Army and Navy Staff College, the Naval War College, and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. During his naval career, he served in destroyers, cruisers, and battleships; served on the staffs of the 3d and 7th Amphibious Forces in the Pacific in World War II; and commanded Service Squadron 1 during the Korean war. As a retired naval officer, Rear Admiral Hayes resides in Texas City, Tex., where he is active as a writer on modern applications of seapower for professional military and naval periodicals. He is author of the biography of Adm. Joseph M. Reeves published in volume XXIII of the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

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third after Reeves turned down an offer of the job. Moreover, he wanted others to have the experience of this foremost fleet command, especially the able Harry E. Yarnell, who succeeded him. He knew he was in disfavor with the administration over his stands on the Geneva and London Disarmament Conferences, and his relations with the Navy Department had lately become strained. But he never expected the low prestige duty assignment that he received, Senior Member of the Pacific Coast Board of Inspection and Survey.

When his flag was hauled down from *Saratoga's* masthead on 6 April 1931, Reeves ended his direct association with naval aviation. He also believed his naval career was near its close. So here should be a good place to end his saga for a

time. A future issue of the *Naval War College Review* will record his trying year as a member of the General Board, his dialectic victory over Drew Pearson, his last 3 years afloat, 2 as Commander in Chief U.S. Fleet, and his services during World War II.

One bit of the future, however, can be anticipated. Admiral Bogan last met Reeves in the Navy Department in 1946 when the former was Commander Aircraft, Atlantic. After a few minutes' chat, the old man remarked, "Imagine, Jerry, a kid like you a vice admiral." Bogan was then 53 years of age. But in the younger man, Joseph Mason Reeves saw the abundant fulfillment of a life's work. Shortly thereafter he retired after more than 52 years of active service. In a little over a year, he was dead.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. In the two decades before World War II, naval units normally stationed in the Pacific composed the Battle Fleet; those in the Atlantic were in the Scouting Fleet.

2. The photographs at the top of page 219 in Frank Freidel's *The Splendid Little War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958) appear to be those of Reeves and Leahy.

3. See biography of Fredrick Winslow Taylor in the *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Scribners, 1936), v. XVIII, p. 323-324.

4. A copy of this lecture is in the Naval Academy Library, a gift of his niece, Mrs. Eileen Reeves Woods of Washington, D.C., wife of Capt. I.L.B. Woods, USN (Ret.). Reeves' papers, "Policy" and "Facts," are in the Naval War College archives. He may possibly have also done one on "Strategy."

5. Adolphus Andrews, Jr., "Admiral with Wings, the Career of Joseph Mason Reeves," Unpublished Dissertation, Princeton University, 1941, p. 50.

6. Eugene E. Wilson, *Slipstream, the Autobiography of an Aircraftsman* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1950), p. 112.

7. This has conveyed the notion that these questions were published in one pamphlet, and this was given credence in Archibald D. Turnbull's and Clifford L. Lord's *History of United States Naval Aviation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 217. However, research has not turned up a copy of such a pamphlet.

8. Admiral Jackson, now age 104, lives in Coronado, Calif.

9. Gerald F. Bogan, "The Navy Spreads Its Golden Wings," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1961, p. 98. Admiral Bogan submitted the article with the whimsical but more precise title, "Long Labor Healthy Child." Clark G. Reynolds, author of *The Fast Carriers* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968) rates Bogan in the book's "Dramatis Personae": Pugnosed, outspoken smart, tenacious combat leader, loving a scrap; a thorough teacher in the ways of carrier combat.

10. Andrews, p. 68-73; Eugene E. Wilson, "The Navy's First Carrier Task Force," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, February 1950, p. 159-169. Primary reliance for basic facts here have been on Turnbull and Lord who used official records.

11. Letter from Rear Adm. Charles L. Westhofen, USN (Ret.) of 3 August 1970. Westhofen encoded the dispatch.