

Admiral, Ex-Mayor

C. P. Mason Dead at 80

Adm. Charles P. Mason, aviation pioneer, military commander, civic worker and former mayor of Pensacola, died early Friday morning of natural causes at a local hospital.

He was 80.

Adm. Mason was a 38-year Naval veteran when he retired in Pensacola in 1946. A native of Pennsylvania, he was graduated from the Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1912. He first came to Pensacola in 1916, training to become Naval Aviator No. 52 in 1917. He saw service in France during World War I and served on the Armistice Commission in Germany in 1918. He later commanded the first seaplane squadron of the Pacific Fleet.

He married the former Ralphine Fisher in Pensacola in 1917 and returned here four years later as superintendent of Naval Aviation Training. He later served on the first aircraft carrier, the USS Langley, making the first night takeoff and first catapult launching.

Adm. Mason commanded the USS Hornet when the aircraft carrier went down during the Battle of Santa Cruz during World War II in 1942. The following year, he was elevated to command all air forces in the Solomon Islands. His many decorations include the Navy Cross, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star and honors from Mexican, Chilean, Peruvian and Brazilian governments.

The original USS Lexington was sunk during World War II while Mason was under orders to take over as the ship's commanding officer.

Adm. Mason was posted to Pensacola four times during his Naval career and was in command of the Naval Air Station at Jacksonville when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

When he reported aboard the



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Aircraft Carrier Hornet it had been ordered to sea for the action that developed as the battle of Midway. Following the battle, he took over as commanding officer and during one of his assignments, the Hornet moved within 30 miles of Guadalcanal served for 36 hours as a sort of substitute to Henderson Field while the field itself was being repaired.

The carrier's planes were credited that day with stemming the Japanese tide, relieving the vastly outnumbered, harassed Marine ground troops until the field was put back in operation.

Next came the Battle of Santa Cruz on Oct. 26, 1942. The American fleet was outnumbered, with 22 ships against 36 to 39 Japanese vessels, all heavier and stronger in every division.

It was all over for the Hornet in eight minutes. She no longer would respond to the helm. But they fought all day with the ship afire seven different times. At 4:30 p.m. Adm. Mason, faced with the prospect of keeping the remaining 1,700 men aboard a derelict all night, gave the order to abandon ship. After the men were off, the admiral went over the side and was picked up by a motor whaleboat.

Adm. Mason was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions that day by Adm. W. F. Halsey. The citation read: "Without regard for his own safety and though the carrier was subjected to violent attack by overwhelming numbers of enemy fighter, dive and torpedo bombers, Adm. Mason coolly and efficiently directed the firing of his ship at all times."

Adm. Mason was first chosen

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Appellate Court

Book Mart Decision Is Upheld