

REAR ADMIRAL EDWARD WALTER EBERLE
U. S. NAVY, DECEASED

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

Edward Walter Eberle, the third Chief of Naval Operations, was born in Denton, Texas, on August 17, 1864. He was appointed to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from the Third District of Arkansas in 1881. Graduated on June 5, 1885, he served the two years at sea, then required by law, before he was commissioned Ensign to rank from July 1, 1887. He subsequently attained the rank of Rear Admiral to date from September 25, 1919, and served in the temporary rank of Admiral from June 1921 until November 1927, when he reverted to his permanent rank of Rear Admiral. He was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy on August 17, 1928, in the rank of Rear Admiral.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy in 1885, he had consecutive duty in the USS MOHICAN and USS SHENNANDOAH and while he was aboard the latter vessel, she was assisting in maintaining treaty obligations in the insurrection on the Isthmus of Panama. He had short duty in the RANGER from October 1886 to April 1887, and between August and November 1887, had special duty at the Naval Academy.

He joined the U. S. Fish Commission Steamer ALBATROSS, which in 1891, under the direction of Alexander Agassiz, made many important contributions to science by the discovery of various forms of sea life and furnished valuable information to hydrographers. He aided in running lines of soundings in the waters of Cape Horn and then steamed in northern Pacific waters sounding and charting the fishing banks so that their location would be readily known to the fisher folk of Alaska and the Northwest.

From January 1891 to March of that same year he had instruction in ordnance at the Navy Yard, Washington, D. C., after which he joined the USS LANCASTER as Watch and Division Officer. In October 1893 he transferred to the USS MARION to serve until 1894, when he reported for duty at the Naval Academy. Ordered to the battleship OREGON in 1896, when she remained at the builder's yards on the Pacific Coast until she was commissioned on July 15, of that year, when he joined her as Turret Officer.

He made the famous cruise around the Horn in the OREGON, in the spring of 1898, and was in charge of her forward turret during the Battle of Santiago, when the Spanish Fleet made their frantic dash for the open sea, July 4, 1898. While the OREGON was in Guantanamo Bay to coal, he discovered from the fore-top-mast that there was great activity of Spanish soldiers at Caimanera, five miles distant. For lack of proper range-finding tactics, he plotted the range from the navigational charts then used, had his turrets crew to go to quarters and he

from the fore-top controlled the fire of the turret. So accurate was his estimate of the range that the first shot fired struck a loaded troop train and the railroad station, completely wrecking both and killing many Spanish troops. The proposed plans of the Spanish to operate to harass the Marines, then on McCalla Hill, were completely broken up by this work.

Detached from the OREGON in 1899, he joined the staff of Commander in Chief, Asiatic Fleet, as Flag Lieutenant and Acting Chief of Staff, and so served during the Philippine revolution and the settlement of the insurrection. Returning to the Naval Academy in September 1899 he reported as Aide to the Superintendent and was in command of the ships at that Station. While there he wrote "Guns and Torpedo Drills for the United States Navy" - this being the first work dealing with the drill procedure for modern guns and torpedoes and forming the basis of modern naval organization and the drill procedure now in force.

He again had sea duty for a year as Gunnery Officer of the USS INDIANA, before he reported in 1902, as Aide to the Commandant of the New York Navy Yard. While in that assignment he served on two occasions as Aide to Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, Royal British Navy, upon his visits to the United States, and also acted in a similar capacity during the visit of the Crown Prince of Siam to this country. In 1903 he became Aide to the Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet, and it was during this tour of duty that he assisted in the establishment of the first wireless telegraph installations on Naval vessels.

With the innovation of this new means of communication which became so essential to the efficiency of the modern Fleet, it was necessary that instructions for the operation and use of wireless be drawn up with a view to its use in the Navy. He drew up these instructions and devised codes to be used in the operation of wireless ashore and afloat. In an Atlantic Fleet Scouting Squadron, he first used wireless to expedite communication and facilitate the operations of the Fleet. He had short duty at the Naval War College from May to October 1905, when he became Recorder of the Board of Inspection and Survey, Washington, D. C.

When President Theodore Roosevelt sent the American Fleet on its historic voyage around the world, Rear Admiral Eberle was serving as Executive Officer of the USS LOUISIANA, one of the sixteen battleships to make the cruise. Upon the arrival of the Fleet at San Francisco, California, he was detached from the LOUISIANA, and was assigned temporary duty in June 1908 as Commandant Naval Training Station, San Francisco.

He assumed command of the USS PENSACOLA later in 1908, and in 1910 was transferred, in the same capacity, to the USS MILWAUKEE. In April 1910, he reported as Commanding Officer of the USS WHEELING and was Senior Officer Present in command of that vessel and the USS PETREL on a cruise around the world by way of Alaska, Japan, the Indian Ocean, and the Mediterranean. Due to the opening of the Panama Canal in 1915 this cruise was probably the last of such world cruises necessitating the passage of the Straits of Magellan or the Suez Canal to transfer vessels from the waters of the Pacific to the Atlantic.

About this period (1910-1911) naval architects had created a new type of war vessel - the destroyer - a speedy craft to supplant the torpedo boat and the torpedo boat destroyers of former days. The organization of these craft into tactical units for battle was essential and Rear Admiral Eberle was assigned the task. The Atlantic Torpedo Fleet was thus formed under his command. It was at this time that he conceived the smoke screen tactics which have played such a part in subsequent operations of the destroyer and which were tried out in maneuvers against the battleships of the Atlantic Fleet off Block Island in 1912. Aviation was now in its infancy in the Navy, and he used planes off Guantanamo, Cuba, in 1913 to determine the depths at which submerged submarines might be detected from the air.

Relieved of command of the Atlantic Torpedo Fleet in June 1913, he attended the short course at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, and while there put on paper the mine-laying and mine-sweeping tactics for use in the United States Navy. He was temporarily detailed during the same year on a secret mission to Europe in connection with the Navy and visited the capitals of several foreign countries. In January 1914 he assumed command of the USS WASHINGTON, and while in command of that armored cruiser raised the blockade which had been established in San Domingo waters, suppressed the revolution and supervised the election of the new President of the country.

Detached from the WASHINGTON in November 1914, he became Commandant of the Navy Yard and Superintendent of the Naval Gun Factory, Washington, D. C., and while there instituted the Planning Division. He remained in that assignment until September 1915 when he reported as Superintendent of the Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland. He was so serving when the United States entered World War I, and as a result of war the expansion of the Navy brought an increased need for officer personnel. The Navy Department placed the training of officers in the hands of Rear Admiral Eberle. Not only were augmented as classes of Midshipmen placed in training and graduated in the shortened period of three years but large numbers of college graduates and students as well as competent enlisted men from the Fleets were sent to Annapolis where they constituted Naval Reserve Officers Training Classes.

As a result of the excellent service to his country at Annapolis, Rear Admiral Eberle was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for "exceptionally meritorious service of great responsibility as Superintendent of the U. S. Naval Academy."

In February 1919 he assumed command of Division FIVE, Atlantic Fleet, and in August 1920 transferred, in the same capacity, to Battleship Division SEVEN, U. S. Atlantic Fleet. He served as such until June 1921, and on July 5, of that year, he was designated Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, with the rank of Admiral. His title was changed on December 8, 1922, to Commander in Chief, Battle Fleet, in view of changes in organization of Naval Forces of the United States. Relieved of that command on June 30, 1923, he served from July 21 of that year until November 14, 1927, as Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

He became a member of the General Board, and was Chairman of the Executive Committee of that Board at the time of his retirement on August 17, 1928.

Rear Admiral Eberle died at the Naval Hospital, Washington, D. C., on July 6, 1929, and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal, Rear Admiral Eberle had the Sampson Medal; the Spanish Campaign Medal; the Philippine Campaign Medal; the Mexican Service Medal; and the World War I Victory Medal.

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