



## ALAMEDA NAVAL AIR STATION

June 1940 – April 1944



### Our First Commandant Captain Frank R. McCrary

Alameda Naval Air Station's first commandant had already served one naval career. A graduate of the Naval Academy class of 1901, Captain McCrary was a leader in lighter-than-air (LTA) technology. In WWI he received the Navy Cross while serving in Europe using blimps in antisubmarine warfare. He was the first to fly (LTA) craft across the Atlantic. He later commanded the *USS Langley*, CV-1, NAVAIR San Diego, the *USS Saratoga*, CV-3 (1930-1932), and then attended Naval Air Training, Pensacola (1933-1934). After serving two more years in the Bureau of Aeronautics, Captain McCrary retired from the Navy June 30, 1936.

The Navy called McCrary out of retirement in June 1940, assigning him to command the new air station at Alameda that was commissioned in November of that year. He was handed the job of getting a brand new, barely serviceable naval air station up and running.

Then, 13 months later, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the war was upon us. Little Pier 1 was the only working pier when McCrary came aboard, but in 1941 Pier 2 was built and soon got into business handling the big carriers. In April 1942 the *USS Hornet*, CV-8, and the Doolittle Mission disembarked from Pier 2 to bomb Japan.

Facility needs were growing and in 1942 Building 77, now the Alameda Naval Air Museum, was erected as a radio and radar repair facility. Soon the job of operations HQ for the seaplane squadrons was added. Patrol squadrons of PBY, PBM, PB2Y and Martin Mars seaplanes served navy needs throughout the Pacific.

Construction never stopped during the war. Alameda was one of the Navy's busiest and most complete air stations, and it all started under the command of Captain Frank R. McCrary. His original staff is listed on the plaque in front of the museum. He went on to obtain the services of notable Navy leaders:

**LT. COMMANDER C. WADE MCCLUSKY, JR.** distinguished himself as Commander, Air Group Six on the *USS Enterprise* most notably at the Battle of Midway in June 1942. He served on McCrary's staff in 1942 and 1943.

**CAPT. WALTON WILEY SMITH** became operations officer on McCrary's staff in September 1942 and in June 1943, Smith became chief of staff and aide. Capt. Smith left Alameda in December 1943 to become commandant of the Jacksonville Naval Air Station. Later, on the *USS Cabot*, CV-28, Smith relieved Capt. Stanley Michael and Michael came back to command here at Alameda. Smith took CV-28 to Iwo Jima, Okinawa, on to war's end, receiving many citations.

In all, Capt. McCrary's tour at Alameda involved many crucial activities in support of the war in the Pacific. Upon stepping down from the job in April 1944, Capt. McCrary again retired. He stayed in the Bay Area passing on 10 June 1952 at age 72.

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