Thomas R. McClellan, 88, a retired Navy rear admiral who led the Naval Air Systems Command in the early 1970s and later became a lawyer, died Nov. 8 at Inova Fairfax Hospital after a stroke. He lived at the Fairfax military retirement home at Fort Belvoir.

Adm. McClellan, who was a two-star rear admiral, graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1942 in an accelerated wartime program. During World War II, he served in the Pacific aboard the destroyer USS Mugford and the aircraft carrier USS Yorktown.

After the war, Adm. McClellan, who spent most of his military career in the Navy's aviation corps, received a master's degree in aeronautical engineering from the California Institute of Technology. He piloted seaplanes on anti-submarine patrols and commanded patrol squadrons.

He completed his military duty at the Naval Air Systems Command, then based in Washington, first as deputy commander and later as commander. He was responsible for the acquisition and development of naval aircraft and for developing equipment for aircraft carriers and supporting shore and shipboard facilities. Under his supervision, the Navy developed the F-14 Tomcat strike fighter.

Adm. McClellan retired from the Navy in 1973. He received the Distinguished Service Medal, among other decorations.

After working as a consultant, Adm. McClellan went to law school at George Washington University, graduating in 1980. He had a law practice in Alexandria for several years before becoming executive director of Vinson Hall Retirement Community, a military retirement facility and foundation in McLean, in the late 1980s. He retired in 1993.

Thomas Rufus McClellan was born in Gatesville, Tex., and attended Baylor University in Texas before entering the Naval Academy.

He lived in Alexandria for many years and was a member of the Cosmos Club and the Society of the Cincinnati, a patriotic and educational organization dating to the Revolutionary War.

An award for academic excellence is named in Adm. McClellan's honor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif.

Survivors include his wife of 66 years, Jane Atkinson McClellan of Fort Belvoir, and three children, John C. McClellan of Waco, Tex., Susan M. Thomas of Charlottesville and Thomas R. "Bob" McClellan of Alexandria.