

REAR ADMIRAL WILLIAM JOHN C. AGNEW
MEDICAL CORPS, U.S. NAVY, RETIRED

William John Clarke Agnew was born in High Falls, New York, on December 6, 1891, son of Rev. W.J.C. Agnew and Mary Martha Stephens-Agnew. He graduated from the University of Vermont, College of Medicine, in 1914. He entered the Medical Reserve Corps on February 1, 1917 and was commissioned Assistant Surgeon with the rank of Lieutenant, junior grade. Transferred to the U.S. Navy Medical Corps on April 4, 1917, he received temporary appointment to Lieutenant during World War I, was commissioned in that rank on July 30, 1919, and by subsequent promotions attained the rank of Rear Admiral to date from June 21, 1942. His retirement from the Naval Service became effective May 1, 1952.

For a few months after his enrollment in the Naval Service in 1917, he attended the Naval Medical School, Washington, D.C., completing the general postgraduate course. He was then assigned duty as Medical Officer in the USS CONYNGHAM, with the first division of destroyers to cross the Atlantic to Ireland after the United States entered the World War. In November, 1917 he was transferred to the USS CASSIN, also operating with the Destroyer Force based on Queens-town, Ireland, and served there until January, 1918, when he was assigned duty in the U.S. Naval Hospital, London, England. From April, 1919 until January, 1920 he served at U.S. Naval Headquarters, London, transferring to Paris, France, for duty in command of the Naval Exhumation Unit for removal of Naval and Marine Corps dead in Europe, with additional duty as Naval Representative on the National Commission for Military Cemeteries and Pertinent Affairs in France and Belgium. From June, 1920 until June, 1921 he was Officer in Charge of the U.S. Naval and Marine Corps Graves Registration Service in Paris.

Returning to the United States, he reported in July, 1921 to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., where he served until December 31, 1924. Again ordered to sea duty, he joined the USS OMAHA and served aboard from January to November, 1925, transferring to the USS RICHMOND in which he had a two year tour of duty. In March, 1927 he returned to the Navy Department, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, having additional duty aboard the USS MAYFLOWER, presidential yacht. From January, 1929-1930 he served at the Naval Hospital, New York, New York.

From February, 1930 until March, 1932 he was stationed at the Naval Hospital, Canacao, P.I. Upon his return to the United States, he had duty in the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department, until ordered detached in December, 1933, and to duty at the Marine Barracks, Quantico, Virginia, with additional duty for one month attached to the 7th Regiment Marines, and thereafter as first Force Surgeon of the Fleet Marine Force from January to September, 1934. Detached from duty in the Marine Barracks in April, 1935, he returned to sea aboard the carrier SARATOGA, serving until January, 1937, followed by an assignment at the Naval Training Station, San Diego, California, until June, 1938. For two months thereafter he had duty with the Hospital Corps School in San Diego.

On September 1, 1938 he reported in the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department, serving as Head of the Division of Personnel of that bureau, and after October, 1941 was also attached to the Bureau of Naval Personnel (then Bureau of Navigation). On November 20, 1944, he was appointed Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. For the period of his service during World War II, he was awarded the Legion of Merit, the citation in part stating:

"For exceptionally meritorious conduct . . . as Director of Personnel, including the Medical Corps, Hospital Corps and Nurse Corps from the beginning of the emergency to November 24, 1944; and as Assistant Chief of the Bureau from November 25, 1944 to the surrender of the Japanese Empire. By his dynamic leadership and his competence in handling problems of the greatest complexity during a period when the demand for medical officers and nurses was rising steadily, (he) was able to coordinate the recruiting and training of medical personnel . . . thereby insuring expeditious assignment to ships, advance bases, and hospitals throughout the world as well as to the shore stations and hospitals at home. Serving as Assistant Chief of the Bureau, he bore the entire responsibility for the operation of the Medical Department of the Navy during the absence of the Surgeon General and . . . contributed vitally to the successful operation of the Medical Department."

In December, 1946 he was designated District Medical Officer, 11th Naval District, San Diego, California. From April, 1948 to September, 1949 he was District Medical Officer of the 14th Naval District Pearl Harbor, T.H., and then transferred to similar duty in the 9th Naval District, Great Lakes, Illinois. He remained there until October, 1951, when he assumed duty as Commanding Officer of the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland. He was so serving when relieved of active duty pending his temporary disability retirement on May 1, 1952.

In addition to the Legion of Merit, Rear Admiral Agnew has the Victory Medal, Destroyer Clasp (USS CASSIN); the American Defense Service Medal; the American Campaign Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal.

Rear Admiral Agnew is a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. He is a member of the Alpha Kappa Kappa and Theta Nu Epsilon fraternities, and the following clubs: New York Yacht Club; Chevy Chase Club, and Columbia Club in Chevy Chase, Maryland; Army-Navy Clubs in both Manila, P.I. and Washington, D.C.

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