

VICE ADMIRAL WILLIAM CHAMBERS
MEDICAL CORPS, U. S. NAVY, DECEASED

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

William Chambers was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on August 25, 1884, son of John and Ann Pauline (Kunkle) Chambers. He died on March 29, 1951 in Naval Hospital, San Diego, California, interment to be in Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, San Diego.

Graduated from the Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia in 1907, he was commissioned Assistant Surgeon in the Medical Corps of the United States Navy on March 19, 1908. He subsequently advanced in rank to that of Rear Admiral to date from September 15, 1942. Upon his transfer to the Retired List of the Navy on November 1, 1946, he was advanced to Vice Admiral on the basis of combat awards.

His active duty began at the Naval Hospital, Philadelphia, in April, 1908, and previous to World War I he had served at various Naval Hospitals and shore establishments, aboard ships of the Fleet, including the USS MARYLAND, USS GLACIER, and USS GALVESTON, and in foreign areas. He was assigned to the Marine Expeditionary Force, aboard the USS MORRO CASTLE, Atlantic Fleet, and served with the 3rd Regiment, U.S. Marines at Vera Cruz, Mexico, in 1914; on the Asiatic Station; and with the Marine Detachment at the American Legation, Peking, China. Detached from the latter just previous to the entrance of the United States into the war, he then served first at the Naval Hospital, Norfolk, Virginia, and with the 8th Regiment of Marines, Quantico, Virginia, before joining the USS CONNECTICUT, operating with the Atlantic Fleet. He served aboard six months before reporting in June, 1918 to the Marine Camp at Quantico, preparatory to going overseas. For one year thereafter he was with the American Expeditionary Force, 13th Regiment of Marines, 5th Brigade in France.

Returning home to await orders in August, 1919, he reported to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., and served from September, 1919 to January, 1920. He was then sent to the Asiatic Station, and reported to the Naval Station, Cavite, Philippine Islands, in March. He was then assigned to the Naval Station, Canacao. After four months he joined the USS HURON, flagship of the Asiatic Fleet, and served aboard as Medical Officer, with temporary additional duty as Fleet Surgeon on the staff of the Commander. From January, 1921 to October, 1922 he was again assigned to the American Legation Guard, Peking. Returning home aboard the USS HENDERSON, he reported for duty at the Marine Barracks, Quantico, and served as Post Surgeon three years.

He completed the senior course at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, in 1926, and after postgraduate instruction in Aviation Medicine at the Army School, Brooks Field, San Antonio, Texas, he was designated flight surgeon in December, 1926 and detached. He then joined the USS LEXINGTON fitting out at the plant of Bethlehem Shipbuilding Corporation, Quincy, Massachusetts, and was attached to that aircraft carrier after her commissioning on December 14, 1927.

When detached in March, 1929 he had duty in the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery until ordered in January, 1933 to duty as Director of the American Scientific Mission, Republic of Haiti, at Port au Prince. He served there until August, 1934, and upon returning to the United

States, he reported the following October to the Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut, for duty as Medical Officer. Detached in January, 1936, he was again ordered to the Asiatic Station, where he served as Medical Officer in Command, Naval Hospital, Canacao, P. I., for two years from April, 1936.

Following his detachment from duty overseas, he served as Medical Officer in Command of the Naval Medical School, Washington, D.C., from July, 1938 until July, 1940, and was then transferred to similar duty in the Naval Hospital, San Diego, California, for a two year tour. He was made Medical Director with the rank of Rear Admiral in September, 1942, and was assigned as District Medical Officer, 14th Naval District, Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii. In August, 1943 he was appointed Inspector, Medical Department Activities, Southwest Pacific Areas, operating from headquarters in Pearl Harbor. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, and cited:

"For exceptionally meritorious service to the Government of the United States in a duty of great responsibility as Inspector, Medical Department Activities, Pacific Area, from October 1942, to August 1, 1944. Working tirelessly and with brilliant administrative skill, (he) carried out his vital assignments throughout the combat areas of the South, Southwest and Central Pacific, expeditiously effecting the organization of medical facilities which included first aid treatment in the field, hospitalization and evacuation of the sick and wounded, the establishment of medical storehouses and supply depots for the Fleet and shore activities, and the preliminary plans for care of natives in conquered territory. A qualified Flight Surgeon, he personally participated in the evacuation of the first battle casualties from Bougainville prior to the organization of a regular air evacuation service . . . and was largely responsible for the success of the Medical Department's program in this theater of war."

In September, 1944 he became Medical Officer in Command of the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland. He was awarded a Letter of Commendation with Ribbon by the Secretary of the Navy, "For outstanding performance of duty . . . to the close of World War II. . ." The citation states further: "(He) ably planned, organized and directed an adequate program of expansion of this vital activity under extremely difficult conditions imposed by the war and, exercising resourceful initiative and discrimination and judgment in his administration of the Naval Medical Center, achieved a full and adequate operation of each department in a minimum of time. . ."

He was so serving when relieved of active duty pending his transfer to the Retired List of the Navy on November 1, 1946, having reached the statutory age.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal and Commendation Ribbon, Vice Admiral Chambers had the Mexican Service Medal; Victory Medal, Atlantic Fleet Clasp (USS CONNECTICUT); American Defense Service Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; American Campaign Medal; and World War II Victory Medal.