

# NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

CHARLES SPARKS THOMAS  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

May 3, 1954 - April 1, 1957

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Son of Charles Rogers and Della (Rouse) Thomas, Charles Sparks Thomas, was born in Independence, Missouri, on September 28, 1897, but in 1911 became a resident of California. He attended the University of California, at Berkeley, and Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, leaving the latter during World War I to enter the Aviation Branch of the U. S. Naval Reserve Force.

At the conclusion of his active service in 1919, Mr. Thomas joined the investment house of George H. Burr Company in Los Angeles, California, and in 1925 became a partner and Vice President of the firm, in charge of its affairs in Southern California, Arizona, and New Mexico. He left that company in 1932 to be Vice President and General Manager of Foreman and Clark, a chain of men's retail clothing stores. Five years later he was made President, a position he held until his appointment as Under Secretary of the Navy.

After the outbreak of World War II, he was appointed special assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air, Mr. Artemus L. Gates, and he later served as an assistant to Mr. James Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy at that time. The procurement of aircraft his primary concern, he also set up the Navy's Inventory and Purchasing Control Program and the first Contract Negotiation Section in the Navy Department.

For his outstanding wartime service, Mr. Thomas received the Presidential Medal for Merit and the Distinguished Civilian Service Award,

Later Mr. Thomas became Secretary of the Navy on May 3, 1954, when he was sworn into office to succeed Mr. Robert B. Anderson. He previously served as Under Secretary of the Navy, February 9 to July 28, 1953, and as Assistant Secretary of Defense (Supply and Logistics), July 28, 1953 to May 3, 1954. He served as Secretary of the Navy until April 1, 1957. He was presented the Army Exceptional Civilian Service Award by the Secretary of the Army at a ceremony in the Pentagon on March 26, 1957. Text of the citation accompanying the award follows:

"As Secretary of the Navy since 1954, he has rendered distinguished service to America during a perilous period of tremendous change and challenge, contributing immeasurably to the strength and unity of the Armed Forces of the United States, and thereby to the security of the Nation. His exemplary spirit of warm and friendly cooperation with the Department of the Army in all matters of joint concern, his mature judgment, farseeing vision, inspired leadership, and sterling attributes of mind and character have earned him the profound respect and high esteem of all his associates, and have further enriched the splendid heritage of the Naval Service."

Mr. Thomas has been very active in civic affairs in Los Angeles and on the West Coast. Past President of the Navy League in the Eleventh Region, he was an airport commissioner in Los Angeles, and has served as Vice President of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. He has also been active in church and

hospital work there. Since August 11, 1960, he has been President of the 93000-acre Irvine Ranch in Southern California.

Previous to his first appointment to the Navy Department, he held directorships in the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, Byron-Jackson Company, Pacific Finance Corporation, and the Broadway-Hale Department Stores.

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Biographies Branch  
19 January 1961