

## NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

### CAPTAIN ALBERT R. BEHNKE, JR. MEDICAL CORPS, U. S. NAVY

Albert Richard Behnke, Jr., was born in Chicago, Illinois, on August 8, 1903, son of Albert R. and Clara M. (Weartz) Behnke. He attended Whittier (California) Union High School; Whittier College (BA, 1925); University of Pennsylvania (1926); and Stanford University (MD, 1929). He was appointed a Lieutenant (junior grade) in the Medical Corps of the U. S. Navy, on June 4, 1929, and subsequently advanced in rank attaining that of Captain, to date from August 1, 1943

After receiving his commission in 1929, he served his internship at the Naval Hospital, Mare Island, California, and in November 1930 joined the staff of Commander Submarine Division TWELVE as Medical Officer. He was so serving when he became intensely interested in submarine medicine and deep diving. Between June and September 1932, he was under instruction at the Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut.

He next had postgraduate instruction in applied physiology at the Harvard School of Public Health, and in October 1935 reported as Medical and Diving Officer with the Submarine Escape Training Unit at the Submarine Base, Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii. During 1936 he served as a medical member of a board to study air conditioning in relation to damage control. He remained there until October 1937, after which he had duty in connection with research and tests with the Experimental Diving Unit at the Navy Yard, Washington, D. C.

In October 1938 he became an Instructor at the Naval Medical School, Washington, D. C., continuing to serve with the Experimental Diving Unit as additional duty. He had further additional duty from 1939 to 1941 at the Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in connection with the rescue of the crew and the salvage of the submarine SQUALUS; under postgraduate instruction at Mayo Foundation, Rochester, Minnesota; in the USS SEARAVEN and in the Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., in connection with ventilation studies in submarine during simulated wartime operations; and in the USS PLATTE.

Assigned in February 1942 to the Naval Medical Research Institute, National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland, he had further duty in connection with tests and medical research at various places, including the Fourteenth Naval District, Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, and in Europe. "For exemplary service as Research Executive at the Naval Medical Research Institute..." he received a Letter of Commendation, with authorization to wear the Commendation Ribbon, from the Secretary of Navy. The citation continues in part:

"Outstanding in scientific achievement in submarine and diving medicine, Captain Behnke has made possible safe diving operations at greater depths, a significant contribution to the prevention and treatment of decompression illness in divers and caisson workers. His wide knowledge and experience in research, appreciation of the importance of medical research in the Navy, and his unfailing interest and high motivation in the performance of his duties have contributed in great measure to the establishment, development and high standings of the Naval Medical Institute..."

He served as Assistant Naval Attache for Medical Intelligence in London, England, from November 1945, until February 1946, after which he was Executive Officer of the Naval Medical Research Institute, Bethesda, Maryland, until May 1950. He then joined the staff of Commander Naval Forces, Germany for duty in connection with medical intelligence and in September 1952 transferred to the Staff of Commander Submarine Force U. S. Atlantic Fleet as Staff Medical Officer. In May 1953 he reported as Radiological Medical Director at the Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory, San Francisco, California.

In addition to the Commendation Ribbon, Dr. Behnke has the American Defense Service Medal; the American Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal; the World War II Victory Medal; the Navy Occupation Service Medal, Europe Clasp; and the National Defense Service Medal. In 1942 he received an Honorary Degree from Yale University.

He has conducted Naval medical research in submarine medicine studying high air and oxygen pressures and quantitative studies relating to the physiology of deep sea diving. He has made studies in submarine and every type of naval vessel pertaining to ventilation, air conditioning, human engineering, general habitability, endurance and fitness of personnel, respiration, life preserving equipment, exposure to high and low temperatures, high and low pressures, noise vibration and abnormal motion. He is author or co-author of many articles on medical specialities.