

Deceased 21 March 1977

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

REAR ADMIRAL CHARLES FREDERICK BEHRENS
MEDICAL CORPS, U. S. NAVY, RETIRED

Charles Frederick Behrens was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on March 18, 1896, son of Charles W. and Augusta E. (Hulsman) Behrens. He attended Central High School, the University of Pennsylvania (1914-1916) and received his Doctor of Medicine degree from the Medical School of that University in 1920. While under instruction, he served during World War I in an enlisted capacity in the Army Medical Corps Reserve, and was transferred in 1918 to the Medical Unit of the Student Army Training Corps. Discharged after the Armistice, he was appointed an Assistant Surgeon, with the rank of Lieutenant (jg) in the Medical Corps of the U. S. Navy on October 16, 1920, and subsequently attained the rank of Rear Admiral, confirmed on March 22, 1951 to date from April 1, 1949. On April 1, 1956 he was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy.

After accepting appointment to the U. S. Navy in October 1920, he served until January 1921 at the Naval Training Station, Great Lakes, Illinois. Following instruction at the Naval Medical School Washington, D. C., he reported in May 1921 for duty at the Naval Hospital, Norfolk, Virginia, where he was soon placed in charge of the laboratory. He remained there until October 1923 when he joined the USS HENDERSON to serve as Junior Medical Officer until August 1925. While serving aboard this ship in association with LCDR J. C. Parham, MC, USN, he performed the initial studies in the Navy on the "Kahn Precipitin Test" thus helping to establish its reliability and suitability for service use.

He had instruction in X-ray at the Naval Hospital, Washington, D. C., during the Fall of 1925, after which he was transferred to the Naval Hospital, Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, where he served for four years chiefly in the X-ray department and in the laboratory. Between August 1929 and January 1932 he had duty with the Garde d'Haiti and also served as consultant in X-ray, laboratory and orthopedics to the Service d'Hygiene at Cape Haitien, Haiti, after which he returned to the United States for duty in X-ray, laboratory and physical medicine at the Naval Hospital, Newport, Rhode Island. While stationed there he attended a course in Roentgenology at the Cornell Medical Center, New York City, from October 1936 to February 1937. He next joined the Hospital Ship RELIEF as Chief of X-ray and Physical Medicine and when detached in November 1938 served until June 1939 at the Naval Hospital, Brooklyn, New York.

His next assignment brought him to the old Naval Hospital, Washington, D. C., as Chief of X-ray. There, in the Fall of 1939 the important matter of mass chest surveys by X-ray came up for decision and resulted in extensive research and development in the field of 35 mm photofluorography under his supervision. The outcome was successful and resulted in the effective use of this method in World War II, both in fixed installations and in two mobile units. In February 1942 the new Medical Center at Bethesda

was opened and he continued his duties there until June 1945. During this time he represented the Navy on the Baruch Committee on Physical Medicine and in its report, prepared the section on Rehabilitation.

Dr. Behrens' next duty was as Executive Officer of the Naval Hospital, St. Albans and following that (in April 1947) he was selected to head the Atomic Defense Division of BuMed, then in process of organization. The following year he was also given command of the Naval Medical Research Institute and he carried on both assignments until June of 1951, when he was promoted to flag rank. In connection with these assignments Admiral Behrens had much to do with biomedical research pertaining to field tests of nuclear weapons, radiological safety, the establishment of photodosimetry and setting up the program for use of radioactive isotopes. Out of these experiences and associations, the textbook "Atomic Medicine" was derived which he edited and which was authored almost completely by Naval Personnel.

In July 1951 he was assigned to the Eastern Sea Frontier as its staff medical officer and remained until May 1953. During this period he also served as Office of Naval Research representative on Project East River (an elaborate and comprehensive study of all aspects of Civil Defense conducted by the Associated Universities, Inc., for the National Security Resources Board, Federal Civil Defense Administration, and Department of Defense). He also served as a consultant in Radiation therapy to the Naval Hospital, St. Albans.

In June 1953 he reported as District Medical Officer, Sixth Naval District, and served as such until his retirement April 1, 1956. During this period in addition to his routine duties he has served as a frequent lecturer in courses at the Naval Medical School and has given numerous talks to various medical and civil organizations on subjects related to Atomic Medicine. He has also represented the Navy as Councilor to the American College of Radiology and the National Committee on Radiation Protection, Bureau of Standards.

He is a diplomate of the American Boards of Radiology and Internal Medicine, and a Fellow of the American College of Radiology; he is a member of the American Medical Association and the Association of Military Surgeons, and is a member of the following societies: Radiological Society of North America, Radiation Research Society, New York Academy of Sciences, Civil Defense Research Associates, Naval Order of the United States, and General Alumni Society of the University of Pennsylvania.

Admiral Behrens is author and co-author of numerous medical articles and pamphlets, and is editor of "Atomic Medicine", published by Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1949, and "After the A Bomb" (Emergency Care in Atomic Warfare) published by the same, in 1951.

These books have been taken over by the Williams and Wilkins Company, Baltimore, Maryland. A new edition of "Atomic Medicine" was published in 1953.

Admiral Behrens has the World War I Victory Medal; the Navy Expeditionary Medal (Haiti, 1929-32); the American Defense Service Medal; the American Campaign Medal; the World War II Victory Medal; and the National Defense Service Medal.

Admiral Behrens has resumed professional work as Radiologist for The Yater Clinic, Washington, D. C.

1 May 1956