

*His corrections*

REAR ADMIRAL WILLIAM STERLING PARSONS, U.S. NAVY

Rear Admiral Parsons, born in Chicago, Illinois, November 26, 1901, attended Fort Sumner, New Mexico, High School, before his appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy from New Mexico in 1918. Graduated and commissioned Ensign in June 1922, he subsequently progressed in grade until his promotion to ~~Commodore, August 10, 1945.~~ On January 8, 1946, he was appointed by the President of the United States to the rank of Rear Admiral on *January 8, 1946*

After graduation in 1922, Rear Admiral Parsons served in the USS IDAHO for five years, with duty in connection with gunnery and fire control. In May 1930 he completed instruction in ordnance engineering at the Postgraduate School, Annapolis, Maryland, and at the Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. From June 1930 until May 1933 he served in the battleship TEXAS, again with fire control and gunnery duty. He served in the Bureau of Ordnance, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., from July 1933 until May 1934, acting as liaison officer for the Bureau at the Naval Research Laboratory, Anacostia, D.C.

From June 1934 until June 1936, Rear Admiral Parsons was an instructor in ordnance at the Postgraduate School, Annapolis, Maryland. Returning to sea, he served as executive officer of the USS AYIWIN from June 1936 until March 1938 when he was transferred to duty as gunnery officer on the staff of Rear Admiral William R. Sexton, U.S.N., Commander, Destroyers, Battle Force, of which the USS DETROIT was flagship, serving in that assignment until June 1939. From August of that year until May 1943 he was Experimental Officer, Naval Proving Ground, Dahlgren, Virginia. From April 1942 until May 1943 he performed additional duty as Special Assistant to <sup>Dr.</sup> Vannevar Bush in connection with the development of the radio proximity fuze. This additional duty extended to the South Pacific where from December 1942 to March 1943 he assisted in the introduction of the fuze in the Fleet, and witnessed its initial battle use from the USS HELENA in January 1943.

On June 15, 1943, Rear Admiral Parsons reported for duty in the Manhattan Engineer District, U.S. Engineer Project "Y", Santa Fe, New Mexico. On that assignment he served as ordnance division leader and associate director, and finally as officer-in-charge of the overseas technical group of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, which developed the atomic bomb. After witnessing the atomic bomb test in New Mexico in July 1945, he returned to the Marianas and flew in the bomber which dropped the first atomic bomb used in warfare on the City of Hiroshima. For those services he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal with the following citation:

*was weaponeer and bomb commander*

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Distinguished Service Medal

"For exceptionally meritorious service to the Government of the United States in a duty of great responsibility since May 1943, in connection with the development of the atomic bomb. Working with tireless energy, courage, and foresight, Commodore (then Captain) Parsons applied himself to the tremendous task of transforming the theory of atomic fission into an effective weapon of war capable of being manufactured by American production methods at a time when the task appeared all but impossible. He applied his specialized knowledge in personally directing much of the design and development of the many components of the atomic bomb and in formulating and coordinating the plans for disseminating the manufacture of these components. In addition, he also organized much of the procedure required in assembling the components into an effective weapon under conditions of utmost secrecy. He devoted himself fully to these tasks from May 1943, to the initial atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima in which he took part. Commodore Parsons' organizational ability, brilliant professional skill and devotion to duty throughout the development and manufacture of the atomic bomb were outstanding and in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

For his services as Senior Military Technical Observer on the B-29 plane which dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Rear Admiral (then Captain) Parsons was awarded the Army Silver Star Medal, with the following citation:

Silver Star Medal--Army

"For gallantry in action while participating in aerial flight against the Japanese Empire. Captain Parsons was Senior Military Technical Observer on a B-29 aircraft which flew from a base in the Marianas Islands 6 August 1945 to drop on the city of Hiroshima, Japan, the first atomic bomb to be used in warfare. After takeoff in the very early morning hours, the plane set course as planned. Captain Parsons then climbed into the bomb bay. As the airplane approached Japan the risks grew greater, for the element of hazard from the unknown was ever present, since this was the first time this bomb, much more destructive than any in existence, had been released from an airplane. The possibilities of damage from anti-aircraft fire, enemy fighters, and unforeseen failures added to the risk; nor was it certain what effect the detonation would have upon the bomber and its

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occupants. Accompanying the mission to insure the bomb's correct use, Captain Parsons kept careful watch until the plane was in its briefed position, and then approved release. At 0915 the switch was pressed, the bomb cleared safely, and fell towards its planned objective. They then departed with speed from the target area, travelling a safe distance before the blast occurred. By his high degree of skill in directing work with the atomic bomb, and great personal risk in placing the ~~powder charge~~ <sup>fiducial components</sup> in the bomb during flight, Captain Parsons distinguished himself, reflecting the highest credit on himself and the United States Navy."

In November 1945, Rear Admiral Parsons was assigned duty in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Special Weapons) as Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Special Weapons). In January 1946, Rear Admiral Parsons was assigned to additional duty as Deputy Commander for Technical Direction, and Commander Task Group 1.1, of Joint Army Navy Task Force One, the task force formed by direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and with the approval of the President, to conduct atomic bomb tests against naval vessels in order to gain information of value to the national defense. Tests Able and Baker, known as "Operations Crossroads" were held on schedule in Bikini lagoon, Marshall Islands, in July 1946.

In accordance with the disestablishment of the Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operation (Special Weapons), and Task Force One, in November 1946, Rear Admiral Parsons was assigned duty as Director of Atomic Defense in the Office of Deputy Chief of Naval Operation (Operations). He will be responsible for the initiation and coordination of naval action required to implement decisions and policies with respect to atomic matters.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal and the Army Silver Star Medal, Rear Admiral Parsons has the Victory Medal, and is entitled to the American Defense Service Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal, the American Area Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal.

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REAR ADMIRAL WILLIAM STERLING PARSONS  
UNITED STATES NAVY, DECEASED

William Sterling Parsons was born in Chicago, Illinois, on November 26, 1901, the son of Harry Robert and Clara Sterling (Doolittle) Parsons. He attended Fort Sumner (New Mexico) High School before his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from the state of New Mexico in 1918. Graduated and commissioned Ensign in June 1922, he subsequently attained the rank of Rear Admiral to date from July 1, 1948, having served in the rank of Commodore from August 10, 1945 to January 8, 1946, and as temporary Rear Admiral from January 8, 1946 to August 7, 1947.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy in 1922, he reported aboard the USS IDAHO, operating with Division EIGHT, Squadron FOUR, Pacific, and later with Division FOUR, Battleship Division, Battle Fleet, Detached from the IDAHO in May 1927, he had instruction in ordnance engineering at the Postgraduate School and the Navy Yard, Washington, D. C. before he joined the USS TEXAS in June 1930. He served in that battleship, flagship of the Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet, and later a unit of Battleship Division ONE, Battle Force, until May 1933.

From July 1933 to June 1934 he served as Liaison Officer between the Bureau of Ordnance, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. and the Naval Research Laboratory, Anacostia, D. C., participating in the early development of radar. He next served as an instructor in ordnance at the Postgraduate School, and returning to duty afloat in June 1936, served as Executive Officer and Navigator of the USS AYLWIN. In March 1938 he reported as Gunnery Officer on the staff of Commander Destroyers, Battle Force, USS DETROIT, flagship.

Between July 1939 and June 1943, he was Experimental Officer at the Naval Proving Ground, Dahlgren, Virginia, with additional duty from May 1942 as Special Assistant to Dr. Vannevar Bush, Director of OSRD, in connection with the development of the combat radio proximity fuze. This additional duty was partially performed in the South Pacific, where from September 1942 to March 1943 he assisted in the introduction of the fuze in the Fleet and witnessed its initial battle use from the USS HELENA in January 1943.

On June 15, 1943 he reported for duty at Los Alamos Laboratory (Manhattan District), Los Alamos, New Mexico. In that assignment he served as Ordnance Division Associate Director, and finally as Officer in Charge of the Overseas (Tinian, Marianas) Technical Group of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, which developed the atomic bomb. After witnessing the atomic bomb test in New Mexico in July 1945, he returned to the Marianas and as Weaponeer and Bomb Commander he flew with the atomic bomb from

Tinian to Hiroshima in the bomber which dropped the first atomic bomb used in warfare on the city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. For the above services he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the citation following in part:

"For exceptionally meritorious service...since May 1943, in connection with the development of the atomic bomb...(He) applied himself to the tremendous task of transforming the theory of atomic fission into an effective weapon of war capable of being manufactured by American production methods at a time when the task appeared all but impossible. He applied his specialized knowledge in personally directing much of the design and development of the many components. In addition he also organized much of the procedure required in assembling the components into an effective weapon under conditions of utmost secrecy. He devoted himself fully to these tasks from May 1943 to the initial atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima in which he took part..."

For his services as Senior Military Technical Observer on the B-29 plane which dropped the first atomic bomb to be used in warfare on the city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, he was awarded the Silver Star Medal from the War Department, with citation to follow:

"For gallantry in action while participating in aerial flight against the Japanese Empire...After takeoff in the very early morning hours, the plane set course as planned. (He) then climbed into the bomb bay and completed assembly of the atomic bomb. As the airplane approached Japan the risks grew greater, for the element of hazards from the unknown was ever present, since this was the first time this bomb, much more destructive than any in existence, had been released from an airplane. The possibilities of damage from anti-aircraft fire, enemy fighters, and unforeseen failures added to the risks; nor was it certain what effect the detonation would have upon the bomber and its occupants. Accompanying the mission to insure the bomb's correct use, (he) kept careful watch until the plane was in its briefed position, and then approved release. At 0915 the switch was pressed, the bomb cleared safely, and fell towards its planned objective. They then departed with speed from the target area, travelling a safe distance before the blast occurred..."

In December 1945 he reported as Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Special Weapons, and in January 1946 was assigned additional duty as Deputy Commander for Technical Direction, and Commander Task Group ONE POINT ONE, of Joint Task Force ONE (the task force formed by direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and with the approval of the President, to conduct atomic bomb tests against naval vessels in order to gain information of value to the national defense). Tests "Able" and "Baker," known as "Operation Crossroads" were held on schedule in Bikini Lagoon, Marshall Islands, in July 1946.

"For exceptionally meritorious conduct...as Deputy Commander for Technical Direction, Joint Task Force ONE, during Operation CROSSROADS from January 11 to November 1, 1946; and Commander Technical Task Group, Joint Task Force ONE from May 15 to August 18, 1946..." he was awarded the Legion of Merit. The citation states that, "His scientific and technical knowledge served to gain the confidence, loyalty and cooperation of the Military and Naval personnel as well as of the many eminent civilian scientists who were under his technical direction. By his understanding of operational as well as technical problems, and his effective coordination of the efforts of civilian and military personnel in scientific and technical undertakings (he) rendered invaluable assistance to the Task Force Command during the planning, operational and post-operational phases of this unique mission..."

In accordance with the disestablishment of the Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Special Weapons and Task Force ONE in November 1946, he was assigned duty as Director of Atomic Defense in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, with additional duty as Deputy Chief, Armed Forces Special Weapons Project. He was one of the two Navy members of the Military Liaison Committee to the Atomic Energy Commission. While so assigned he served from November 1947 to June 1948 as Deputy Commander of Operation SANDSTONE, atomic weapon tests at Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshalls. Relieved of duty as Director of Atomic Defense on May 24, 1949, he was next assigned to the Weapons Systems Evaluation Group, National Military Establishment, Washington, D. C.

On February 2, 1951 he reported as Commander Cruiser Division STX, and in March 1952 was detached for duty as Deputy and Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Ordnance, Navy Department. He died suddenly on December 5, 1953 at the Naval Hospital, Bethesda, Maryland.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal, the Army Silver Star Medal, and the Legion of Merit, Rear Admiral Parsons had the Victory Medal, the American Defense Service Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; the American Campaign Medal; the World War II Victory Medal; and the National Defense Service Medal.

Rear Admiral Parsons received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science from Union College, Schenectady, New York, in June 1948.

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