

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

CAPTAIN THOMAS J. CANTY
MEDICAL CORPS, U. S. NAVY

Thomas John Canty was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on April 19, 1906, son of John Thomas and Effie Marie (Boyer) Canty. He attended Marquette University High School and received the degrees of Bachelor of Science (1933) and Doctor of Medicine (1936) from Marquette University and Marquette University Medical School, respectively. He served his internship at the Milwaukee County Hospital, 1935-1936. During 1937 he attended a postgraduate course in surgery at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Medicine. Commissioned Lieutenant (Junior grade) in the Medical Corps of the U. S. Navy on August 24, 1937, he subsequently advanced in rank, attaining that of Captain, to date from April 1, 1953.

Upon receiving his appointment in 1937, he reported for instruction at the U. S. Navy Medical School, Washington, D. C. Between April and October 1938 he was engaged in orthopaedic surgery at the U. S. Naval Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, after which he served as Medical Officer on board the USS TEXAS, operating with the Atlantic Fleet. In November 1939 he transferred in a similar capacity to the USS HERNDON in which he had duty until September 1940.

He was Medical Officer at the U. S. Naval Dispensary, Portsmouth, New Hampshire followed by postgraduate instruction in surgery at the U. S. Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, Virginia. In June 1941 he joined the USS WASHINGTON as Medical Officer and was serving as such when the United States entered World War II, December 8, 1941. While he was aboard that battleship, she conducted convoys to Murmansk, Russia, and later participated in action in the Solomon Islands area.

In July 1943 he reported for postgraduate instruction in surgery at Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota. Upon completing the course in December of that year, he became Chief of Surgery and Chief of Rehabilitation at the U. S. Naval Convalescent Hospital, Sun Valley, Idaho. He remained there until August 1944, when he joined the USS MARYLAND as Medical Officer. He received a Letter of Commendation with Ribbon and Combat "V," as follows:

"For distinguishing himself by excellent service as Senior Medical Officer on board the USS MARYLAND during operations against the enemy in Leyte Gulf, P. I., on 29 November 1944. When his ship was damaged by enemy action, Lieutenant Commander Canty personally treated the wounded in smoke-filled compartments as well as directing rescue operations. Although sick bay was completely destroyed, he organized and established emergency wards in accordance with plans he had previously decided..."

Detached from the USS MARYLAND in July 1945, he then reported as Chief of Orthopedic Surgery, U. S. Naval Hospital, Mare Island,

Vallejo, California, and also served as Officer in Charge of the Amputation Center, Officer in Charge of the Artificial Limb Shop and Director of Prosthetic Research.

"For exceptionally meritorious conduct as Chief of Orthopedic Surgery, Officer in Charge of the Artificial Limb Department and Director of Prosthetic Research; and Rehabilitation Officer at the United States Naval Hospital, Mare Island, Vallejo, California, from July 1945 to 23 June 1950..." he was awarded the Legion of Merit. The citation continues in part:

"Exercising brilliant professional skill, meticulous attention to detail and sound judgment in the administration of his responsibilities to aid the physically handicapped, Commander Canty personally originated twenty-eight important improvements in the manufacture and fitting of artificial limbs; performed in excess of two thousand successful operations; and directed all phases of the rehabilitation process for each amputee, including the proper training in the use of prosthetic devices. In addition, he gave unstintingly of his time and efforts in conducting schools for civilian limb makers at the hospital in the interest of aiding the physically handicapped throughout the nation, as well as casualties from action in the Armed Forces, achieving a record of ninety percent completely rehabilitated, with no amputee becoming psychotic while under his charge..."

On June 19, 1950, he became Chief of the Amputee Service at the U. S. Naval Hospital, Oakland, California, and continued in this assignment until his detachment in January 1961. He assumed duty as Commanding Officer, U. S. Naval Hospital, Camp Pendleton, California, on February 20, of that year and in July 1965 was ordered detached for duty as Medical Reserve Program Officer in the Ninth Naval District, headquarters Great Lakes, Illinois.

In addition to the Legion of Merit and the Commendation Ribbon with Combat "V," Captain Canty has the American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with star; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with four stars, World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Service Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with two stars.

Dr. Canty was awarded the Marquette University School of Medicine Alumni Association's 1950 Annual Alumni Award for his outstanding work in the field of medicine. On January 18, 1952 he received a letter from the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, Navy Department, expressing its appreciation in recognition of his outstanding accomplishment in research development, production and fitting of artificial limbs for combat veterans from 1943 to 1950. On October 31, 1950 he received an award for distinguished service by the American Legion for his signal contributions to the well-being, orientation and rehabilitation of amputee

veterans and service men. In 1952 he received a citation from the Disabled American Veterans for "Exceptional and meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service for the disabled."

In July 1954 he was awarded a commendation from the President's Committee for Employment of the Physically Handicapped and in that same year he was awarded a Certificate of Merit from the American Medical Association. In December 1954 he was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from the veterans of Foreign Wars for "His outstanding service and exceptional contributions in rehabilitation of amputee casualties of World War II and the Korean conflict." In April 1955, Dr. Canty was presented the "Jose Fernandez Madrid" medical award by the President of Columbia, South America. In May 1956 he was presented with a citation from the Chinese Nationalist Navy for outstanding work in the field of rehabilitation. In August 1957 he lectured at the first course on prosthetics, held at Copenhagen, Denmark. That same month he received a citation for meritorious service from President Eisenhower's Committee on Employment of the Physically Handicapped. In January 1959 Dr. Canty was given a citation from the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons and in March of that year was presented with a citation from the Mexican government for his work in rehabilitation. In December 1960, Dr. Canty was awarded the Eduardo Liceaga Medal from Mexico, and a commendation from the National Society for Crippled Children and Adults, Inc.

Dr. Canty is a recognized authority, both national and international, on amputations, prostheses and rehabilitation. He has personally performed over 7,000 amputations without a single fatality. He personally organized and established the first comprehensive rehabilitation program in the U. S. Navy at the U. S. Navy Convalescent Hospital, San Valley, Idaho. He had been the Director of Prosthetic Research from 1946 and has personally contributed innumerable improvements in artificial limbs and braces.

On October 13, 1953, he was elected a member of the American Fracture Association. In his official capacity as Chief of the Amputee Service, he has represented this Government and the U. S. Navy at various international meetings and numerous national scientific meetings. He has authored numerous articles and medical journals regarding orthopedic surgery, amputation surgery, prosthetic devices and rehabilitation. He is certified in Suction Socket Prostheses and has directed several Suction Socket Schools for limb fitters throughout the nation. He has supervised and trained many medical officers in orthopedic surgery and rehabilitation. He has organized, equipped, staffed, and directed several Physical Therapy Departments and Occupational Therapy Departments in various Navy Hospitals. He has conducted a School for Orthopedic Appliance Mechanics at the Navy Amputee Center from 1947 to the present, which has graduated numerous personnel, many of whom are now practicing this profession throughout the country.

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Dr. Canty is a member of the American Medical Association; the American Fracture Association; various sub-committees of the Prosthetics Research Board, National Research Council; the International Society for the Welfare of Cripples; the Committee on Prostheses, Braces and Technical Aids; the Medical Advisory Committee of the American Federation of the Physically Handicapped, and the Latin-American Society of Orthopedics and Traumatology. He also belongs to the Knights of Columbus; Bohemian Club, San Francisco, California; and the Marquette University Alumni Association.