

CAPTAIN MELVILLE JOSEPH ASTON
MEDICAL CORPS, U.S. NAVY, RETIRED

Melville Joseph Aston was born on December 13, 1889, in Kingston, Pennsylvania, the son of the late Enoch R. Aston and Mrs. Elizabeth Jane (Davies) Aston. He attended Mercersburg (Pennsylvania) Academy and studied medicine for two years at the University of Maryland, at College Park, and two years at George Washington University Medical School, receiving his Doctor of Medicine degree from the latter in 1914. He served his internship at Garfield Memorial Hospital, Washington, D.C., and then practiced medicine for eighteen months, in West Virginia. Commissioned Assistant Surgeon, with the rank of Lieutenant (jg) in the Medical Corps of the U.S. Naval Reserve Force, on February 12, 1917, he was transferred to the Medical Corps of the U.S. Navy on May 21, 1917. Thereafter he progressed in grade to that of Captain to date from July 1, 1940, and retired from the Naval Service in that rank on May 1, 1950.

Following his commissioning in 1917, he had duty under instruction at the Naval Medical School, Washington, D.C., with an additional assignment at the Naval Hospital there. Completing his instruction in April 1917 he had consecutive duty until November 1918 in the USS NORTH DAKOTA, the USS BLACK HAWK and USS BALTIMORE. Relieved of sea duty he returned to the United States and was assigned to the Naval Hospital, Parris Island, South Carolina. He remained there until January 1919, when he was transferred to the Receiving Station, New York, New York. Between April and September 1919, he served in the USS AMPHION, after which he reported to the Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In December 1921 he joined the USS SHAWMUT for two years' duty and upon being detached was assigned to the Naval Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. While in that assignment he reported in April 1926 for six months' postgraduate instruction in urology at the James Buchanan Brady Urological Institute a part of Johns Hopkins University Medical School, Baltimore, Maryland. From November 1926 until November 1928 he was attached to the Naval Dispensary, Coco Solo, Canal Zone, after which he returned to the United States for duty, until November 1931, at the Naval Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

After completing duty in the USS CHAUMONT in October 1933, he reported to the Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, Virginia. In August 1934 he joined the USS ARKANSAS and remained aboard that battleship until transferred in September 1938 to the USS NEW YORK. Detached from the latter vessel in May 1939 he reported for duty at the Naval Hospital, Chelsea, Massachusetts. Continuing his assignment there until June 1940, he was then assigned to the Naval Training Station

Naval Operating Base, Norfolk, Virginia. Between February and November 1941 he served as Executive Officer of the Naval Hospital, Chelsea, Massachusetts, after which he reported on December 19, 1941, as Senior Medical Officer aboard the USS SOLACE.

The SOLACE was the sole hospital ship in the Pacific area during the first eighteen months of World War II. She received a Letter of Commendation from Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN, then Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet, for "meritorious achievement and distinguished service during and subsequent to the Japanese air attack on the United States Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, on 7 December 1941. At the time of the attack and afterwards, this unit displayed conspicuous devotion in the line of duty. Its ability to cope with this disaster was responsible for the successful care of all casualties and the saving of many lives..." Captain Aston was especially commended (in a letter to the Chief of the Bureau of Naval Personnel) by the Commanding Officer of the SOLACE for his professional skill and distinguished service in caring for the wounded.

For his services as Senior Medical Officer of the SOLACE in the South Pacific War Area from December 1941 to August 1943 he was awarded the Legion of Merit, with Combat Distinguishing Device "V". The citation states in part: "...Demonstrating professional ability, (he) directed the care, treatment and transportation of large number of casualties resulting from intensive combat activity in the South Pacific and, by his tireless efforts, contributed materially to the maintenance of a low mortality rate during the prolonged period in which his ship operated in waters frequently infested by enemy Japanese forces..."

In September 1943, he assumed command of the Naval Hospital, Norfolk, Virginia, and in March 1945 was transferred to command of the Naval Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. For services in the latter assignment he received a Letter of Commendation, with authorization to wear the Commendation Ribbon, from the Secretary of Navy. Relieved of command of the Naval Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he reported as District Medical Officer, Third Naval District, New York, New York, and in January 1947 he became Senior Medical Officer at the Naval Shipyard, Portsmouth, Virginia.

Since August 1948, Dr. Aston has been in command of the Naval Medical School, National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland. On May 1, 1950 he transferred to the Retired List of the Navy after more than thirty years in the Naval Service.

In addition to the Legion of Merit and Commendation Ribbon, Captain Aston has the World War I Victory Medal; the American Defense Service Medal; the American Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal.

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He is a member of the American Medical Association, the Association of Military Surgeons; the Philadelphia County Medical Society; the American Urological Association; the American Public Health Association, a diplomate of the American Board of Urology and the American Board of Preventive Medicine and Public Health (Founder Group-1949); and is a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

In addition to his postgraduate work at Johns Hopkins Medical School, he has also had postgraduate courses at the Naval Medical School, Washington, D. C., the University of Pennsylvania, and the Jefferson Medical School, at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

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31 May 1950