

Commander Amberson was born in Douglas County, Minnesota, October 23, 1895, the son of Hans and Rose Johnson Amberson, natives of Norway. He received his secondary education at the University of North Dakota 1915-17; University of Montana School of Mines, 1919-21; University of Chicago 1922-27, obtaining degrees in Engineer of Mines (EM) and Doctor of Medicine (MD) from the latter. He also had courses in Business Administration 1921-22, at University of Chicago, and Contract Law, 1934, at Northwestern University. As an undergraduate he entered long distance competition in Track, and operated an amateur radio station.

After service with the National Guard of North Dakota for three years, Commander Amberson enlisted, in 1917, in the U. S. Naval Reserve Force, and served as Radioman on ships at sea during World War until May 1918, when he was commissioned Ensign, thereafter having duty as Radio Instructor; Communications Officer and Intelligence Officer, until placed on inactive duty December 9, 1918, and then honorably discharged August 5, 1921.

In the interim between that time and World War II, he followed his two professions. As consultant in Mining Engineering for twenty years, he was active in prospecting for and drilling many oil wells and designing power plants, and for fifteen years concurrently, he engaged in the practice of medicine and surgery, becoming President of the staff of the Norwegian-American Hospital of Chicago.

He reentered the U.S. Naval Reserve August 5, 1942 as a Lieutenant Commander, Medical Corps. After a period of service at Naval Medical School, Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland, from September 1942 to April 1943, he proceeded to the U. S. Naval Air Technical Training Command, Corpus Christi, Texas, to assume the duties of officer-in-charge, Epidemiology Unit #21. When detached in January 1944, he reported to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., receiving orders to become attached to the Field Air Force, U. S. Army, in Cairo, Egypt, from February to June 1944, doing clinical typhus and epidemic control work.

From June 1944 to September 1945, he was officer-in-charge, Epidemiology Unit #50 with the Eighth Fleet, accompanying the Naval Units on the invasion of Southern France, working in anti-biologic warfare, mal ria indoctrination, and preventive medicine in the field. He had duty while in this assignment on an independent mission to the Middle East, India, East Africa, and South Africa. He also headed the Naval Photographic Unit #2 in this area, and collected medical intelligence there and in Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon Turkey, Arabia, Iran and Iraq. This period was filled with tremendous labors and clinical experiments in control of cholera and treatment of relapsing fever, involving chemo-therapy, and resulting in many life-saving discoveries and far-reaching developments of inestimable value to Naval medicine and the entire field of medical research. For his services in this connection he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal with citation as follows:


DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL:

"For exceptionally meritorious service to the Government of the United States in a duty of great responsibility as Medical Officer in Command of Epidemiology Unit No. 50, operating in Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey and East and South Africa, over an extended period of time. Obtaining protocols to establish the official presence of his Unit in the East, Middle East and Africa, Commander Amberson conducted pioneer research in the treatment of Asiatic cholera and relapsing fever, developing the Unit into a potent force in the control of endemic diseases, a source of sound basic research and creator of good will towards the United States. He maintained effective liaison with the United States Typhus Commission stationed in Egypt and later, assumed responsibility for the Commission's duties, equipment and continuing clinical investigations. In addition, he demonstrated the value of penicillin in treating the victims of relapsing fever. Introducing a revolutionary cure for Asiatic cholera after extensive and painstaking scientific and medical development, Commander Amberson applied this treatment in 500 cases of this ordinarily fatal disease and, by his efforts, prevented the loss of a single life in the test group, thereby bringing to mankind a new method of treatment which will undoubtedly save the lives of untold thousands in the years to come. Through his professional skill, administrative ability and great scientific motives maintained despite his continual exposure to fatal endemic diseases, Commander Amberson has made an outstanding contribution in the field of medical research and his unwavering devotion to an important assignment reflects the highest credit upon himself and the United States Naval Service."

Upon his return to the United States, in September 1945, Commander Amberson was ordered to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery for duty as technical advisor to the Audio-Visual Section, and produced two teaching films in color and sound dealing with preventive medicine and cholera. When detached in March 1946, he returned to the Naval Air Training Command, Corpus Christi, Texas, for duty as Epidemiologist and Sanitation Officer. From June until December 1946, he had duty under the Department of the Interior, with the Medical Survey Group of the Coal Mines Administration, then under Naval management. When detached in December 1946, he reported to the Naval Medical School, Bethesda, Maryland, where he is now serving. During this period, Commander Amberson was the leader of the Naval Medical Unit of research scientists of the University of California's African Expedition, which embarked in the USS MATTAPONI (AO-41) in January 1948 for Port Said, Egypt. After travel by jeep and truck in fifteen countries, a total of 21,000 miles, he returned in the light cruiser USS HUNTINGTON in November 1948. The assigned mission was to study tropical diseases, collect rare specimens and set up a medical information exchange program. When mounted, the specimens and numerous movies and still photographs will be used to instruct Naval medical officers and will also be made available to other scientific and research institutions.

Commander Amberson has produced and published numerous papers in the Naval Medical Bulletin.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal, and the World War I Victory Medal with Fleet Clasp, Commander Amberson is entitled to the American Area Campaign Medal; European-African-Middle Eastern Area Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal; and World War II Victory Medal.



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