= William Sterling Parsons =

Rear Admiral William Sterling " Deak " Parsons (26 November 1901 ? 5 December 1953) was an American naval officer who worked as an ordnance expert on the Manhattan Project during World War II . He is best known for being the weaponeer on the Enola Gay , the aircraft which dropped the Little Boy atomic bomb on Hiroshima , Japan in 1945 . To avoid the possibility of a nuclear explosion if the aircraft crashed and burned on takeoff , he decided to arm the bomb in flight . While the aircraft was en route to Hiroshima , Parsons climbed into the cramped and dark bomb bay , and inserted the powder charge and detonator . He was awarded the Silver Star for his part in the mission .

A 1922 graduate of the United States Naval Academy , Parsons served on a variety of warships beginning with the battleship USS Idaho . He was trained in ordnance and studied ballistics under L.T.E. Thompson at the Naval Proving Ground in Dahlgren , Virginia . In July 1933 , Parsons became liaison officer between the Bureau of Ordnance and the Naval Research Laboratory . He became interested in radar and was one of the first to recognize its potential to locate ships and aircraft , and perhaps even track shells in flight . In September 1940 , Parsons and Merle Tuve of the National Defense Research Committee began work on the development of the proximity fuze , a radar @-@ triggered fuze that would explode a shell in the proximity of the target . The fuze , eventually known as the VT (variable time) fuze , Mark 32 , went into production in 1942 . Parsons was on hand to watch the cruiser USS Helena shoot down the first enemy aircraft with a VT fuze in the Solomon Islands in January 1943 .

In June 1943 , Parsons joined the Manhattan Project as Associate Director at the research laboratory at Los Alamos , New Mexico under J. Robert Oppenheimer . Parsons became responsible for the ordnance aspects of the project , including the design and testing of the non @-@ nuclear components of nuclear weapons . In a reorganization in 1944 , he lost responsibility for the implosion @-@ type fission weapon , but retained that for the design and development of the gun @-@ type fission weapon , which eventually became Little Boy . He was also responsible for the delivery program , codenamed Project Alberta . He watched the Trinity nuclear test from a B @-@ 29 .

After the war , Parsons was promoted to the rank of rear admiral without ever having commanded a ship . He participated in Operation Crossroads , the nuclear weapon tests at Bikini Atoll in 1946 , and later the Operation Sandstone tests at Enewetak Atoll in 1948 . In 1947 , he became deputy commander of the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project . He died of a heart attack on 5 December 1953 .

= = Early life = =

William Sterling Parsons was born in Chicago , Illinois , on 26 November 1901 , the oldest of three children of a lawyer , Harry Robert Parsons , and his wife Clara , née Doolittle . In 1909 , the family moved to Fort Sumner , New Mexico , where William learned to speak fluent Spanish . He attended the local schools in Fort Sumner and was home schooled by his mother for a time . He commenced at Santa Rosa High School , where his mother taught English and Spanish , rapidly advancing through three years in just one . In 1917 he attended Fort Sumner High School , from which he graduated in 1918 .

In 1917 Parsons travelled to Roswell , New Mexico to take the United States Naval Academy exam for one of the appointments by Senator Andrieus A. Jones . He was only an alternate , but passed the exam while more favored candidates did not , and received the appointment . As he was only 16 , two years younger than most candidates , he was shorter and lighter than the physical standards called for , but managed to convince the examining board to admit him anyway . He entered the Naval Academy at Annapolis , Maryland in 1918 , and eventually graduated 48th out of 539 in the class of 1922 , in which Hyman G. Rickover graduated 107th . At the time , it was customary for midshipmen to acquire nicknames , and Parsons was called " Deacon " , a play on his last name . This became shortened to " Deak " .

= = Ordnance = =

On graduating in June 1922 , Parsons was commissioned as an ensign and posted to the battleship USS Idaho , where he was placed in charge of one of the 14 @-@ inch gun turrets . In May 1927 , Parsons , now a lieutenant (junior grade) , returned to Annapolis , where he commenced a course in ordnance at the Naval Postgraduate School . He became friends with Lieutenant Jack Crenshaw , a fellow officer attending the same training course . Jack asked Parsons to be best man at his wedding to Betty Cluverius , the daughter of the Commandant of the Norfolk Navy Yard , Rear Admiral Wat Tyler Cluverius , Jr . , at the Norfolk Navy Chapel . As best man , Parsons was paired with Betty 's maid of honor , her sister Martha . Parsons and Martha got along well , and in November 1929 , they too were married at the Norfolk Navy Chapel . This time , Jack and Betty were best man and maid of honor .

The ordnance course was normally followed by a relevant field posting , so Parsons was sent to the Naval Proving Ground in Dahlgren , Virginia to further study ballistics under L.T.E. Thompson . Following the usual pattern of alternating duty afloat and ashore , Parsons was posted to the battleship USS Texas in June 1930 , with the rank of lieutenant . In November , the Commander in Chief United States Fleet , Admiral Jehu V. Chase , hoisted his flag on the Texas , bringing Cluverius with him as his chief of staff . This was awkward for Parsons , but Cluverius understood , being himself the son @-@ in @-@ law of an admiral , in his case , Admiral William T. Sampson .

In July 1933 , Parsons became liaison officer between the Bureau of Ordnance and the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) in Washington , DC . At the NRL he was briefed by the head of its Radio Division , A. Hoyt Taylor , who told him about experiments that had been carried out into what the Navy would later name radar . Parsons immediately recognized the potential of the new invention to locate ships and aircraft , and perhaps even track shells in flight . For this , he realized that he was going to need high frequency microwaves . He discovered that no one had attempted this . The scientists had not considered all the applications of the technology , and the Navy bureaus had not grasped their potential . He was able to persuade the scientists to establish a group to investigate microwave radar , but without official sanction it had low priority . Parsons submitted a memorandum on the subject to the Bureau of Ordnance (BuOrd) requesting $ 5 @,@ 000 per annum for research . To his dismay , the BuOrd and Bureau of Engineering , which was responsible for the NRL , turned his proposal down .

Some thought that Parsons was ruining his career with his advocacy of radar , but he acquired one powerful backer . The Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics (BuAer) , Rear Admiral Ernest J. King , supported the use of radar as a means of determining aircraft altitude . When the Bureau of Engineering protested that such a device would necessarily be too large to carry on a plane , King told them that it would still be worthwhile , even if the only aircraft in the Navy big enough to carry it was the airship USS Macon .

Parson 's marriage produced three daughters . The first , Hannah , was born in 1932 ; the second , Margaret (Peggy) , followed in 1934 . Hannah died of polio in April 1935 . Parsons returned to sea in June 1936 as the executive officer of the destroyer USS Aylwin . He was promoted to lieutenant commander in May 1937 . His third daughter , Clara (Clare) , was born the same year . On that occasion , Parsons left Martha with the newborn and three @-@ year @-@ old Peggy to care for and reported for duty the next day , believing that his first responsibility was to his ship . His skipper , Commander Earl E. Stone , did not agree , and sent him home . In March 1938 , Rear Admiral William R. Sexton had Parsons assigned to his flagship , the cruiser USS Detroit , as gunnery officer . Parson 's task was to improve the gunnery scores of his command , and in this he succeeded .

= = Proximity fuze = =

Parsons was posted back to Dahlgren in September 1939 as experimental officer . The atmosphere had changed considerably . In June 1940 , President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved the creation of the National Defense Research Committee (NDRC) , under the direction of Vannevar Bush .

Richard C. Tolman , dean of the graduate school at Caltech , was given responsibility for the NDRC 's Armor and Ordnance Division . Tolman met with Parsons and Thompson in July 1940 , and discussed their needs . Within the Navy , too , there was a change of attitude , with Captain William H. P. (Spike) Blandy as the head of BuOrd 's Research Desk . Blandy welcomed the assistance of NDRC scientists in improving and developing weapons .

In September 1940 , Parsons and Merle Tuve of NDRC began work on a new concept . Shooting down an aircraft with an anti @-@ aircraft gun was a difficult proposition . As a shell had to hit a speeding aircraft at an uncertain altitude , the only hope seemed to be to fill the sky with ammunition . A direct hit was not actually required ; an aircraft might be destroyed or critically damaged by a shell detonating nearby . With this in mind , anti @-@ aircraft gunners used time fuzes to increase the possibility of damage . The question then arose as to whether radar could be used to create an explosion in the proximity of an aircraft . Tuve 's first suggestion was to have an aircraft drop a radar @-@ controlled bomb on a bomber formation . Parsons saw that while this was technically feasible , it was tactically problematic .

The ideal solution was a proximity fuze inside an artillery shell , but there were numerous technical difficulties with this . The radar set had to be made small enough to fit inside a shell , and its glass vacuum tubes had to first withstand the 20 @,@ 000 g force of being fired from a gun , and then 500 rotations per second in flight . A special Section T of NDRC was created , chaired by Tuve , with Parsons as special assistant to Bush and liaison between NDRC and BuOrd .

On 29 January 1942 , Parsons reported to Blandy that a batch of fifty proximity fuzes from the pilot production plant had been test fired , and 26 of them had exploded correctly . Blandy therefore ordered full @-@ scale production to begin . In April 1942 , Bush , now the Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) , placed the project directly under OSRD . The research effort remained under Tuve but moved to the Johns Hopkins University 's Applied Physics Laboratory (APL) , where Parsons was BuOrd 's representative . In August 1942 , a live firing test was conducted with the newly commissioned cruiser USS Cleveland . Three pilotless drones were shot down in succession .

Parsons had the new proximity fuzes , now known as VT (variable time) fuze , Mark 32 , flown to the Mare Island Navy Yard , where they were mated with 5 " / 38 caliber gun rounds . Some 5 @,@ 000 of them were then shipped to the South Pacific . Parsons flew there himself , where he met with Admiral William F. Halsey at his headquarters in Noumea . He arranged for Parsons to take VT fuzes out with him on the cruiser USS Helena . On 6 January 1943 , Helena was part of a cruiser force that bombarded Munda in the Solomon Islands . On the return trip , the cruisers were attacked by four Aichi D3A (Val) dive bombers . Helena fired at one with a VT fuze . It exploded close to the aircraft , which crashed into the sea .

To preserve the secret of the weapon , its use was initially permitted only over water , where a dud round could not fall into enemy hands . In late 1943 , the Army obtained permission for it to be used over land . It proved particularly effective against the V @-@ 1 flying bomb over England , and later Antwerp in 1944 . The use of a version fired from howitzers against ground targets was authorized in response to the German Ardennes Offensive in December 1944 , with deadly effect . By the end of 1944 , VT fuzes were coming off the production lines at the rate of 40 @,@ 000 per day .

= = Manhattan Project = =

= = = Project Y = = =

Parsons returned to Dahlgren in March 1943 . Around this time , a research laboratory was established at Los Alamos , New Mexico under the direction of J. Robert Oppenheimer as Project Y , which was part of the Manhattan Project , the top @-@ secret effort to develop an atomic bomb . The creation of a practical weapon would necessarily require an expert in ordnance , and Oppenheimer tentatively pencilled in Tolman for the role , but getting him released from OSRD was another matter . Until then , Oppenheimer had to do the job himself . In May 1943 , the Manhattan

Project 's director , Brigadier General Leslie R. Groves , took up the matter with the Military Policy Committee , the high @-@ level committee that oversaw the Manhattan Project . It consisted of Vannevar Bush as its chairman , Brigadier General Wilhelm D. Styer who represented the Army , and Rear Admiral William R. Purnell as the Navy 's representative .

Groves told them that he was looking for someone with " a sound understanding of both practical and theoretical ordnance ? high explosives , guns and fusing ? a wide acquaintance and an excellent reputation among military ordnance people and an ability to gain their support ; a reasonably broad background in scientific development ; and an ability to attract and hold the respect of scientists . " He said that a military officer would be his ideal , as the job might involve planning and coordinating the use of the bomb , but added that he knew of no Army officer who fit the bill . Bush then suggested Parsons , a nomination supported by Purnell . The next morning , Parsons received a phone call from Purnell , ordering him to report to Admiral King , who was now the Commander in Chief , US Fleet (Cominch) . In a terse ten @-@ minute meeting , King briefed Parsons on the Project , which he said had his full backing . That afternoon , Parsons met with Groves , who quickly sized him up as the right man for the job .

Parsons was relieved of his duties at Dahlgren and officially assigned to Admiral King 's Cominch staff on 1 June 1943 , with a promotion to the rank of captain . On 15 June 1943 he arrived at Los Alamos as Associate Director . Parsons would be Oppenheimer 's second in command . Parsons and his family moved into one of the houses on " Bathtub Row " that had formerly belonged to the headmaster and staff of the Los Alamos Ranch School . Bathtub row , so @-@ called because the houses were the only ones at Los Alamos with bathtubs , was the most prestigious address at Los Alamos . Parsons became Oppenheimer 's next @-@ door neighbor , and in fact his house was slightly larger , because Parsons had two children and Oppenheimer , at this point , had only one . With two school @-@ age children , Parsons took a keen interest in the construction of the Central School at Los Alamos , and became president of the school board . Instead of the temporary two @-@ story structure that Groves had envisioned in the interest of economy and not misusing the project 's high priorities for labor and materials , Parsons had a well @-@ built , modern , single @-@ story school constructed . On seeing the result , Groves said : " I 'll hold you personally responsible for this , Parsons . "

Oppenheimer had already recruited key people for Parson 's Ordnance Division . Edwin McMillan was a physicist who headed the Proving Ground Group . His first task was to establish the ordnance test area . Later he became Parsons ' deputy for the gun @-@ type fission weapon . Charles Critchfield , a mathematical physicist with ordnance experience at the Army 's Aberdeen Proving Ground , was in charge of the Target , Projectile and Source Group . Kenneth Bainbridge arrived in August to take charge of the Instrumentation Group . Parsons recruited Robert Brode from the proximity fuze project to become head of the Fuze Development Group . Joseph Hirschfelder was brought in as an expert on internal ballistics , and headed the Interior Ballistics Group . From the beginning , Parsons wanted Norman Ramsey as the head of the delivery group . Edward L. Bowles , the scientific adviser to the Secretary of War , Henry L. Stimson , was reluctant to part with Ramsey , but gave way under pressure from Groves , Tolman and Bush . Perhaps the most controversial group head would be Seth Neddermeyer , the head of the Implosion Experimentation Group ; for the time being , Parson accorded a relatively low priority to this work . He also recruited Hazel Greenbacker as his secretary .

Groves , among others , felt that Parsons had a tendency to fill positions with Naval officers . There was some aspect of service parochialism , and Parsons believed that involvement in the Manhattan Project would be important for the future of the Navy , but it was also due to the difficulty of getting highly skilled people from any source in wartime . Parsons simply found it easiest to get them through Navy channels . Lieutenant Commander Norris Bradbury said that he did not wish to join Project Y , but was soon on his way to Los Alamos anyway . Parsons recruited Commander Francis Birch , who replaced McMillan at Anchor Ranch . Commander Frederick Ashworth was a Naval ordnance officer and aviator who was senior aviator at Dahlgren when he was brought in to work on the delivery side . By the end of the war , there were 41 Naval officers at Los Alamos .

Over the next few months , Parsons ' division designed the gun @-@ type plutonium weapon ,

codenamed Thin Man . It was assumed that a uranium @-@ 235 weapon would be similar in nature . Hirschfelder 's group considered various designs , and evaluated different propellants . The ordnance test area , which became known as " Anchor Ranch " , was established on a nearby ranch , where Parsons conducted test firings with a 3 @-@ inch anti @-@ aircraft gun . Work on implosion lagged by comparison , but this was not initially a major concern , because it was expected that the gun @-@ type would work with both uranium and plutonium . However , Oppenheimer , Groves and Parsons lobbied Purnell and Tolman to get John von Neumann to have a look at the problem . Von Neumann suggested the use of shaped charges to initiate implosion .

Oppenheimer considered that there was a " reciprocal lack of confidence " between Parsons and Neddermeyer , and in October 1943 he brought in George Kistiakowsky , who began a new attack on the implosion design . Kistiakowsky clashed with both Parsons and Neddermeyer , but felt that " my disagreements with Deak Parsons were very minor compared to my disagreements with Neddermeyer . " The implosion design acquired a new urgency in April 1944 , when studies of reactor @-@ produced plutonium confirmed that it could not be used in a gun @-@ type weapon . An accelerated effort was called for to design and build the implosion @-@ type weapon , codenamed Fat Man . Two new groups were created at Los Alamos : X (for explosives) Division headed by Kistiakowsky , and G (for gadget) Division under Robert Bacher . Parsons was placed in charge of O (for ordnance) Division , with responsibility for both the gun @-@ type design and delivery .

The uranium gun @-@ type weapon known as Little Boy did prove to be simpler than Thin Man . The gun velocity needed to be only 1 @,@ 000 feet per second (300 m / s) , a third that of Thin Man . A corresponding reduction in the barrel length reduced the bomb 's overall length to 6 feet (1 @.@ 8 m) . In turn , this made it much easier to handle , and permitted a conventional bomb shape , resulting in a more predictable flight . The main concerns with Little Boy were its safety and reliability .

= = = Project Alberta = = =

The delivery program , codenamed Project Alberta , got underway under Ramsey 's direction in October 1943 . Starting in November , the Army Air Forces Materiel Command at Wright Field , Ohio , began Silverplate , the codename for the modification of B @-@ 29s to carry the bombs . Parsons arranged for a test program at Dahlgren using scale models of Thin Man and Fat Man . Test drops were carried out at Muroc Army Air Field , California and the Naval Ordnance Test Station at Inyokern , California using full @-@ size replicas of Fat Man known as pumpkin bombs . The ungainly and non @-@ aerodynamic shape of Fat Man proved to be the main difficulty , but many other problems were encountered and overcome . Parsons , wrote Oppenheimer , " has been almost alone in this project to appreciate the actual military and engineering problems which we would encounter . He has been almost alone in insisting on facing these problems at a date early enough so that we might arrive at their solution . "

In July 1944 , Parsons joined Jack Crenshaw , who was investigating the Port Chicago disaster . The two men surveyed the disaster area , where 1 @,@ 500 tons of munitions had exploded and 320 men had lost their lives . A year later , Parsons watched the Trinity nuclear test from a circling B @-@ 29 . Afterwards , Parsons flew to Tinian , where the B @-@ 29s of Colonel Paul W. Tibbets ' 509th Composite Group were preparing to deliver the weapons . En route , he stopped off in San Diego to visit his eighteen @-@ year @-@ old half @-@ brother Bob , a marine who had been badly wounded in the Battle of Iwo Jima . Parsons also met with Captain Charles B. McVay III , the skipper of the cruiser USS Indianapolis , in Purnell 's office at the Embarcadero in San Francisco and gave McVay his orders :

You will sail at high speed to Tinian where your cargo will be taken off by others . You will not be told what the cargo is , but it is to be guarded even after the life of your vessel . If she goes down , save the cargo at all costs , in a lifeboat if necessary . And every day you save on your voyage will cut the length of the war by just that much .

Parsons was in charge of scientists and technicians from Project Alberta on Tinian , who were

nominally organized as the 1st Technical Service Detachment . Their role was the handling and maintenance of the nuclear weapons . Parsons was joined by Purnell , who represented the Military Liaison Committee , and Brigadier General Thomas F. Farrell , Groves ' Deputy for Operations . They became , informally , the " Tinian Joint Chiefs " , with decision @-@ making authority over the nuclear mission . Before Farrell left for Tinian , Groves had told him : " Don 't let Parsons get killed . We need him ! "

In the space of a week on Tinian , four B @-@ 29s crashed and burned on the runway . Parsons became very concerned . If a B @-@ 29 crashed with a Little Boy , the fire could cook off the explosive and detonate the weapon , with catastrophic consequences . He raised the possibility of arming the bomb in flight with Farrell , who agreed that it might be a good idea . Farrell asked Parsons if he knew how to perform this task . " No sir , I don 't " , Parsons conceded , " but I 've got all afternoon to learn . " The night before the mission , Parsons repeatedly practiced inserting the powder charge and detonator in the bomb in the poor visibility and cramped conditions of the bomb bay .

Parsons participated in the bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 , flying on the Enola Gay as weaponeer and Senior Military Technical Observer . Shortly after takeoff , he clambered into the bomb bay and carefully carried out the procedure that he had rehearsed the night before . It was Parsons and not Tibbetts , the pilot , who was in charge of the mission . He approved the choice of Hiroshima as the target , and gave the final approval for the bomb to be released . For his part in the mission , Parsons was awarded the Silver Star , and was promoted to the wartime rank of commodore on 10 August 1945 . For his work on the Manhattan Project , he was awarded the Navy Distinguished Service Medal .

= = Postwar career = =

In November 1945 , King created a new position of Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Special Weapons , which was given to Vice Admiral Blandy . Parsons became Blandy 's assistant . In turn , Parsons had two assistants of his own , Ashworth and Horacio Rivero , Jr . He also brought Greenbacker from Los Alamos to help set up the new office . Parsons was a strong supporter of research into the use of nuclear power for warship propulsion , but disagreed with Rear Admiral Harold G. Bowen , Sr. , the head of the Office of Research and Inventions , who wanted the Navy to initiate its own nuclear project . Parsons felt that the Navy should work with the Manhattan Project , and arranged for Naval officers to be assigned to Oak Ridge . The most senior of them was his former classmate Rickover , who became assistant director there . They immersed themselves in the study of nuclear energy , laying the foundations for a nuclear @-@ powered navy .

On 11 January 1946 , Blandy was appointed to command Joint Task Force One (JTF @-@ 1) , a special force created to conduct a series of nuclear weapon tests at Bikini Atoll , which he named Operation Crossroads , to determine the effect of nuclear weapons on warships . Parsons , who was promoted to the rank of rear admiral on 8 January 1946 , became Blandy 's Deputy Commander for Technical Direction and Commander Task Group 1 @.@ 1 . Parsons worked hard to make a success of the operation , which he described as " the largest laboratory experiment in history " . In addition to the 95 target ships , there was a support fleet of more than 150 ships , 156 aircraft , and over 42 @,@ 000 personnel .

Parsons witnessed the first explosion , Able , from the deck of the task force flagship , the command ship USS Mount McKinley . An airburst like the Hiroshima blast , it was unimpressive , and even Parsons thought that it must have been smaller than the Hiroshima bomb . It failed to sink the target ship , the battleship USS Nevada , mainly because it missed it by a considerable distance . This made it difficult to assess the amount of damage caused , which was the objective of the exercise . Blandy then announced that the next test , Baker , would occur in just three weeks . This meant that Parsons had to carry out the evaluation of Able simultaneously with the preparations for Baker . This time he assisted with the final preparations on USS LSM @-@ 60 before heading back to seaplane tender USS Cumberland Sound for the test . The underwater Baker explosion was no larger than Able , but the dome and water column made it look far more spectacular . The real

problem was the radioactive fallout , as Colonel Stafford L. Warren , the Manhattan Project 's medical advisor , had predicted . The target ships proved impossible to decontaminate and , lacking targets , the test series had to be called off . For his part in Operation Crossroads , Parsons was awarded the Legion of Merit .

The Special Weapons Office was abolished in November 1946 , and the Manhattan Project followed suit at the end of the year . A civilian agency , the United States Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) , was created by the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 to take over the functions and assets of the Manhattan Project , including development , production and control of nuclear weapons . The law provided for a Military Liaison Committee (MLC) to advise the AEC on military matters , and Parsons became a member . A joint Army @-@ Navy organization , the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project (AFSWP) , was created to handle the military aspects of nuclear weapons . Groves was appointed to command the AFSWP , with Parsons and Air Force Major General Roscoe C. Wilson as his deputies . In this capacity , Parsons pressed for the development of improved nuclear weapons . During the Operation Sandstone series of nuclear weapon tests at Enewetak Atoll in 1948 , Parsons once again served as deputy commander . Parsons hoped that his next posting would be to sea , but he was instead sent to the Weapons Systems Evaluation Group in 1949 . He finally returned to sea duty in 1951 , this time as Commander , Cruiser Division 6 , despite having never commanded a ship . Parsons and his cruisers conducted a tour of the Mediterranean showing the flag . He then became Deputy Chief of the Bureau of Ordnance in March 1952 .

= = Death and legacy = =

Parsons remained in contact with Oppenheimer . The two men and their wives visited each other from time to time , and the Parsons family especially enjoyed visiting its former neighbors at their new home at Olden Manor , a 17th @-@ century estate with a cook and groundskeeper , surrounded by 265 acres (107 ha) of woodlands at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton , New Jersey . Parsons was disturbed by the rise of McCarthyism in the early 1950s . In 1953 he wrote a letter to Oppenheimer expressing his hope that " the anti @-@ intellectualism of recent months may have passed its peak " . On 4 December that year , Parsons heard of President Dwight Eisenhower 's " blank wall " directive , blocking Oppenheimer from access to classified material . Parsons became visibly upset , and that night began experiencing severe chest pains . The next morning , he went to Bethesda Naval Hospital , where he died while the doctors were still examining him . He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery alongside his daughter Hannah . He was survived by his father , brother , half @-@ brother and sister , as well as his wife Martha and daughters Peggy and Clare .

The Rear Admiral William S. Parsons Award for Scientific and Technical Progress was established by the Navy in his memory . It is awarded " to a Navy or Marine Corps officer , enlisted person , or civilian who has made an outstanding contribution in any field of science that has furthered the development and progress of the Navy or Marine Corps . " The Forrest Sherman @-@ class destroyer USS Parsons was named in his honor . Her keel was laid down by Ingalls Shipbuilding of Pascagoula , Mississippi on 17 June 1957 and was launched by his widow Martha on 17 August 1958 . When it was rechristened as a guided missile destroyer (DDG @-@ 33) in 1967 , Clare , now a Naval officer herself , represented her family . Parsons was decommissioned on 19 November 1982 , stricken from the Navy list on 1 December 1984 , and disposed of as a target on 25 April 1989 . The Deak Parsons Center , headquarters of Afloat Training Group , Atlantic , in Norfolk , Virginia , was also named for him . Parsons ' portrait is among a series of paintings related to Operation Crossroads . His papers are in the Naval Historical Center in Washington , DC .