Modest Patterson Risked Security to Serve Nation

By ROBERT ALLEN

Washington.

IN THE WELTER of and charges against men in high office, it is vital to keep in mind that many Americans have a lofty sense of duty and serve their country honorably. One who should be honored for outstandingly distinguished service to his country is Robert P. Patterson, former secretary of war. There was an inexplicable failure to decorate him with the high medal he deserved when he retired from office recently. Far lesser men received DSMs and legions of merit. Why Patterson was not so honored is a mystery.

Patterson

It can be said, of course, that his kind of integrity and courage need no decoration to embellish them. Also, Patterson already has the distinguished service cross he won for extraordinary heroism in World War I.

Patterson unhesitatingly gave up a lifetime position as a United States circuit court judge to assume the onerous and thankless responsibilities of directing the logistics branch of the war department. He worked unflaggingly to arm his unprepared country.

Among other things, Patterson is responsible for the government's belated program to develop modern and effective artificial limbs.

Both the army and navy went to great expense to give the finest medical care to men who lost limbs. Special hospitals and rehabilitation centers were set up. But at that point their efforts ended.

Nothing was done about modernizing the prosthetic devices upon which these handicapped men would have to depend the rest of their lives.

In the spring of 1945, Patterson took hold of this problem himself. Over the opposition of certain army brasshats, he set up a committee of civilian scientists, engineers and surgeons, provided them with ample funds, and put them to work to lift artificial limbs out of the ice age.

If this program can be continued a few more years, the 800,000 amputees in the United States—civilians as well as veterans—can look forward to devices that will be modern and efficient.