

COLONEL FRANCIS THOMAS EVANS
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS, RETIRED

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

Francis Thomas Evans was born in Delaware, Ohio, on June 3, 1886. He had early military service as a member of Company K, Fourth Infantry, Active Ohio National Guard, from August 9, 1904 to August 8, 1907, and was appointed Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps on January 16, 1909. He was subsequently promoted as follows: First Lieutenant, September 17, 1913; Captain, August 29, 1916; Major, temporary, August 28, 1918; permanent, June 4, 1920; and Lieutenant Colonel, May 29, 1934. He was transferred to the Retired List on July 1, 1938, but returned to active duty on October 6, 1939, and on December 2, 1944 was promoted to the rank of Colonel, on the Retired List to date from January 1, 1942.

Accepting his commission as Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps on January 24, 1909 he reported a few days later to the Commandant of the Marine Corps at Headquarters, Washington, D.C., and on February 8, began instruction at the Marine Officers' School, Port Royal, South Carolina. He had duty from December of that year until March 1910, as a part of his training, with the First Regiment, Expeditionary Brigade aboard the USS PRAIRIE, USS DIXIE and USS BUFFALO. After detachment from the school, he continued duty with the Expeditionary Brigade in the BUFFALO, at Balboa, Panama, and in camp at Los Cascades, Canal Zone until his return to the United States for duty at Marine Barracks, Mare Island, California, and the Rifle Range, Fort Barry, California.

On October 1, 1912 he left Mare Island for the Marine Barracks, Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii, and after service there and at Marine Barracks, Guam, until June 1915, reported to the Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks, Panama-Pacific Exposition at San Francisco, for fitness examination prior to aviation duty. On June 24, 1915 he was ordered to the Naval Aeronautic Station, Pensacola, Florida, where he was designated Naval Aviator on March 9, 1916, his designation specifying "duty involving actual flying in aircraft, including balloons, dirigibles and aeroplanes."

He remained on duty at the Naval Aeronautic Station, Pensacola, and was temporarily in command of the Marine Barracks there from October 3 to 26, 1916 and from November 23 to December 18, 1916. He also had temporary additional duty with the Curtiss Aeroplane Company, Buffalo, New York, and the Curtiss Flying School, Newport News, Virginia, from April 20 to May 17, 1917, after the United States' entry into World War I. He was detached to Marine Barracks, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on May 19, 1917, and on July 12 of that year was awarded the Navy Air Pilot Certificate No. 22.

Reporting to the Naval Coastal Air Station, Cape May, New Jersey, on October 14, 1917, he was transferred to Marine Barracks, Philadelphia, on December 8, and on January 1, 1918 left for the Marine Aeronautic Company, U.S. Naval Base #13, Azores. He arrived there on January 31, 1918, and commanded the Marine Aeronautic Detachment until July 22 when he was ordered to return to the United States. After reporting to Headquarters, Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., he was assigned duty with the Marine Aviation Detachment, Miami, Florida, on August 31, 1918.

On July 2, 1919 he assumed command of the Marine Aviation Detachment, Marine Barracks, Quantico, Virginia, and served in that command until ordered in March 1921 to the First Brigade, Marines, in Haiti. He served there for two years, and after his arrival at Hampton Roads, Virginia on March 8, 1923, reported to Washington Headquarters, and then to Marine Barracks, Quantico, for the Field Officers' Course at the Marine Corps Schools. He commanded the First Battalion from January 1 to March 12, 1925, and had temporary additional duty in connection with maneuvers on Oahu, Territory of Hawaii, attached to Company "F" First Provisional Battalion, Marine Corps Expeditionary Force.

As Battalion Commander, Marine Barracks, Marine Corps Base, San Diego, California, from May 9, 1925, he participated in the policing of the devastated area at Santa Barbara, California, from July 1 to 14, 1925, and for service rendered by the Marine Detachment in fighting fire there received a commendatory letter from the Major General Commandant. He reported to the Naval Air Station, San Diego, on February 23, 1926, to serve for a year as Executive Officer, with additional duty as Group Armament Officer from July 1 to December 22, 1926.

Following temporary aviation duty in the Far East with the Third Marine Brigade, as Squadron Commander at Manila and Olongapo, Philippine Islands; and at Shanghai, Taku Bar, and Hsin Ho, China, he returned to San Diego, and on September 12, 1927 began instruction at the Army Air Corps Tactical School, Langley Field, Virginia, and briefly at the Army War College, Washington, D. C. On August 29, 1928 he rejoined the First Brigade, Marines in Haiti, and thereafter, until July 1930, commanded Observation Squadron 9M and Brown Field. He received a letter of commendation from the Major General Commandant, on report of inspection by the Adjutant and Inspector, for "efficiency, morale and general excellence" of his squadron.

Detached to the Naval Air Station, San Diego, he had aviation duty for two years as Executive Officer, of Aircraft Squadron, West Coast, Expeditionary Force, and in that capacity received a letter of commendation from the Brigade Commander, Second Brigade, for excellence in aircraft gunnery. On August 25, 1932 he joined Aircraft Squadrons.

East Coast Expeditionary Force, at Marine Barracks, Quantico, and served as Executive Officer until January 28, 1935. A unit of his command won the Schiff Trophy for 1933, and he received a commendatory letter from the Major General Commandant.

Ordered to the Marine Barracks, Navy Yard, Washington, D.C., in January 1935, Colonel Evans served as Commanding Officer for two years, and after a period of hospitalization from January to May 1937, was relieved of active duty pending his retirement, for physical disability, on July 1 of that year.

Recalled to active duty on October 6, 1939, he reported on October 18, to the Marine Barracks, Naval Operating Base, Norfolk, Virginia, where he served as Executive Officer until November 8, 1940, with additional duty as Recreation Officer from January 1 to September 6, 1940. He assumed command on December 1, 1940, and from June 14, 1941 had additional duty as District Marine Officer, Fifth Naval District, until transferred in February 1944, to the Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia. He served there as Marine Corps Equipment Board Officer until again relieved of all active duty on December 1, 1944.

Colonel Evans was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross by a special act of Congress in 1933 for extraordinary achievement in the face of the accepted theory that it was impossible when on February 13, 1917, he "successfully looped a seaplane for the first time and demonstrated recovery from spins induced by whipstalls...." and for further outstanding service in the development of Naval Aviation.

In addition to the Distinguished Flying Cross, he has the Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal with Bronze Star (Panama, 1909, and Haiti, 1923); the World War I Victory Medal, Overseas Clasp; the Yangtze Service Medal; the American Defense Service Medal; the American Campaign Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal.

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