

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution



Patriot of the Month

January 2016



Charles Eugene Evans

Sponsored by:

Crowley's Ridge Chapter



Charles Eugene Evans enlisted in the US Marine Corps on August 14, 1942. He left Little Rock, Arkansas, for basic training in San Diego, California. Evans was an infantry man in the First Marine Division, Seventh Marines when he shipped out as a replacement to Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. When they made land, the main part of one battle had played out but an airport with one little plane still had to be defended. Foxholes circled the airport. Being a replacement on the front line, Evans occupied one of these foxholes and recognized a shallow grave next to him by the outstretched fingers visible above the ground. Very quickly, American P38 planes appeared overhead and the Japanese left this area as they had no defense against the P38's. The company faced a critical need for safe drinking water. Warned against drinking the island water, their need outweighed the warning, and they quietly filled their canteens as they walked across a stream of clear, good tasting water. Evans and all the others came down with malaria and believed it came from that water. They spent four months in a hospital in Melbourne, Australia.

Goodenough Island was a staging area where the Marines prepared for battle and waited for orders to go into Peleliu Island. While there the men organized two baseball teams. In the game, Evans stepped on a rock and broke a small bone above his ankle. They taped it up; he went to Peleliu and the bloodiest battle in the Pacific. Evans had two brothers, both fighting in the European Theater. Word came that his younger brother was killed in action; he was pulled from the front line of combat and assigned to a support system to carry ammunition to the front line. "I almost got killed doing that. We worked in pairs. Snipers spotted us once on our return to the supply line and started firing. There was no cover but we saw a shallow bombed out crater and ran for it. By hugging the side closest to the enemy, the snipers couldn't see us but they kept us pinned down all day by firing bullets into the crater. When night came, we were able to escape."

Serving in the South Pacific for twenty-seven months, Evans participated in the Guadalcanal, Cape Gloucester, and Peleliu campaigns. He was attached to a special weapons outfit with the famed First Marine Division. In his three Pacific offenses, which totaled over eight months of front line action, twenty-five year old Evans fought the Japanese in four major battles, two on Guadalcanal and two at Peleliu. His last combat duty was on Bloody Nose Ridge, Peleliu.

After Peleliu, Evans was rotated back to the states to Cecil Field in Jacksonville, Florida, for eight months in the Marine Guard for the Naval Air Station there. In July of 1945, Evans returned to Camp Pendleton to prepare for the planned November assault on mainland Japan. The announcement came on August 6, 1945, that the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. He received an honorable discharge on September 27, 1945. Within forty-eight hours, he mustered out and was on his way home to Dell, Arkansas.

Evans worked in a furniture factory, drove a bread truck, ran a Jewell Tea route, married Vivian, and with her young daughter, Joyce, made their home in Blytheville, Arkansas. They moved to Hayti, Missouri, and then transferred to Memphis, Tennessee where he worked for the US Post Office. Joyce graduated college and enjoyed a career first in radiology and later in nuclear safety. Evans also sold real estate and had his broker's license. On his birthday, January 15, 1980, he retired as manager of one of twelve postal stations in Memphis. His station was the original post office building in downtown Memphis located near the Mississippi River.

After his wife and daughter died, Evans moved to Sikeston, Missouri. He volunteered at the Missouri Delta Hospital in Sikeston for twelve years. He served forty-eight years as a deacon in Southern Baptist Convention churches and is a member of the Minor Baptist Church. In his ninety-fifth year, Evans enjoys a good life with his wife, Jane.

The members of the Crowley's Ridge Chapter, NSDAR wish to extend their gratitude to Charles Eugene Evans for his service to our great country.