

Burrowes G. Stevens 1918

Cullum No. 6196 • Sep 17, 1983 • Died in Columbus, GA

Interred in Park Hill Cemetery, Columbus, GA

Born 21 May 1895 in Portland, Maine, Steve was raised in the stern New England traditions of a distinguished family near the many Army posts defending Portland and Casco Bay. His father, Paul Revere Stevens, was descended from Mary Revere, sister of Paul Revere. An early grandfather, Isaac Sawyer Stevens, had been a sergeant in the Revolution. Another ancestor, Augustus Ervin Stevens, had been mayor of Portland in 1866. His mother was Lena Louise Goldthwaite of Boston. The Stevens family spent every summer at a cottage which still stands on Great Diamond Island. The Coast Artillery and Infantry posts, Fort McKinley, Fort Williams, and Fort Preble, home of the 5th 'Til Try Sir" Regiment, have long since been abandoned, but the active presence of troops in the early 1900's strongly influenced Steve to seek a military career. His other great loves were for ships and the sea.

Steve attended the New York Military Academy at Cornwall-on-Hudson for four years and was appointed to West Point as a graduate of this honor school in 1916. He made corporal and sergeant, was a hop manager and was in the Hundredth Night Show. World War I brought early graduation in November 1918, but too late for oversea action. His first assignments were in Camp Hancock and Camp Benning, Georgia, as a student and then instructor in machine guns. Here he met and married Martha Alexander of Columbus and Fort Mitchell, Alabama. Martha's (Polly's) family included Colonel Crowell, first Indian agent for Russell County, Alabama, and General James Cantey of the Confederate Army.

The first seventeen years as a lieutenant saw a succession of two or three-year posts, learning, teaching, and commanding troops. 1919-23: Fort Benning, Georgia, Infantry School and with a company of the 29th Infantry. 1923-26: Puerto Rico (Henry Barracks and San Juan) with companies of the 65th Infantry. 1926-27: Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, attending the Signal School. 1927-30: Fort Williams and Fort Preble, Maine. HQ company commander in the 5th Infantry Regiment. 1930-31: Fort Benning, Company Officers Course. 1931-32: Fort Benning, company commander and battalion adjutant, 29th Infantry. 1932: Assisted in pilgrimage of War Mothers and Widows to France (Gold Star Detail). 1932-35: Vancouver Barracks, Washington (by Army transport St. Mihiel, NYC to San Francisco). Company commander and post signal officer, 7th Infantry; made captain. 1935-38: Schofield Barracks, TH. Command HQ Company, 22nd Infantry Brigade (27th and 35th Inf Regiments). 1938—39: Fort Howard, Maryland, company commander, post and regimental adjutant, 12th Infantry.

1940-42: Fort Benning, Georgia. GGO and S3 4th Anti-Tank Bn. Bn CO, 94th AT Bn, which became 894th Tank Destroyer Bn. Major 1940, lieutenant colonel 1942. 1942: Fort Bragg, North Carolina, CO, 894th TD Battalion. CO 1st TD Group as colonel, AUS. 1942: August. England. CO, 1st Tank Destroyer Group. 1943: January 10th. North Africa. CO 1st TD Group with II

Corps, I Armored Corps and Fifth Army. 1943: October-November, Italy with Fifth Army. 1943: December. England. CO, 1st TD Group with VII Corps.

1944: 10 June. Landed in Normandy. 11 July. Managed to meet his son, First Lieutenant B.G. Stevens, Jr. in St. Lo, who was en route as a replacement assigned "B" Company Commander, 357th Regiment, 90th Division. Steve saw his son once more about July 26th on the Seves River at the start of the big breakthrough. Steve received a Bronze Star for his outstanding conduct of operations as Director of Traffic for VII Corps. Steve's Bronze Star (OLC) citation: "As Security Commander, VII Corps, COLONEL STEVENS in October 1944, formulated the Corp Security Plan, wrote the Standing Operating Procedure, and initiated the execution thereof on a practical, comprehensive, and tactically sound basis. Thereafter, he directed organization of the Corps Rear Area Security. ... he evolved a doctrine that became the model for the First United States Army. The efficient manner in which troops in the Corps Area conducted operations 16-17 December 1944 on occasion of enemy paratroop activities is directly attributed to his insistence on detailed security area planning."

1945: Continued as CO, 1st TD Group through victory in Germany. June. Camp Hood, Texas. Director, Tactical Department and Assistant Commandant TD School.

1946: January. Fort Knox, Kentucky; CO, Training Group TARS. Made colonel, USA, 1948. 1949-50: Germany. Executive officer, 2nd Constabulary Brigade and executive officer, Munich Military Post. 1950-53: New York City. Senior instructor NY National Guard.

1953: Retired 1 July 1953 to West Palm Beach, FL, where he and Polly spent many happy years and made many new friends. Steve became a deacon in the Presbyterian Church on Flagler Drive. They enjoyed the long anticipated peaceful life in the first home they had ever owned. Steve also contributed his knowledge and experience as director of Civil Defense for West Palm Beach. Surf casting, woodworking, gardening and reading were his hobbies.

Every summer six weeks were spent at the Stevens cottage on Great Diamond Island in Maine's Portland harbor. This is the place that they loved most—with the tang of the sea, the bright sunny days made even more pleasant by contrast with the occasional fog and rain.

An unfortunate accident brought all this to a sudden end. While at home in Florida, Steve slipped in the bathtub and was seriously scalded as he lay in the tub unable to escape the hot water flow. His injuries were aggravated by a stroke which rendered him an invalid for the rest of his life. To help in caring for Steve, Polly found it best to move to Columbus, Georgia, near their daughter, Betty, and her husband, Walter Haywood. Steve gradually failed more and more until he finally passed away quietly on 17 September 1983.

Steve's great strengths were his excellence in the performance of every job, his competence in all phases of military duty and his compassion and consideration for every person under his command.

The best expression of Steve's contribution to this life and to his country is not from a recitation of his commendations and citations, but from the words of two men who knew him. First, from Major Milton F. Davis (USMA 1890) of New York Military Academy, 30 April 1914:

“ . . . Young Stevens has been a cadet here since last September. He is as square, upright, clean, and manly a type of the American boy as one would care to see. If the whole school faculty were to take a vote on whom they considered the finest boy in school—taking into consideration scholastic work and effort, conduct, cheery good nature, athletic ability, in fact, all those qualities which go to make a clean, manly young fellow of eighteen, I think Stevens would carry off the medal. . . . ”

And, second from SFC Thomas J. McCullough in 1953, after duty with the New York National Guard:

Sir, it has been a privilege and a pleasure working for you. From your first day of duty with this organization, you made myself and all others feel as though we were part of a team and made us anxious to do a good job, not through fear of punishment, but because we wanted to do it. There haven't been many times in the Army that I felt like doing overtime work or extra duties without griping to myself about it, but if the occasion ever had arisen and the Colonel had so requested it, it would have been done with pleasure and never a gripe. It has been a privilege to find out that there are officers in the US Army that are, in fact, gentlemen by act and deed and your stay here is the proof of that statement.”

His son, USMA June 1943