



**Robert F. Conley, Brigadier General, USMC**  
(1919 - 1994)

Robert Francis Conley was born April 9, 1919, in Lansing, Michigan. He graduated from Muskingum College, New Concord, Ohio, in 1941, with a BA degree in Economics. He entered flight training at Corpus Christi, Texas, and on June 3, 1942, he completed this training, was commissioned a Marine second lieutenant and designated a Naval aviator.

In 1942, Conley was assigned to Henderson Field, Guadalcanal, where he saw his first combat action as a pilot with Marine Scout Bomber Squadron-142. He also served as the operations officer for that unit. During February 1943, he was reassigned to Headquarters Squadron, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing with Strike Command at Guadalcanal. In November 1943, he was assigned to the Bomber Training Unit, MAG-46 at El Toro (Santa Ana), California.

During January 1945, (the then) Captain Conley was reassigned to Group Headquarters Squadron, where he served as Operations Officer until his transfer in April to MAG-14 as a fighter pilot with the Okinawa based unit, and in September, he joined the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing where he remained until December 1945.

Following completion of the Staff and Tactical School at Quantico, Virginia, in June 1946, he reported to the Marine Air Detachment, NAS Columbus, Ohio, serving as its executive officer until August 1947. Reporting to MCAS Cherry Point., NC, he assumed duties as Group Intelligence Officer and Assistant Operations Officer with MAG-14 from September 5, 1947 until April 1948, when he took command of the Marine Night Fighter Squadron-114. From June 1950 until June 1952, he served as Assistant Head, Aviation Control Unit, Personnel Department at Headquarters Marine Corps.

In Korea, Conley commanded VMF (N)-513, a Marine All-Weather Night Fighter Squadron. On 31 January 1953, less than two weeks after assuming command, while flying an F3D at night escorting a group of medium bombers engaged



in a night attack against enemy installations at Wonsan, he downed his first enemy MIG-15 aircraft. He established radar contact with the enemy aircraft, pressed a swift pursuit through the darkness, visually identified the hostile jet interceptor and maneuvered into attack position to destroy the MIG-15 with a burst of machine-gun fire. He destroyed his second MIG-15 in March 1953. For his heroism in aerial flight and his efforts as CO in pioneering night fighter tactical doctrine, he earned his fourth Distinguished Flying Cross and the Legion of Merit with Combat "V".

Upon his return to the U.S. in 1953, he reported to MAG-15 at El Toro, where he served as Group Operations Officer. During November 1953, he joined Headquarters Squadron, Air, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, for duty as the operations and training officer. He rejoined MAG-15 during November 1954 as Special Projects Officer.

He attended the United Kingdom's Joint Service Staff College, Bucks, Latimer, England from August 1955 until June 1956. Upon graduation, he joined the Staff of the Commander, Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean.

Returning to the U.S., he commanded MABS-32 and later, Marine Fighter Squadron-235 at Beaufort, SC. Flying supersonic F8U Crusader jets, this squadron was the East Coast representative for Marine aviation in the 1959 Navy-Marine Air Gunnery Meet in Yuma, Arizona.

After graduating from the Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, AL., in 1961, he served as Commanding Officer, Marine Air Reserve Training Detachment in Glenview, IL (1961 - 1964).

In July 1965, as Commanding Officer of MAG-11 with headquarters at Atsugi, Japan, Conley deployed the group to the Republic of South Vietnam as one of the first Marine aviation units to begin operations against the insurgent communist forces. He earned a second Legion of Merit with Combat "V" during this assignment.

During December 1965, he reported to Headquarters Marine Corps to serve as the Marine Corps Liaison Officer with the Chief of Naval Operations. Upon completion of this assignment, he was transferred to Cherry Point, for duty as Commander, Marine Corps Air Bases, Eastern Area/Commanding General, Marine Corps Air Station. For his service in this capacity from August 1968 until March 1970, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. He was promoted to the rank of brigadier general. September 1, 1968.

In April 1970, Brigadier General Conley returned to the Republic of South Vietnam where he served as Assistant Wing Commander, First Marine Aircraft Wing until that August when he was reassigned duty as Commanding General, First Marine Aircraft Wing (Rear). In April 1971, he assumed command of the First Marine Aircraft Wing after its headquarters was redeployed from Vietnam to Japan.

Brigadier General Robert F. Conley retired from active duty May 31, 1973 following 32 years of active duty. He saw his last tour serving as Director of Information, Division of Information, Headquarters Marine Corps, from July 1971 until his retirement and earned a gold star in lieu of a fourth Legion of Merit.

Brigadier General Robert F. Conley USMC (Ret.) died on 30 July 1994, in Jacksonville, Florida. Graveside services were held at Arlington National Cemetery on August 4, 1994, with full military honors. Robert Conley married the former Jane Reed, of Houston, PA., June 6, 1942, and they had two sons: Capt. Robert Frank Conley, USMCR, a Naval aviator who was killed in the Vietnam conflict; and LtCol. Christopher Conley, USAF (Ret.). Chris and his wife, Paula, have one daughter, Katy.

A complete list of Brigadier General Conley's medals and decorations include: the Legion of Merit with Combat "V" and three gold stars in lieu of second through fourth awards; the Distinguished Flying Cross with gold stars in lieu of second through fourth awards; the Meritorious Service Medal; the Air Medal with two silver stars and four gold stars in lieu of second through fifteenth awards; the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V" and gold star in lieu of a second award; the Presidential Unit Citation; the Navy Unit Commendation Medal; the American Defense Service Medal; the American Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with six battle stars; the World War II Victory Medal; the Navy Occupation Service Medal with Asia clasp; the National Defense Service Medal with one bronze star; the Korean Service Medal with three bronze stars; the Vietnam Service Medal with one bronze star; the Korean Presidential Unit Citation; the United Nations Service Medal; and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.