

LT. COLONEL REUEL H. PIETZ (1921-2008)

A Featured Veteran from St. Cloud, Minnesota

Lt. Col. Reuel Henry Pietz exemplifies veterans who complete two full, successful careers. Following 23 years of active service as an aviator in the United States Marine Corps, Pietz became a geography professor at St. Cloud State University. He retired as Professor Emeritus after 27 years of teaching.

Beginnings. Pietz was born on June 19, 1921, and raised in Westbrook, Minnesota, by Henry and Martha Pietz. After attending Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, he joined the United States Marine Corps in 1942.

World War Two. Upon graduating from Naval flight training, Pietz began an extensive tenure of service in the USMC across the United States and the Pacific Theater in WWII, the Korean War, and in the early stages of the conflict in Southeast Asia. Pietz's first post was as a fighter pilot with the VMF-111, also known as the "Devil Dogs," in Roi-Namur and Makin, flying F4U Corsairs. At the end of WWII, he served as an operational flight instructor in Florida and married Mary Dierks, a US Navy nurse, in 1945. He decided to stay in the Marine Corps. His responsibilities grew between 1945 and 1952, as a Wing legal officer in China, an aide-de-camp in both California and Guam, and as an adjutant, personnel officer, and photo pilot in North Carolina.

Korea and the Cold War. During the Korean War in 1952, Pietz served as a photo reconnaissance pilot and, in 1953, became the commanding officer for Headquarters Squadron 33 in Korea. With the conclusion of the war, he returned to the United States as an air officer and special weapons officer with the Fleet Marine Pacific Force in Hawaii (1953 to 1955), as executive officer with Marine Aircraft Engineering Squadron 12 in Virginia (1955 to



Pietz in an F4U Corsair in the South Pacific, 1943 or '44.

1958), and as a staff officer with 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing in California (1959 to 1960). In 1960, with war on the horizon in Southeast Asia, Pietz became the commanding officer of Marine Air Control Squadron 4, which served in California, Japan, the Philippines, and Thailand through 1962.

His final post was as commanding officer, Headquarters Squadron 2nd Marine Air Wing in North Carolina from 1963 to 1964. He retired in 1964 as a Lieutenant Colonel after 23 years of service. Among his many awards were two Distinguished Flying Crosses and ten Air Medals.

Academia. Pietz was dedicated to educating himself and those around him. In addition to Gustavus Adolphus College, he attended East Carolina University, University of Hawaii, Chapman College, McGill University, George Washington University, and the University of Minnesota. Upon discharge, he returned to his Minnesota roots and moved to St. Cloud. He then spent 27 years teaching in the geography department at St. Cloud State University before retiring as Professor Emeritus in 1991. His passion for geography extended beyond the classroom to his membership on the Association of American Geographers, the National Council of Geographic Education, president of Minnesota Geographers, and director of the Pierce County Geographical Society.

Reuel Pietz passed away at the age of 87 on September 3, 2008, but not before celebrating 63 years of marriage with Mary, becoming a father to Eric Henry and Pamela Jo, and being admired and respected by many friends and family members and the countless students he taught over a truly expansive career.