

= Pedro del Valle =

Lieutenant General Pedro Augusto del Valle (August 28 , 1893 ? April 28 , 1978) was a United States Marine Corps officer who became the first Hispanic to reach the rank of Lieutenant General . His military career included service in World War I , Haiti and Nicaragua during the Banana Wars of the 1920s , in the seizure of Guadalcanal , and later as Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division during World War II .

= = Early years = =

Del Valle was born on August 28 , 1893 in San Juan , Puerto Rico when the island was still under Spanish colonial rule . He was related to Dr. Francisco del Valle , a surgeon who had served as mayor of San Juan from 1907 to 1910 . In 1900 , two years after the Spanish ? American War , the del Valle family moved to Maryland where they became U.S. citizens (The Jones Act of 1917 later gave United States Citizenship to all Puerto Ricans born on the island) . He received his primary and secondary education in Maryland .

On June 17 , 1911 , after he graduated from high school , del Valle received an appointment by George Radcliffe Colton , who served from 1909 to 1913 as the U.S. appointed governor of Puerto Rico , to attend the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis , Maryland . Del Valle graduated from the academy in June 1915 and was commissioned a second lieutenant of the Marine Corps on June 5 , 1915 .

= = Military career = =

= = = The Banana Wars & pre @-@ World War II = = =

Pedro del Valle helped the Marine Corps in the capture of Santo Domingo , Dominican Republic , in 1916 , for which he was awarded his first Legion of Merit . Del Valle commanded the Marine detachment on board the USS Texas (BB @-@ 35) in the North Atlantic during World War I. In 1919 , he participated in the surrender of the German High Seas Fleet . Later he served as " Aide @-@ de @-@ camp " to Major General Joseph Henry Pendleton after serving on a tour of sea duty aboard the USS Wyoming (BB @-@ 32) . His job included an inspection tour of the West Indies in the company of General Pendleton .

In 1926 , del Valle served with the Gendarmerie of Haiti for three years and , during that time , he also became active in the war against Augusto César Sandino in Nicaragua . In 1929 , he returned to the United States and attended the Field Officers Course at the Marine Corps School in MCB Quantico , Virginia .

In 1931 , Brigadier General Randolph C. Berkeley appointed del Valle to the " Landing Operations Text Board " in Quantico , the first organizational step taken by the Marines to develop a working doctrine for amphibious assault . In 1932 , he wrote an essay titled " Ship @-@ to @-@ Shore in Amphibious Operations " which was published in the Marine Corps Gazette . In his essay , he stressed the importance of a coordinated amphibious assault and of an execution of an opposed landing .

He worked as an intelligence officer in Havana , Cuba in 1933 under Admiral Charles Freeman , following the Cuban Sergeant 's Revolt . From 1935 ? 1937 , del Valle was Assistant Naval Attache , attached to the American Embassy to Italy in Rome . While on duty , del Valle participated as an observer with the Italian Forces during the Second Italo @-@ Abyssinian War . The experiences which del Valle gained as an observer led him to author the book " Roman Eagles Over Ethiopia " where he describes the events leading up to the Italian expedition and the complete movements of combat operations by the Italian Army under Generals De Bono , Badoglio , and Graziani . In 1939 , he was ordered to attend the Army War College in Washington , D.C. and after graduating was named Executive Officer of the Division of Plans and Policies , USMC .

== = World War II = = =

On March 1941 , del Valle became the commanding officer of the 11th Marine Regiment , (artillery) . Upon the outbreak of World War II , del Valle led his regiment and participated in the Guadalcanal Campaign , providing artillery support for the 1st Marine Division . In the Battle of the Tenaru , the firepower provided by del Valle 's artillery units killed many assaulting Japanese soldiers before they ever reached the Marine positions . The attackers were killed almost to the last man . The outcome of the battle was so stunning that the Japanese commander , Colonel Kiyonao Ichiki , committed seppuku shortly afterwards . Major General Alexander Vandegrift , impressed with del Valle 's leadership recommended his promotion and on October 1 , 1942 , del Valle became a brigadier general . Vandegrift retained del Valle as head of the 11th Marines , the only time that the regiment has ever had a general as their commanding officer . In 1943 , he served as Commander of Marine Forces overseeing Guadalcanal , Tulagi , and the Russell and Florida Islands .

On April 1 , 1944 , del Valle , as Commanding General of the Third Corps Artillery , III Marine Amphibious Corps , took part in the Battle of Guam and was awarded an award star in lieu of a second Legion of Merit . The men under his command did such a good job with their heavy artillery that no one man could be singled out for commendation . Instead , each man was given a letter of commendation by del Valle which was carried in their record books .

In late October 1944 , he succeeded Major General William H. Rupertus as Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division , being personally greeted in his new command by Colonel Lewis Burwell " Chesty " Puller . At the time , the 1st Marine Division was training on the island of Pavuvu for the invasion of Okinawa . He subsequently led the division throughout the campaign . Del Valle was awarded a Distinguished Service Medal for his leadership during the battle and the subsequent occupation and reorganization of Okinawa .

== = Post @-@ World War II = = =

After World War II ended , del Valle was ordered back to Headquarters Marine Corps , where he was named Inspector General , a position which he held until he retired on January 1 , 1948 . On February 19 , 1946 New Mexico Senator Dennis Chavez and del Valle held a meeting with President Harry S. Truman in the White House , in which Chavez recommended del Valle for the position of governor of Puerto Rico . From 1898 to 1942 , the governors of the island were officials appointed by the President of the United States . Local Puerto Rican politicians , such as Luis Muñoz Marín , opposed the naming of del Valle in favor of Jesús T. Piñero ; to which Del Valle eventually asked President Truman to withdraw his name among those considered for the position . The first civilian and native Puerto Rican appointed governor of Puerto Rico thus became Piñero in 1946 . If Congress had not approved legislation in 1947 allowing Puerto Ricans to elect their own Governor , del Valle may have been appointed to the governorship .

== = Later years = =

After retiring from the Marine Corps , del Valle worked as a representative of ITT in the company 's office in Cairo , Egypt . After some time with the company he was named president of ITT for all South America in Buenos Aires , Argentina , a position that he held until 1951 .

Believing that the United States was in danger of a communist threat , del Valle tried to convince the Central Intelligence Agency and Department of Defense to form a vigilante minuteman group . He also believed that the CIA should operate behind Russian and Chinese lines . After his ideas were turned down , he decided to form his own group . In 1953 , del Valle met with LtCol John H. Hoffman , LtCol Eugene Cowles Poneroy , Brigadier General Bonner Fellers , and Major General Claire Chennault (USAF) to form the " Defenders of the American Constitution " (DAC) . DAC 's main goal was to purge the United States of any communist influence . The idea behind the group was to organize the citizens in each state as vigilantes against sabotage and other forms of treason

, then link them up in some national headquarters . Del Valle ran for governor of Maryland in 1953 and was defeated in his attempt to be nominated in the Republican primary election . The controversial views shared by some of the members of " DAC " was to blame for the organization 's decline in popularity . On April 12 , 1961 , del Valle invoked The Protocols of the Elders of Zion (an antisemitic hoax) during a speech before the United States Daughters of 1812 , in an attempt to " prove " that Communism and Socialism were introduced to Russia by an " Invisible Government " whose intention was to destroy that country . Del Valle also belonged to a group known as the Sons of Liberty , established in 1967 in Annapolis , Maryland and named after the secret patriotic society which directed the actions of the Boston Tea Party on December 13 , 1773 .

Lieutenant General Pedro del Valle was married to Katharine Nelson (1890 ? 1983) . He died on April 28 , 1978 in Annapolis , Maryland and was buried in the United States Naval Academy Cemetery and Columbarium . After del Valle ' s death at age 85 , the DAC ceased to exist .

= = Written Works by Pedro del Valle = =

Books

Diary and reports of the U.S. naval observer of Italian Operations in East Africa : March 1937 (Washington : Government Printing Office , 1937) .

Roman Eagles Over Ethiopia (Harrisburg , PA : Military service Pub . Co . , 1940) .

Semper fidelis : An autobiography (Hawthorne , CA : Christian Book Club of America , 1976) .

Lieutenant General Pedro A. del Valle , U.S. Marine Corps (retired) (Oral history program) .

Articles

" Guam , the Classical Amphibious Operation " Military Review (1944) .

" Massed Fires on Guam " Marine Corps Gazette (1944) .

= = Awards and recognitions = =

Among Lieutenant General Pedro del Valle 's decorations and medals were the following :