

# George Almy Percy 1895-1970, Harvard Athlete & Decorated Marine Who Served in Both World Wars

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**By Michael Percy - January 1970**

Col. George Almy Percy USMC, retired Wall Street banker, athlete noted as the "Harvard Hercules", First Marshal of the class of 1918, and Marine who served his country in both World Wars, died January 10th in Amityville, NY, age 74, after a long illness.

Mr. Percy was captain of the 1917 Harvard hockey team which won the Intercollegiate Championship. The preceeding year he played right field in every baseball game of the 1916 season with an unmatched 22-3-1 record. That team bested the Red Sox 1-0 in an exhibition game, the same year they won the World Series. While not a large man at 5'8" and 156 pounds, Mr Percy also set the next highest Harvard strength and fitness record tested up to that year. He attributed his fitness to sawing up to a cord of wood at a time for exercise.

Mr. Percy and his two brothers, David Thomas Jr. and Frederick B., enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1917, with Mr. Percy posted to El Paso on the Mexican border in response to Pancho Villa's guerilla raids against the Mexican government. This conflict had resulted in the death of some 30 Americans the previous year. Mr. Percy later spoke of learning to parachute from a balloon with his chute wrapped in newspaper during his 1917 service.

Not content to remain stateside, restricted to the confines of his banking profession, as the United States entered the Second World War, Mr. Percy managed to re-enlist in the Marine Corps as non-combatant paymaster with the rank of Major. While stationed on Guadalcanal, his fitness regimen included jogging on the beach each morning while much of his 3rd Marine Division fellow soldiers were incapacitated by illness. This so impressed his Division Commander, that Major Percy's wish to be transferred to a combat unit was granted. Subsequently he became the only officer over 45 to command a combat battalion on Iwo Jima in the days after the invasion. Suffering a severe wound to his left arm and refusing evacuation, his actions from the 21st of February to the 16th of March 1945, yielded award of the Navy Cross, a commendation for "his indomitable fighting spirit, strategic ability and aggressive leadership which were contributing factors to the final victory, and his exemplary devotion to duty reflects the highest credit on Major Percy and the United States Naval Service."

His life after the war was devoted to his stock brokerage career with Clark, Dodge & Co., then the oldest firm on Wall Street, Marine Corps reunions, his devotion to golf and family, and reputation for walking on his hands for exercise which he continued until age 70. Mr. Percy is survived by four sons from three marriages, and wife Margaret Beauchamp Percy.

presentation of the Navy Cross by Col. John Griebel, Third Marine Corps

