

ENSIGN WILLIAM ROBINSON EVANS, U.S. NAVAL RESERVE (DECEASED)

Ensign Evans was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, on August 11, 1918. He was graduated from Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, in 1940, and on October 14 of that year entered the U. S. Naval Reserve in New York for preliminary flight training at the Naval Reserve Aviation Base there. He was appointed Aviation Cadet January 13, 1941, and continued flight training at the Naval Air Stations, Jacksonville and Miami, Florida. He was commissioned Ensign, USNR, August 8, 1941, and was ordered to active duty with Torpedo Squadron EIGHT, which was later based on the USS HORNET, operating in the Pacific.

Ensign Evans was reported missing in action when the plane of which he was pilot was shot down by the Japanese in the Battle of Midway on June 4, 1942. He was officially presumed dead (in accordance with Section 5 of Public Law 490) a year and a day later.

For heroism on June 4, 1942, Ensign Evans was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross, and is entitled to the Ribbon for, and a facsimile of, the Presidential Unit Citation to Torpedo Squadron EIGHT. The citations follow:

NAVY CROSS:

"For extraordinary heroism and distinguished service beyond the call of duty as a pilot of Torpedo Squadron EIGHT in the 'Air Battle of Midway,' against enemy Japanese forces on June 4, 1942. Grimly aware of the hazardous consequences of flying without fighter protection, and with insufficient fuel to return to his carrier, he, resolutely, and with no thought of his own life, delivered an effective torpedo attack against violent assaults of enemy Japanese aircraft and against an almost solid barrage of antiaircraft fire. His courageous action, carried out with a gallant spirit of self-sacrifice and a conscientious devotion to the fulfillment of his mission, was a determining factor in the defeat of the enemy forces and was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

PUC - TORPEDO SQUADRON EIGHT:

"For extremely heroic and courageous performance in combat during the 'Air Battle of Midway,' June 4, 1942. Flying low without fighter support, Torpedo Squadron EIGHT began the perilous mission, 'Intercept and attack!' First to sight the enemy, the squadron attacked with full striking power against crushing enemy opposition, scoring torpedo hits on Japanese forces. Realizing to a man that insufficient fuel would prevent a return to the carrier, the pilots held doggedly to the target, dropping torpedoes at point-blank range in the face of blasting antiaircraft fire that sent the planes -- one by one, hurtling aflame into the sea. The loss of 29 lives, typifying valor, loyalty, and determination, was the price paid for Torpedo Squadron EIGHT's vital contribution to the eventual success of our forces in this epic battle of the air."

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