HANOVER - Desmond E. Canavan, 92, died March 30 in Hanover, New Hampshire. He was a Colonel in the Marine Corps, a former faculty member and administrator at Dartmouth College, and a resident of Hanover for the past 47 years.

He was born in West Sound, Orcas Island, Washington, February 3, 1913, the son of Earl Thomas Canavan and Meta Pearmain Canavan.

A 1935 graduate of the University of Washington, Des Canavan enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, where he was an aviation pioneer. He flew more than 100 different aircraft in the course of his career, was the first Marine aviator to fly a helicopter (the experimental Sikorsky XNH in March, 1944), and also the first Marine aviator to fly a jet aircraft (Bell XP59 on July 16, 1944). He participated in the military history of World War II, beginning with the attack on Pearl Harbor when he was Officer of the Day at Ewa Field, Hawaii. He saw action in most major battles of the Pacific, including Midway, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. He was awarded the Air Medal and the Bronze Star with Combat "V" for meritorious service. At the end of the war, he transported a small military surrender party into North China where the Japanese fighting in remote areas had to have proof from their leaders that the war was indeed over. Upon landing in Tientsin, he found more than 100 British prisoners of war. He had the seats of the airplane removed so that he could evacuate them all to safety in Shanghai, where they could receive medical care. During his lengthy Marine Corps career, he was the Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Facility in Edenton, North Carolina, Commanding Officer of MAG-12 and the airfield K-6 in Korea, and the Operations Officer at the Marine Corps Air Station at El Toro, California.

In 1958, Colonel Canavan was transferred to Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire where he was Professor of Naval Science and the Commanding Officer of the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps program. As the ranking military officer in the area, he was asked to create a contingency plan for civil defense. He earned a master's degree in psychology at Dartmouth while heading the Navy ROTC.

Upon retiring from the Marine Corps in 1962, Colonel Canavan became the Assistant Dean and Executive Officer of Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth. He served as placement officer helping students find jobs, as admissions officer for graduate students, as counselor to foreign students, and as the budget officer, as well as serving as liaison between the dean and the overseers. He retired in 1978, and became an active volunteer at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center.

In addition to his great love of flying, Des Canavan was an ardent fly fisherman all his life. He fished the waters of the United States, Quebec, Labrador, and Scotland, and passed on that love of fishing to family and friends. He was a member of the Norford Lake Club in Vermont and the St. Bernard Fish and Game Club in St. Alexis des Monts in the province of Quebec.

He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Marie O'Keefe Canavan, whom he first met when he was a lifeguard at Seward Park in Seattle at age 17, and his children: Kathleen Martin of Grantham, New Hampshire; Nancy Heslop of Akron, Ohio; and Patrick Canavan of Brooklyn, New York; grandchildren: William Canavan Martin of Hanover, New Hampshire; Laura Zentmaier of Far Hills, New Jersey; Heather Licata of Akron, Ohio, and Elizabeth Shumake of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina; and great grandchildren: Caitlin, Des, and Ross Martin; Kayla and Marti Zentmaier; and Jack and Caroline Licata. He was predeceased by a daughter Susan in 1941 and by his brothers Rolland and Leonard.

Colonel Canavan requested that there be a family gathering, but no public memorial service. A reception for friends will be hosted by his children on Sunday, April 3 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Hayward Lounge at the Hanover Inn. The Dartmouth College flag has been lowered to half-staff to recognize him as a senior officer emeritus of the institution. Memorial donations may be made to the Howe Library in Hanover or the Pediatric Diabetes Research Fund at the Dartmouth Medical School.

Arrangements are by Rand-Wilson Funeral Home in Hanover.