

## James Dyce Alger 1912 - 1970

### Early Years

James Dyce Alger, known as Jim, was born to Constance Grant Dyce and James Herman Alger, residents of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, on March 12, 1912 in Goddard Hospital in Brockton, Massachusetts. The family lived in Bridgewater for a period of time. 1920 census records place the family in Androscoggin, Maine. As of 1930, census records show that Jim and his mother were living in Bethel, Maine, and that Constance was a widow. Jim attended the Gould Academy in Bethel, a private college preparatory high school, graduating in 1930. He had decided on a career in the military because, after high school graduation, he spent an extra year at Swavely Preparatory School in Manassas, Virginia, a school that specialized in preparing young men to enter one of the two service academies. Jim gained admission to the United States Military Academy at West Point, graduating in 1935.



*West Point Cadet*

### Military Life



*James and Consuelo*

The newly minted Second Lieutenant Alger was sent to Fort Bliss, Texas, where he was assigned to Troop E, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. He remained there until June 1938, when he was transferred to Fort Stotsenburg in the Philippines, north of Manila, home of the 26<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, known as the Philippine Scouts. While in the Philippines, now First Lieutenant Alger met Consuelo Zobel de Ayala y Montojo, daughter of a prominent and wealthy Philippine business family. They married in 1940.

Meanwhile, back in the United States, on July 15, 1940 the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division was formed at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Jim Alger was sent back to the United States assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division. By 1942 he was commanding the 2d Battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Regiment. On May 11, 1942, the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division sailed to Northern Ireland to train on the Irish moors. On October 29, 1942, the division sailed to England for transport to North Africa. The division was part of Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of French North Africa, which began on November 8, 1942. The division advanced toward Tunisia, and in January 1943 was given the mission of defending central Tunisia. On February 14, 1943 the battle for the Kasserine Pass began. Jim, who was now a Lieutenant Colonel, was captured on the first day of battle, together with fellow LTC John Knight Waters. They arrived



*1943 Portrait*

together at Oflag 64 on June 6, 1943, the first group of prisoners to enter the Oflag. They were bunk mates and became lifelong friends.

### **Oflag 64 and Escape**

LTC Alger quickly involved himself in MIS-X (Military Intelligence Service – X), a top-secret program created in October 1942 to help prisoners escape and avoid recapture. By the end of 1944 Jim was staff position S2, Intelligence and Security, for Oflag 64. He was a member of the MIS-X committee, and also a CU, a code user. He had learned the simple letter code created by MIS-X. The code was used by the military to keep in touch with prisoner of war camps and also to track special packages sent to the camps under the program. All the special packages were given to LTC Alger or LTC Waters. These packages contained items such as maps, guns, and radio parts.

On January 21, 1945, Jim began Long March with his fellow prisoners. However, his march ended earlier than most. On February 12, 1945, the prisoners arrived in Swinemunde and slept in various spaces in the Kriegsmarine barracks there. The next morning, when the march resumed:

*...there was the matter of four of our people managing to disappear. Lt Col Alger was the leader of a successful escape, still a well-guarded secret. Possibly Kriegsmarine or German medical people participated. Probably the group was in Sweden by morning. (Clarence R. Meltesen, Roads to Liberation from Oflag 64, 3d edition, p 173)*

### **Return Home**

In May 1945 Jim returned to the United States. 1945 to 1950 apparently were busy and varied years for him. He attended the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. On July 15, 1947, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division was reactivated at Fort Knox, Kentucky, as a training unit. Jim became a Regimental Commander. He also acted as United States Liaison Officer to the British Fighting Vehicle Research and Development Establishment based in Chertsey, Surrey, England.

Meanwhile, on October 24, 1945, the United Nations was established. On July 26, 1947, the National Security Act of 1947, followed by amendments in 1949, reorganized the United States military and created the Department of Defense, headed by a civilian Secretary of Defense. Jim served on the United Nations Military Staff Committee and under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, created to advise the Secretary of Defense.

## Further Assignments

From 1950 to 1953 Jim served in the Korean Conflict, first as Chief of Staff, 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and then as Chief of Staff of the Korean Military Advisory Group. In the latter position he was credited with the Third Korean Winter and Korean Summer and Fall 1953 campaigns.

In 1954 Jim became Chief of Staff, 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, Fort Hood, Texas. His next assignment took him to Washington, District of Columbia, assigned to the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Army General Staff. In 1957 he returned to Germany as Assistant Division Commander, 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division, headquartered at Drake Kaserne in Frankfurt. He was promoted to Brigadier General in August 1957. In June 1959 he became Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans and Training, Allied Force Command, providing advice to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on military matters.



*General James Dyce Alger*

General Alger returned to the United States to assume command of the United States Army II Corps, headquartered at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, on July 1 1961. An Army Corps Commander is typically a Lieutenant General, so Jim had probably been promoted by this time. On May 6, 1963 he became Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, Department of the Army and on July 2, 1964, Commander, United States Army Forces Southern Command, Canal Zone, Panama. LTG Alger's final appointment prior to retirement, from August 1, 1967 to July 31, 1970 was Chair of the Inter-American Defense

Board, an organization dedicated to the common defense and security issues of North, South and Central America. On July 31, 1970 James Dyce Alger retired from the United States Army with the rank of Lieutenant General.

After retirement Jim was active in business until his death on May 19, 1986, in Honolulu, Hawaii. He was buried at the National Memorial Military Cemetery of the Pacific, Honolulu, Hawaii.



## Decorations and Awards

### UNITED STATES

- Distinguished Service Medal (Oak Leaf Cluster) Citations attached
- Legion of Merit (Oak Leaf Cluster)
- Bronze Star Medal (Oak Leaf Cluster)
- Joint Service Commendation Medal
- Army Commendation Medal
- Purple Heart
- American Defense Service Medal

- American Campaign Medal
- European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal
- World War II Victory Medal
- National Defense Service Medal (Oak Leaf Cluster)
- Korean Service Medal
- United Nations Service Medal

## FOREIGN

- ULCHI Distinguished Service Medal (Korea) (Oak Leaf Cluster)
- Philippine Legion of Honor
- Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation Badge
- Medalla Conmemoración de la Operación Ayacucho/Presidente de Comando Conjunto de la Fuerza Armada (Peru)
- Military Order of Ayacuchu, Grade of Great Cross, Republic of Peru
- Military Order of Ayacuchu, Grade of Grand Officer, Republic of Peru
- Order of Military Merit, Degree of Great Officer, Republic of Brazil
- National Order of Vasco Nunez de Balboa, Republic of Panama
- Cross of the Venezuelan Ground Forces, First Class, Republic of Venezuela
- Grand Star of Military Merit, Republic of Chile

## **Sources**

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Biographical Sketch: Lieutenant General James Dyce Alger, Oflag 64 Archives

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Roads to Liberation from Oflag 64, Clarence R. Meltesen, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

MIS-X and PO Box 1142 Reported by Royal Lee, Oflag 64 Archives

Royal Lee – MIS-X Project, Oflag 64 Archives

1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division World War 2 Combat Chronicles

<https://history.army.mil/html/forcestruc/cbtchron/cc/001ad.htm>

Military photos, gravestone photo: [findagrave.com/memorial/376810/james-dyce-alger](http://findagrave.com/memorial/376810/james-dyce-alger)

Alger Portrait: Oflag 64 Remembered files

*Biography written by Kriegy Research Group writer Anne M. Trujillo*