

**Arlington National Cemetery Website**

## Lewis William Walt

General, United States Marine Corps



### Courtesy of the United States Marine Corps

GENERAL LEWIS W. WALT, USMC (DECEASED)



General Lewis W. Walt, who led Marines during three wars, died 26 March 1989 in Gulfport, Mississippi. General Walt earned numerous personal awards during his more than 34 years as a Marine officer. These included two Navy Crosses and the Silver Star Medal during World War II; a Legion of Merit and Bronze Star Medal in the Korean war; the Distinguished Service Medal in Vietnam, and a Gold Star in lieu of a second Distinguished Service Medal as Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1 January 1968 until 1 February 1971.

Lewis William Walt was born 16 February 1913, in Wabaunsee County, Kansas. He graduated from high school in Fort Collins, Colorado, then entered Colorado State University, and was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry upon graduation in 1936. Highlights of his student activities include: honor graduate, President of Student Body and Student Council, Captain of football team and wrestling team, Cadet Colonel of the ROTC, President of chemistry club and Captain of Scabbard and Blade. He enlisted in the Colorado National Guard at the age of 17. Upon graduation he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Army Field Artillery Reserve, but resigned that commission to accept an appointment as a Marine Second Lieutenant, 6 July 1936.

Lieutenant Walt completed Basic School at Philadelphia, and in April 1937 was assigned to the 6th Marine Regiment in San Diego, California, as a machine gun platoon leader. Embarking for China in August 1937, he took part in the defense of the International Settlement of Shanghai until February 1938, at which time he returned to San Diego. In June 1939, he began his second tour of overseas duty when he was assigned to the Marine Barracks, Guam, Mariana Islands. He was promoted to First Lieutenant in October 1939.

Returning to the United States in June 1941, shortly before his country's entry into World War II, Lieutenant Walt was assigned as a company commander in the Office Candidates' Class, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia. He was promoted to Captain in December 1941.

Early in 1942, Captain Walt volunteered to join the 1st Marine Raider Battalion, and in April 1942 arrived with the battalion on Samoa. On 7 August 1942, as commander of Company A, 1st Raider Battalion, he landed his company in the assault on Tulagi Island in the British Solomon Islands. He was awarded the Silver Star Medal for conspicuous gallantry during this landing. Following this action, he joined the 5th Marines on Guadalcanal where he took part in combat as Commanding Officer of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines. He was promoted to Major in September 1942.

In October 1942, as Battalion Commander, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division, Major Walt was wounded in action but continued in combat. On 22 December 1942, he was spot promoted to Lieutenant Colonel for distinguished leadership and gallantry in action during the Guadalcanal campaign.

In December 1943, following hospitalization and training in Australia, Lieutenant Colonel Walt led the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, in the assault at Cape Gloucester, New Britain, and shortly thereafter was assigned as Regimental Executive Officer. In the middle of this campaign he was ordered to take over



command of the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, during the intense battle for Aogiri Ridge. During this action, he earned his first Navy Cross and Aogiri Ridge was named "Walt Ridge" in his honor by General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., 1st Marine Division Commander.

Departing Cape Gloucester in late February 1944, Lieutenant Colonel Walt was ordered to the Naval Hospital, Oakland, California, for treatment of wounds and malaria. In June 1944, he returned to the Pacific area. That September, he landed at Peleliu as Regimental Executive Officer, 5th Marines. On D-day he was again ordered to take over command of the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, in the midst of the battle for the beachhead, when the Commanding Officer and Executive Officer were both killed. His second Navy Cross was awarded to him for gallantry this action.

In November 1944, Lieutenant Colonel Walt returned to the United States, and the following month assumed duty at Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, as Chief of the Officer Candidates' School Tactics Section.

Assigned to Camp Pendleton in January 1947, Lieutenant Colonel Walt served as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, 3d Marine Brigade, and then as G-3, 1st Marine Division. In November 1947, he assumed duty as Operations and Training Officer, 1st Provisional Marine Brigade on Guam, and later served as Chief of Staff of that organization from February to April 1949. Returning to Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, in May 1949, he saw duty as a battalion commander with the Special Training Regiment; and in September, he entered the Amphibious Warfare School, Senior Course. On completing the course in June 1950, he remained at Marine Corps Schools to serve as Chief of Tactics Section, S-3, and finally, Executive Officer, The Basic School. He was promoted to Colonel in November 1951.

Colonel Walt was ordered to Korea in November 1952. He was in combat with the 1st Marine Division until August 1953, serving consecutively as Commanding Officer, 5th Marines, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, and Chief of Staff of the Division. The Legion of Merit and Bronze Star Medal, both with Combat "V", were awarded to him for exceptionally meritorious service during this assignment. The Republic of Korea government also awarded Colonel Walt the Ulchi Medal and the Ulchi Medal with Silver Star for this period of combat.

On arrival at Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, in August 1953, Colonel Walt saw duty as Director, Advanced Base Problem Section, Marine Corps Educational Center, through May 1954, followed by duty as Commanding Officer, Officers' Basic School, until August 1956. He also served as a Member of the Advanced Research Group, Marine Corps Educational Center, until June 1957.

Transferred to Washington, D.C., Colonel Walt served as Assistant Director of Personnel until August 1959, then entered the National War College, Washington, D.C.. He completed the course in June 1960.

In July 1960, Colonel Walt began a one-year assignment as Marine Corps Representative on the Joint Advanced Study Group of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Upon completing this assignment, he was promoted to Brigadier General and reported for duty at Camp Lejeune as Assistant Division Commander, 2d Marine Division.

In September 1962, General Walt returned to Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, serving as Director of the Marine Corps Landing Force Development Center there until May 1965. That same month, he was promoted to Major General, and in June 1965 assumed command of III Marine Amphibious Force and 3d Marine Division in Vietnam. He was also Chief of Naval Forces, Vietnam and Senior Advisor, I Corps and I Corps Coordinator, Republic of Vietnam.

Ten months later, General Walt was nominated for Lieutenant General by President Lyndon B. Johnson, and his promotion was approved by the Senate 7 March 1966. He continued in Vietnam as Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force, and Senior Advisor, I Corps and I Corps Coordinator, Republic of Vietnam. During this period, General Walt was awarded his first Distinguished Service Medal. In addition, the Vietnamese government awarded General Walt the Vietnamese National Order, 3d Class; the Vietnamese National Order, 4th Class; the Gallantry Cross with Palm; the Chuong My Medal, and the Vietnamese Armed Forces Meritorious Unit Citation of Gallantry Cross with Palm. He was also awarded the senior Ulchi Medal by the Government of South Korea.

Upon his return to the United States, General Walt saw duty from June 1967 until the following December as Deputy Chief of Staff (Manpower)/Director of Personnel, at Headquarters Marine



Corps. On 1 January 1968, he was designated Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

In April 1969, the Senate passed and sent to the White House a bill to make the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps general when the active duty strength of the Corps exceeds 200,000. On May 5, President Richard M. Nixon signed the bill, and General Walt was promoted to four-star rank on 2 June 1969, thus becoming the first Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps to attain that rank. He retired from active duty on 1 February 1971.

While visiting the Taiwan Defense Command in April 1970, General Walt was presented the Cloud and Banner with Grand Cordon, by General Kao Kuei-yuan of the Republic of China. Presented by the Chief of the General Staff, the citation recognized the Assistant Commandant's "exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service to the Chinese Marine Corps." The citation noted that General Walt had "contributed immensely in the furtherance of military cooperation and traditional friendship between the United States of America and the Republic of China."

A complete list of his medals and decorations includes: two Navy Crosses; two Distinguished Service Medals; the Silver Star Medal; the Legion of Merit with Combat "V"; the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V"; the Purple Heart; the Presidential Unit Citation with one bronze star indicative of a second award; the Navy Unit Commendation; the China Service Medal; the American Defense Service Medal with base clasp; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with four bronze stars; the American Campaign Medal; the World War II Victory Medal; the Navy Occupation Service Medal with Asia-clasp; the National Defense Service Medal with one bronze star; the Korean Service Medal with two bronze stars; the Vietnam Service Medal with four bronze stars; the United Nations Service Medal; the Korean Presidential Unit Citation; four awards from the Republic of Korea - the Ulchi Medal with Neck Band and Breast Plate; the Ulchi Medal with Silver Star; the Ulchi Medal; the Korean Order of Service Merit, Second Class; the Vietnamese National Order, 3d Class; the Vietnamese National Order, 4th Class, the Gallantry Cross with Palm; the Choung My Medal; the Chinese Order of Cloud and Banner with Grand Cordon; the Vietnamese Armed Forces Meritorious Unit Citation of Gallantry Cross with Palm; and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

Residing in Orlando, Fla., the former Marine continued to speak out on national security affairs. He was the author of three books: *Strange War, Strange Strategy*; *America Faces Defeat*; *The Eleventh Hour*, and wrote numerous articles for military journals and served on President Gerald R. Ford's Clemency Board.

After a long illness, on Easter Sunday 1989, General Lew Walt passed away. The "Marine's Marine" was laid to rest with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery, as taps echoed through the Virginia countryside. With his death, an era in the Marine Corps died also. To those Marines who served with him in Vietnam, there would never be another "Uncle Lew."

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