

1           **LIEUTENANT GENERAL LEWIS B. PULLER,**  
2   **USMC**

3           **NAMESAKE OF USS LEWIS B. PULLER (FFG 23)**

4   Lieutenant General Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller was a colorful veteran  
5   of the Korean War, four World War II campaigns, and expeditionary  
6   service in China, Nicaragua, and Haiti. He was the only Marine to  
7   win the Navy Cross five times for heroism and gallantry in combat.

8   A Marine officer and enlisted man for 37 years, General Puller  
9   served at sea or overseas for all but ten of those years, including a  
10   hitch as commander of the "Horse Marines" in China. Excluding  
11   medals from foreign governments, he won a total of 14 personal  
12   decorations in combat, plus a long list of campaign medals, unit  
13   citation ribbons and other awards. In addition to the Navy Crosses,  
14   the highest honor the Navy can bestow, he holds its Army  
15   equivalent, the Distinguished Service Cross.

16   Born 26 June 1898, at West Point, Virginia, the general attended  
17   Virginia Military Institute until enlisting in the Marine Corps in  
18   August 1918. He was appointed a Marine Reserve second lieutenant  
19   16 June 1919, but due to force reductions after World War I, was  
20   placed on inactive duty ten days later. He rejoined the Marines as an  
21   enlisted man to serve with the Gendarmerie d'Haiti, a military force  
22   in that country under a treaty with the United States. Most of its  
23   officers were U. S. Marines, while its enlisted personnel were  
24   Haitians.

25   After almost five years in Haiti, where he saw frequent action against  
26   the Caco rebels, Puller returned in March 1924 to the United States.  
27   He was commissioned a Marine second lieutenant that same month,  
28   and during the next two years, served at the Marine Barracks,  
29   Norfolk, Virginia, completed the Basic School at Philadelphia,  
30   Pennsylvania, and served with the 10th Marine Regiment at  
31   Quantico, Virginia.

32   In July of 1926, Puller embarked for a two-year tour of duty at the  
33   Marine Barracks, Pearl Harbor. Returning in June 1928, he served in  
34   San Diego, California, until he joined the Nicaraguan National

35 Guard Detachment that December. After winning his first Navy  
36 Cross in Nicaragua, he returned to the United States in July 1931 to  
37 enter the Company Officers Course at the Army Infantry School,  
38 Fort Benning, Georgia. He completed the course in June 1932 and  
39 returned to Nicaragua the following month to begin the tour of duty  
40 that brought him a second Navy Cross.

41 In January 1933, Puller left Nicaragua for the United States. A  
42 month later he sailed from San Francisco to join the Marine  
43 Detachment of the American Legation at Peiping, China. There, in  
44 addition to other duties, he commanded the famed "Horse Marines."  
45 Without coming back to the United States, he began a tour of sea  
46 duty in USS AUGUSTA of the Asiatic Fleet. In June 1936 he  
47 returned to the United States to become an instructor in the Basic  
48 School at Philadelphia. He left there in May 1939 to serve another  
49 year as commander of the AUGUSTA's Marine Detachment, and  
50 from that cruiser, joined the 4th Marine Regiment at Shanghai,  
51 China, in May 1940.

52 After serving as a battalion executive and commanding officer with  
53 the 4th Marines, Puller sailed for the United States in August 1941.  
54 In September, he took command of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines,  
55 1st Marine Division, at Camp Lejeune. That Regiment was detached  
56 from the 1st Division in March 1942 and the following month, as  
57 part of the 3rd Marine Brigade, sailed for the Pacific theater. The 7th  
58 Regiment rejoined the 1st Marine Division in September 1942, and  
59 Puller, still commanding its 1st Battalion, went on to win his third  
60 Navy Cross at Guadalcanal.

61 The action that brought him that medal occurred on the night of  
62 October 24-25 1942. For a desperate three hours his battalion,  
63 stretched over a mile-long front, was the only defense between vital  
64 Henderson Airfield and a regiment of seasoned Japanese troops. In  
65 pouring jungle rain the Japanese smashed repeatedly at his thin line,  
66 as General Puller moved up and down its length to encourage his  
67 men and direct the defense. After reinforcements arrived, he  
68 commanded the augmented force until late the next afternoon. The  
69 defending Marines suffered less than 70 casualties in the engagement  
70 while 1400 of the enemy were killed and 17 truckloads of Japanese  
71 equipment were recovered by the Americans.

72 After Guadalcanal, Puller became executive officer of the 7th  
73 Marines. He was fighting in that capacity when he won his fourth  
74 Navy Cross at Cape Gloucester in January 1944. There, when the  
75 commanders of the two battalions were wounded, he took over their  
76 units and moved through heavy machine-gun and mortar fire to  
77 reorganize them for attack, then led them in taking a strongly fortified  
78 enemy position.

79 In February 1944, Puller took command of the 1st Marines at Cape  
80 Gloucester. After leading that regiment for the remainder of the  
81 campaign, he sailed with it for the Russell Islands in April 1944. He  
82 went on to command it at Peleliu in September and October 1944.  
83 He returned to the United States in November 1944, named  
84 executive officer of the Infantry Training Regiment at Camp Lejeune  
85 in January 1945, and took command of that regiment the next month.

86 In August 1946, Puller became Director of the 8th Marine Corps  
87 Reserve District, with headquarters at New Orleans, Louisiana. After  
88 that assignment, he commanded the Marine Barracks at Pearl Harbor  
89 until August 1950, when he arrived at Camp Pendleton, California,  
90 to re-establish and take command of the 1st Marines, the same  
91 regiment he had led at Cape Gloucester and Peleliu.

92 Landing with the 1st Marines at Inchon, Korea, in September 1950,  
93 he continued to head that regiment until January 1951, when he was  
94 promoted to brigadier general and named Assistant Commander of  
95 the 1st Marine Division. That May he returned to Camp Pendleton to  
96 command the newly reactivated 3rd Marine Division in January  
97 1952. After that, he was assistant at division commander until he  
98 took over the Troop Training Unit, Pacific, at Coronado, California,  
99 that June. He was promoted to major general in September 1953,  
100 and in July 1954, assumed command of the 2nd Marine Division at  
101 Camp Lejeune. Despite his illness, he retained that command until  
102 February 1955, when he was appointed Deputy Camp Commander.  
103 He served in that capacity until August, when he entered the U. S.  
104 Naval Hospital at Camp Lejeune prior to retirement.

105 In 1966, General Puller requested to return to active duty to serve in  
106 Vietnam, but was turned down because of his age. He died 11  
107 October 1971 in Hampton, Virginia, after a long illness. He was 73.