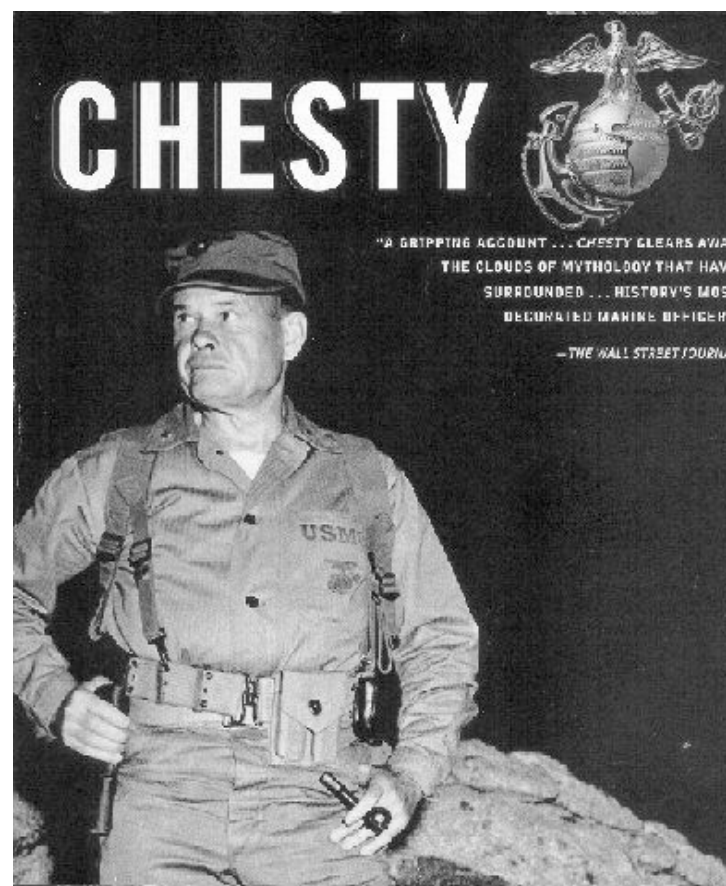


LIEUTENANT GENERAL LEWIS B. PULLER

United States
Marine Corps



Service

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

Decorated Hero

- A Marine officer and enlisted man for 37 years, General Puller served at sea or overseas for all but ten of those years.
- Excluding medals from foreign governments, he won a total of 14 personal decorations in combat, plus a long list of campaign medals, unit citation ribbons and other awards.
- In addition to the Navy Crosses, the highest honor the Navy can bestow, he holds its Army equivalent, the Distinguished Service Cross.

Early Life

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

Early career

After almost five years in Haiti, Puller returned in March 1924 to the United States. He was commissioned a Marine second lieutenant, and during the next two years, served at the Marine Barracks, Norfolk, Virginia, completed the Basic School and served with the 10th Marine Regiment at Quantico, Virginia.

He earns his first two Navy Crosses

- In July of 1926, Puller embarked for a two-year tour at Pearl Harbor. He also served in the Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment that December.
- After winning his first Navy Cross in Nicaragua, he returned to the U.S. in July 1931 to enter the Company Officer's Course. He then returned to Nicaragua to begin the tour of duty that brought him a second Navy Cross.

Service in China

- In January 1933, Puller left Nicaragua for the United States.
- A month later he sailed from San Francisco to join the Marine Detachment at Peiping, China.
- In May 1939 he served another year as commander of the AUGUSTA's Marine Detachment, and later the 4th Marine Regiment at Shanghai, China, in May 1940

Puller Earns his 3rd Navy Cross as WW2 Escalates

After serving as a battalion XO and CO with the 4th Marines, Puller sailed for the US in August 1941. In September, he took command of the 1st Bn, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division, at Camp Lejeune. That Regiment was detached from the 1st Division in March 1942 and the following month, as part of the 3rd Marine Brigade, sailed for the Pacific theater. The 7th Regiment rejoined the 1st Marine Division in September 1942, and Puller, still commanding its 1st Battalion, went on to earn his third Navy Cross at Guadalcanal.

The Heroic Spirit

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

Yet another Navy Cross

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

Further service in World War 2

In February 1944, Puller took command of the 1st Marines at Cape Gloucester and sailed with them for the Russell Islands in April 1944. He went on to command them at Peleliu in September and October 1944. He returned to the US in November 1944, was named XO and later CO of the Infantry Training Regiment at Camp Lejeune.

Service 'til the end

- Puller landed with the 1st Marines at Inchon, Korea, in September 1950, and continued to head that regiment until January 1951, when he was promoted to brigadier general and named Assistant Commander of the 1st Marine Division.
- He was promoted to major general in September 1953, and in July 1954, assumed command of the 2nd Marine Division at Camp Lejeune.
- Despite a serious illness, he retained that command until February 1955, when he was appointed Deputy Camp Commander. He served in that capacity until August, when he entered the U. S. Naval Hospital at Camp Lejeune prior to retirement.

Death

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