

General Clifton B. Cates, present Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, as a colonel, commanded the First Marine Regiment in the initial assault on Guadalcanal and led the Fourth Marine Division through the seizure of Tinian and the battle for Iwo Jima during World War II, and following the war served as Commanding General, Marine Barracks, Quantico, Virginia.

For his outstanding achievements in a position of great responsibility as Commanding General of the Fourth Marine Division, prior to and during the Iwo Jima Operation, from February 10 to March 20, 1945, General Cates was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of a second Distinguished Service Medal. His citation reads in part, "A bold tactician, he landed his force on the southeast shore of the island against heavy enemy resistance and, defying the terrific continuous bombardment laid down by enemy guns located strategically on high ground which afforded direct observation and complete coverage of his entire zone of action, pushed his relentless advance...through the shifting volcanic sands."

"Repeatedly disregarding his own personal safety, Major General Cates traversed his own front lines daily to rally his tired, depleted units and by his undaunted valor, tenacious perseverance, and staunch leadership in the face of overwhelming odds, constantly inspired his stouthearted Marine to heroic effort during critical phases of the campaign."

General Cates was born August 31, 1893, in Tiptonville, Tennessee. A graduate of the University of Tennessee, he reported for active duty in the Marine Corps as a second lieutenant on June 13, 1917, at the Marine Barracks, Port Royal, South Carolina.

He sailed for France in January, 1918. As a member of the Sixth Marine Regiment he participated in the Aisne-Marne Defensive (Chateau Thierry) where he was both gassed and wounded, and in the Aisne-Marne Offensive (Soissons) where he was wounded for the second time. He also took part in the St. Mihiel Offensive, the Meuse-Argonne Offensive (Champagne), and the Meuse-Argonne Offensive (Argonne Forest).

He was a member of the Army of Occupation in Germany following which he sailed for home in September, 1919.

He was awarded the Navy Cross for bravery in the Aisne-Marne Defensive (Chateau Thierry) where on June 6, 1918, while advancing on the town of Bouresches, he led his command on to the objective "despite the fact that he was rendered temporarily unconscious by a bullet striking his helmet. Exposing himself to extreme hazard,

he reorganized his position with but a handful of men."

In addition, the General was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Croix de Guerre with two Palms and a Gold Star, and was twice cited in the general orders of the Second Division, AEF, and once by the Commanding General, AEF.

Upon return to the States he was successively assigned duties as Aide-de-Camp to the Major General Commandant and Aide at the White House to President Woodrow Wilson and the Commanding General, Department of Pacific, San Francisco.

In 1923, he went to sea as Commanding Officer of the Marine Detachment aboard the USS CALIFORNIA, following which he was stationed at the Marine Corps Base, San Diego, California, with the Fourth Marine Regiment.

After recruiting duty at Spokane, Washington, and Omaha, Nebraska and a year with the American Battle Monuments Commission in Washington, D. C., the General went to foreign shore duty in July, 1929, for three years at Shanghai, China, with the Fourth Marine Regiment.

In July, 1932, he was assigned as a student at the Army Industrial College, Washington, D. C., and upon completion of the course joined the Seventh Regiment. In September, 1934, he became student in the Senior Course, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia, and upon graduation was ordered to Headquarters Marine Corps, where he assumed duties with the War Plans Section, Division of Operations and Training.

General Cates again went to foreign shore duty in August of 1937 when he sailed with the Sixth Marine Regiment for Shanghai, China, as Commanding Officer of the Second Battalion. He joined the Fourth Marine Regiment in March, 1938.

Upon return to the States in 1939, he attended a course of instruction at the Army War College, Washington, D. C., and upon graduation was appointed Director, Basic School, Marine Barracks, Philadelphia.

In May, 1942, following this country's entrance into World War II, General Cates became Commanding Officer of the First Marine Regiment, and as part of the First Marine Division, Reinforced, led the regiment in the seizure and defense of Guadalcanal from August 7, to December 22, 1942. For outstanding leadership in this capacity, he was awarded the Legion of Merit.

Returning to the States, he became Commandant, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia, which position he held until returning to the Pacific to become Commanding General of the Fourth Marine Division in the final days of the battle for Saipan.

He proceeded to lead the Division in the seizure of Tinian Island in July, 1944, and continued on as Commanding General through the Iwo Jima Operation. For his part in these two operations, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and Gold Star in lieu of a second Distinguished Service Medal.

In December, 1945, he was ordered back to this country and given duties as President of the Marine Corps Equipment Board, which position he held until assigned as Commanding General, Marine Barracks, Quantico, Virginia, in June, 1946.

In addition to the Navy Cross, Distinguished Service Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, Distinguished Service Medal with Gold Star, Legion of Merit, and Croix de Guerre with two Palms and Gold Star, his decorations and medals include the Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, France 1918; Purple Heart Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, France, 1918; Presidential Unit Citation with two Bronze Stars, Guadalcanal 1942, Tinian 1944; Navy Unit Commendation Medal for Iwo Jima 1945; Victory Medal with Aisne, Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, the Meuse-Argonne and Defensive Sector Clasps; Army of Occupation Medal (Germany); Expeditionary Medal, China 1929-1931; Yangtze Service Medal, Shanghai, 1930-1931; China Service Medal, China 1937-1939; American Defense Service Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal with five Bronze Stars; American Area Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal; Legion of Honor, France, 1919; Commander in the Order of the Orange of Nassau with crossed swords, Netherlands, 1943-1944; and the Fourragere, France, 1918.

The General served as Commanding General, Marine Barracks, Quantico, Virginia, with additional duty as Commandant, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia, until December 31, 1947, when, with the rank of General he relieved General A.A. Vandergrift as Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps.

U.S. Marine Corps biography
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