

Four Legendary Leaders Honored With Their Own Stamps

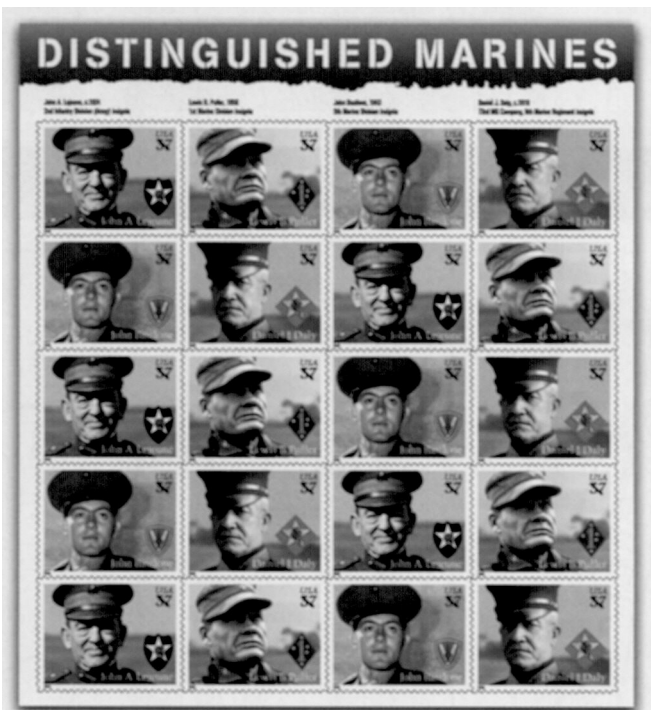
Story by R. R. Keene · Artwork courtesy of USPS

The long-awaited Distinguished Marines stamps will be officially unveiled and placed on sale at U.S. post offices and businesses across the country this month.

The United States Postal Service and the Marine Corps will host a First Day of Issuance Stamp Ceremony to honor four legendary Marines on Nov. 10, the Corps' 230th anniversary, at Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., and Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

According to Mark Saunders, USPS media relations, the stamps themselves will be printed only once and will be available for one year after being issued. "Individuals may purchase the stamps at post offices across the United States on [that] day. However, only two cities will be 'first day of issue' sites. Any post office in Washington, D.C., and the post office at Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton ... are first day of issue sites. Appropriate first day of issue postmarks will be available at these post offices."

The ceremony at 8th and "I" in Washington, hosted by Postmaster General John E. Potter and the newly appointed Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Robert Magnus, will take place at 1 p.m., Nov. 10. It will feature elements of the United States Marine Band, U.S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps and Si-



lent Drill Platoon, as well as country music recording artist Aaron Tippen. Visitors should arrive no earlier than noon. Parking and shuttle service will be available at Robert F. Kennedy Stadium.

Individual retired Marines and Marine veterans have, since the stamps were announced months ago, demonstrated their own initiative and have been actively promoting the stamps to ensure that not only fellow Marines but also the general public is aware of them.

For instance, retired Major General Mike Myatt, president and chief executive officer of the Marines' Memorial Club

in San Francisco, advised *Leatherneck* that the city would have a national first day of sale event in honor of the Distinguished Marines stamps. MajGen Myatt explained the event would be observed by a march on Sutter Street from the Marines' Memorial Club to nearby Union Square, followed by a small noon ceremony attended by prominent Marines from the area.

Across the country in Maine, World War II Marine Corporal Gordon Folsom, 82, has for months canvassed 75 local businesses in Gardiner and Augusta as well as in the nearby states of New Hampshire and Vermont, encouraging those businesses to purchase and use the Distinguished Marines stamps.

Folsom wrote in the July 2005 issue of *Leatherneck*: "My goal is to have as many of these stamps as possible in the hands of the American public. ... I have been in contact with my local bank, several major department stores, local gift shops, a cell phone kiosk and several large grocery chains in our area. ... The reaction is very positive. ..."

For years Marines have been aggressively pushing the USPS for a stamp to honor their heroes. The problem was that the Corps has so many legendary figures, Marines seldom agreed as to who should be on a stamp.

Sure, there was a general consensus that the late and colorful Lieutenant General



Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, with his five Navy Crosses, was definitely a contender. Retired Marine Major Jacques Lorraine waged a relentless 10-year campaign for LtGen Puller to have his own stamp. Others argued that Sergeant Major Dan Daly or MajGen Smedley D. Butler, who both have two Medals of Honor, were no less worthy. Others said, "What about Colonel Mitchell Paige, Gunnery Sergeant "Manila John" Basilone (Jordan A. Jaffe led a drive to obtain one million signatures on a petition demanding a stamp for GySgt Basilone), Sergeant John H. Quick or Private John J. Kelly?"

"Don't forget the 'real motivators' who kept the Corps together," stated the more cerebral students of the Corps' history, referring to Marines such as LtGen John A. Lejeune, General Alexander A. Vandegrift, Gen Louis H. Wilson Jr. or Gen Alfred M. "Al" Gray. There are literally hundreds of other possible leatherneck names whose images would honor any U.S. Postal Service stamp. In the end, the Postal Service made its four choices—four good men among many. It chose well.

Retired Marine Mustang First Lieutenant Gerald F. Merna, who worked for the USPS for 18 years, including serving as Executive Assistant to the Postmaster General, compiled the following biographical information:

GySgt "Manila John" Basilone

GySgt Basilone's name and reputation are synonymous with the sacrifices and sense of duty shared by generations of enlisted Marines.

Born in Buffalo, N.Y., and raised in Raritan, N.J., Basilone (1916-45) enlisted in the U.S. Army when he was 18, serving from 1934 until 1937 in the Philippines, where he earned the nickname Manila John.

Basilone enlisted in the Corps in 1940, and by 1942, he was a sergeant with the 1st Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment,

First Marine Division on Guadalcanal. He led two sections of heavy machine guns that took the brunt of an assault by a Japanese regiment. Basilone helped repel and defeat the Japanese onslaught and provided ammunition to his gunners.

His actions earned him the Medal of Honor.

Basilone returned home and was hailed as a hero. He appeared at successful war-bond rallies. However, he asked to return to combat, and as a gunnery sergeant he landed on Iwo Jima with 1st Bn, 27th Marines, 5thMarDiv. After single-handedly destroying an enemy blockhouse, he was killed in action, Feb. 19, 1945, at the age of 28.

For his heroism at Iwo Jima, Basilone posthumously was awarded the Navy Cross. In July 1949, a destroyer, USS *Basilone* (DD-824), was named for him, and today a statue of him stands in Raritan, where an annual parade has been held in his honor since 1981.

The Basilone Stamp features a 1943 photograph of Manila John and the insignia of the 5thMarDiv.

SgtMaj Daniel J. Daly

Daniel J. Daly (1873-1937) was one of only two Marines to be awarded two Medals of Honor for separate acts of heroism. A 1954 issue of the *Marine Corps Gazette* described Daly as "a sort of legendary figure in his own time." The "Historical Dictionary of the United States Marine Corps" states, "His record as a fighting man remains unequalled in the annals of Marine Corps history."

Born in Glen Cove, N.Y., Daly enlisted in 1899. In 1900 he was sent to China, where he earned his first Medal of Honor after defending the American Legation during the Boxer Rebellion, fighting off attackers while a barricade was repaired. In 1915 he was sent to Haiti, where he won his second Medal of Honor while fighting approximately 400 bandits.

Daly saw combat as a gunnery sergeant throughout France during World War I. He was cited for extinguishing an ammunition-dump fire, single-handedly capturing an enemy machine-gun emplacement with only hand grenades and a pistol, and bringing in wounded while under fire.

However, Daly is best remembered for rallying his men at Belleau Wood in June 1918 during a bleak moment when they were facing heavy German machine-gun fire. He admonished his Marines, specifically any who may have had second thoughts about attacking, when he said, "Come on, you sons-a-b——! Do you want to live forever?" In 1918, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, and he received the Croix de Guerre with Palm from the French government.

Daly retired as a sergeant major in 1929 and died in 1937. During the 1940s the Navy named a destroyer, USS *Daly* (DD-519), in his honor. Daly's heroism and distinguished service have made

him an enduring legend of the Marine Corps.

The Daly stamp consists of a detail from a photograph, circa 1919, and the insignia of the 73d Machine Gun Company, which he served with during WW I and which is a variation of the U.S. 2d Infantry Division insignia.

LtGen John A. Lejeune

John A. Lejeune (1867-1942) made history in WW I as the first Marine to command what was predominately an Army division. Remembered for his professionalism and dedication, especially to enhancing the education and knowledge of Marines, LtGen Lejeune is often referred to as "the greatest of all leathernecks." His leadership and foresight helped prepare the Marine Corps for the amphibious assaults of WW II.

Born in Pointe Coupee Parish, La., he graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy. After serving in the South Pacific as a naval cadet from 1888 to 1890, he was



commissioned in the Marine Corps.

During WW I in France, LtGen Lejeune led the 64th Brigade, 32d National Guard Division and later the 4th Marine Brigade. In 1918, as a major general, he commanded the American Expeditionary Force's 2d Division, which included the 4th Marine Brigade, through victories at St. Mihiel and Blanc Mont and through the Meuse-Argonne offensive. For his service, LtGen Lejeune was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal from both the Army and the Navy, the French Legion of Honor, and the Croix de Guerre with Palm.

From 1920 until 1929, while serving as the 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps, LtGen Lejeune was determined to keep the Marine Corps from becoming antiquated. He foresaw the need for specialized amphibious assault capabilities, and his efforts prepared the Marine Corps for island invasions in the Pacific during WW II. He retired in 1929 and served as superintendent of Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Va.

Following the general's death in 1942, the enormous amphibious training base in North Carolina was renamed Camp Lejeune. Marines today annually read his 1921 Birthday Message Order that summarizes the history, mission and traditions of the Marine Corps.

The LtGen Lejeune stamp features detail from a photograph, circa 1924. The stamp also depicts the "Indian Head" insignia of the U.S. 2d Div.

LtGen Lewis B. Puller

Nicknamed Chesty for his physique as well as for his aggressive bearing, LtGen Lewis B. Puller (1898-1971) had a reputation for incredible toughness. Renowned for his leadership during crucial battles in the "Banana Wars," WW II and the Korean War, LtGen Puller became one of the most highly decorated Marines [including five Navy Crosses], rising through the ranks from private to general officer and becoming perhaps the Corps' most fabled leatherneck.

Born in West Point, Va., he attended Virginia Military Institute in 1917, but dropped out and enlisted in the Corps in June 1918. He was commissioned as a Marine officer the following year, but was placed on the inactive list due to cutbacks after WW I. In response, he enlisted in

the Marine Corps and distinguished himself in fighting against rebels in Haiti from 1919 until 1924, when he again became a second lieutenant.

Between 1928 and 1933 he fought in Nicaragua, where he earned his first two Navy Crosses. He then served for nearly two years at the American Legation in China.

During WW II, LtGen Puller was first a battalion commander and later a regimental commander. In 1942, after training 1st Bn, 7th Marines,

1stMarDiv, he led the battalion against the Japanese at Guadalcanal, where the Marines' defense of the airstrip at Henderson Field helped LtGen Puller win a third Navy Cross.

In late 1943 and early 1944, 7th Marines also took part in the invasion of the island of New Britain, where LtGen Puller received his fourth Navy Cross following combat at Cape Gloucester. In 1944, he took command of 1st Marines and led the regiment in bloody fighting on the island of Peleliu.

During the Korean War, he again commanded the 1st Marines during the September 1950 landing at Inchon. In December when U.S. forces at the Chosin Reservoir were surrounded by Chinese troops, LtGen Puller's 1st Marines tenaciously held the village of Koto-ri, allowing the 5th and 7th Marines to withdraw from the Reservoir area. For his service in Korea, he was awarded his fifth Navy Cross and a promotion to brigadier general.

LtGen Puller retired in 1955 and died in 1971. Today he is remembered for his courage in combat, which inspired confidence and loyalty in those who served under him, and for the particular attention and respect he showed to the enlisted men under his command.

The LtGen Puller stamp highlights a photograph of him at Koto-ri in 1950 along with the insignia of the 1stMarDiv.

Additionally, Saunders said the USPS is offering various

related items of interest to Marines and the Distinguished Marines stamps. Customers may request a free catalog by calling (800) STAMP-24 (782-6724), or writing to: Information Fulfillment, Dept. 6270, U.S. Postal Service, P.O. Box 219014, Kansas City, MO 64121-9014. First-day covers remain on sale for at least one year after the stamps' issuance.



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