



## GENERAL LOUIS H. WILSON

It is with deep regret that Marines around the world learned of the death on 21 June 2005 of Gen Louis H. Wilson, Jr., U.S. Marine Corps Retired, our 26th Commandant of the Marine Corps who received the Medal of Honor for heroism during the battle of Guam on 25–26 July 1944.

Today's Marines owe a tremendous debt to Gen Wilson. His heroic actions as a captain leading Company F, 2d Battalion, 9th Marines in repelling 11 determined counterattacks by a superior enemy force attempting to retake the key terrain of Fonte Hill during the amphibious assault on Guam in July 1944 are part of our Corps' rich heritage that continues to inspire all Marines. But, his professionalism, leadership, and judgment as our 26th Commandant are equally important and institutionally more lasting legacies. He skillfully guided this institution through the crises and numerous tests of the post-Vietnam era—lack of public confidence in the military, the fallout from the transition of the Department of Defense to an all-volunteer force, discipline and leadership challenges within our Corps, chronic budgetary shortfalls, and a vigorous public debate over the Marine Corps' mission, force structure, and operational focus.

We often cite the renewed emphasis on maneuver warfare during the 1980s for the Marine Corps' tactical successes in operations like DESERT STORM in 1991 and IRAQI FREEDOM in 2003. The commitment, however, to professional education and warfighting excellence during that period and into the present was built squarely on the firm foundation that Gen Wilson laid. Our later achievements would not have been possible without his strong moral leadership and his uncompromising personnel standards during the turbulent 1970s. Gen Wilson's emphasis on the readiness and modernization of our Corps as a well-trained, mobile, general-purpose combined arms force with amphibious expertise prepared for low- and high-intensity combat against a wide spectrum of potential foes around the globe continues to define who we are. His compelling articulation within the policy development and political processes concerning the Marine Corps' value and role in our national security was masterful, and it quickly restored faith in our institution. The dramatic improvements to recruiting Marines and recruit training methods set a standard for quality from which the Marine Corps continues to profit with intelligent, adaptable Marines. His vision for demanding combined arms training resulted in the facilities and exercises at Twentynine Palms and elsewhere—where we continue to improve our tactical and operational agility and flexibility.

I believe that Col David H. White, Jr., USMCR(Ret)—in Allan Millett and Jack Shulimson's *Commandants of the Marine Corps*—very accurately pinpoints that the success of Gen Wilson during his watch as Commandant was due to the fact that “he personified the best institutional characteristics of his Corps.” For a Marine, no higher tribute can be made. Gen Wilson was the right man at the right time to lead our Corps. His commitment to warfighting excellence, focus on readiness, and demand for tough, realistic training will continue to guide us into the future. He made a difference and will be missed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "M.W. Hagee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

M.W. Hagee  
General, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commandant of the Marine Corps