

Lew Walt: The "Grunt" Who Wore Stars

In a small, but highly impressive, April 19 ceremony, the Marine Corps Information Operations Center aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., was named Walt Hall. It could not have been named more appropriately.

When he retired, General Lewis W. Walt was a four-star general, but known first and foremost as a leatherneck grunt: fearless, tenacious and frank—hardly silent, but known for listening quietly. He was packed into a bulldog frame; barrel-chested, pugnacious and smart, with penetrating blue eyes and a lantern jaw that exuded confidence to those who followed him.

In recent years, the Corps almost seemed to have forgotten him. How could it forget a Marine like Lew Walt? Thus, when the Marine Corps Operations Center opened at Marine Corps Base Quantico, the Marines checked a very important historical block by naming the building, "Walt Hall," after a giant of the Corps.

Gen Walt's keen understanding of psychological operations and aggressive application of its tenets is part of what made him a giant of the Corps and the perfect patron for the Marine Corps Information Operations Center. He was a man who innovatively utilized his resources in order to create "influences" to achieve a desired effect on the battlefield and thus developed a contemporary model for information operations.

Some of his groundbreaking initiatives are still effective today—the most notable of these was the pioneering of the Combined Action Program in Vietnam, which served as a model for Military Transition Teams employed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lewis William Walt was a young journeyman second lieutenant who stood with old China-hand Marines behind water-cooled machine guns and 1903 rifles with fixed bayonets facing hostile Japanese forces in 1938 at the International Settlements employed in Shanghai.

As a captain he volunteered and commanded Company A, in the elite 1st [Edson's] Raider Battalion as they landed on a deceptively small island named Tulagi in the South Pacific on Aug. 7, 1942, where he earned the Silver Star.

By October, he was a major and commanding 2d Bn, Fifth Marine Regiment on Guadalcanal, where he was wounded, yet his leadership and gallantry saw him promoted to lieutenant colonel.

He was back leading his battalion in the assault at Cape Gloucester, New Britain, in December 1943 and was a newly assigned regimental executive officer when ordered to take command of 3d Bn, 5th Marines, which faced serious resistance at Aogiri Ridge. Against five night attacks LtCol Walt and his men mowed down the Japanese, and when dawn broke, he directed the battalion in the capture of the entire ridge, which the 1stMarDiv commander, Major General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr., renamed "Walt Ridge," and then wrote him up for the Navy Cross.

Later in the war, LtCol Walt landed on Peleliu as regimental executive officer of 5th Marines but again was assigned as the commander of 3/5 when the battalion's commander and executive officer were both killed in action. He earned his second Navy

Cross in that horrific battle.

He was a colonel in 1952 when he finally got to command the Fifth Marine Regiment in Korea. He earned the Legion of Merit and Bronze Star, both with combat "V."

In the late 1950s, the Corps started using Walt's knowledge and experience as a warfighter, and he was assigned Director, Advanced Base Problem Section, Marine Corps Educational Center, Quantico, Va., as the commander of Officers' Basic School and served as a member of the Advanced Research Group, MCEC. In 1960, he was the Corps' representative on the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Joint Advanced Study Group. Promoted to



SgtRSTER/STAFF

The MCIOC commanding officer, Col Christopher L. Naler, and SgtMaj Dwight D. Jones, stand next to a monument (above) honoring Gen Lewis W. Walt (inset). The MCIOC was named Walt Hall, in recognition of Gen Walt's keen understanding of the value of psychological operations, during a ceremony on April 19.

brigadier general, he was director of the Marine Corps Landing Force Development Center, also at Quantico.

In June of 1965, now a major general, Lew Walt became the commanding general of III Marine Amphibious Force and 3dMarDiv in Vietnam. He also was Chief of Naval Forces, Vietnam, and Senior Advisor, I Corps and I Corps Coordinator, Republic of Vietnam, which included 73,000 Marines.

He was promoted to lieutenant general and continued as CG, III MAF and Senior Advisor, I Corps and I Corps Coordinator. *Leatherneck* magazine featured him on the cover of the April 1967 issue and dubbed him the "Three-Star Grunt." He was featured in *Life* magazine, where a May 1967 cover story extolled the success of the combined action companies in Vietnam, a program he had initiated in August 1965.

In 1968, he was appointed the 12th Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps under Gen Leonard F. Chapman, 24th CMC. In 1969, he became the first ACMC to wear four stars.

Gen Walt retired from the Corps in 1971 and passed away on March 26, 1989, at age 76. He is buried at Quantico National Cemetery, but lives on in Walt Hall and Marine history.

—R. R. Keene