

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This issue of The Medal Collector marks the departure of Albert M. (Mike) Shaw from the editorial helm. Mike has endured the slings and arrows as editor since April, 1982. In his long years of service to OMSA, Mike has done truly outstanding work upgrading The Medal Collector and making it the excellent and wide-ranging journal it is today. He will certainly be missed.

This is the premier issue of our new editorial team of Steven and Suzanne Crain. Steven has a remarkable academic background, with specializations in Tudor-Stuart and African history. Plus, he is currently working on an advanced degree in Shakespearean Theater. Steven's been a British collector since 1975, and a Gurka specialist since 1977. In addition to having had several historical articles published, he has written a computer program teaching the history of the Vietnam war, which is currently in use in high schools in several states. Suzanne Crain comes from a military family. She is a graduate of the University of California at Santa Barbara with a degree in English. She now is an editor for an educational publishing company in Monterey. In her spare time, she is a published poet and active in local theater. I welcome the Crains aboard and look forward to working with them and the membership to continue the evolution of The Medal Collector.

On the wider publishing front, OMSA has embarked on a project to reprint some specialized articles from early Medal Collectors. At the suggestion of the French Section, under the direction of Peter Coulston, we will be collating a number of older articles on French and French colonial awards. Mr. Coulston has also secured permission to reprint Harold Gillingham's classics, "French Orders and Decorations" and "Notes on the Decorations and Medals of the French Colonies and Protectorates." These two sources have been out of print for years and, when reprinted, will be substantial additions to any library. Mr. Coulston's initiative will pay benefits to us all.

The new OMSA Monograph Chairman, LCDR Frank Brown, has been reviewing a number of possibilities for monographs. With his active leadership, we should be ready to revitalize the monograph program shortly.

The new book service has already shown outstanding results. As the book service chairman, Paul Kaparoff, reports, we appear to be meeting the needs of the members, so we are certainly successful. As the book service takes off, we need to split the back issue services away. To do that, we need a volunteer to become the Back Issue Chairman. If anyone has some spare space and time and would like to take on this challenging position, please contact Paul Kaparoff or me.

Overall, I see 1990 as a banner year for OMSA. With your support and active participation, we can continue to move ahead.

--JEFFREY B. FLOYD, President

FROM SANTO DOMINGO TO KOREA

BOB DONALD, OMSA #3978

The name of Major General Gregon A. Williams, USMC (see cover), may be unfamiliar to many, yet the "mustang" Marine's career altogether spanned nearly thirty-five years, including three years enlisted service from 1917 to 1920, and thirty-one years commissioned officer service from 1923 to 1954, when he retired as a major general.

Gregon Albert Williams was born in Carrollton, Illinois on 8 January 1896, but moved to San Diego, California with his family, consisting of his parents and brother, Charles, in 1904. Gregon graduated from high school in 1916 and, after one year of junior college, enlisted in the Marine Corps in June, 1917. After completing bootcamp at Mare Island, California, he was shipped to Santo Domingo, where he rose to the rank of infantry first sergeant when his enlistment ended. He remained in Santo Domingo on some sort of detached duty as a Constabulary company commander for two years, reenlisting in November, 1922, with an application for a direct commission. The U.S. Senate approved his application a month later, and he was commissioned a second lieutenant in January, 1923.

After his commissioning he reported to Quantico, Virginia to attend the Officers Basic Course, graduating second in his class in June that year. He then served variously for short periods at Parris Island, South Carolina, Santo Domingo for a short temporary additional duty, and another TAD tour in Nicaragua. He then reported back to Quantico to serve with the 10th Marines.

In October, 1926, he and members of the 10th Marines were ordered to St. Louis, Missouri to serve as Marine mail guards during that emergency, remaining there until March, 1927.

In April, 1927, Lt Williams and the 10th Marines sailed for China, he serving as assistant intelligence officer with the Third Brigade of Marines in Tientsin. After he was promoted to first lieutenant in February, 1928, he was additionally assigned as Aide de Camp to the Brigade commanding general, Smedley Butler. He remained with both duties until January, 1929, when he reported back stateside to serve at Headquarters, Marine Corps in Washington.

In January, 1930, Lt. Williams shipped out to Nicaragua where he was assigned as commander of patrols in the Somoto region of northern Nicaragua, serving as a captain in the Guardia Nacional. His aggressive leadership and patrol actions accounted for numerous guerrilla losses with none for his troops. He also quelled a would-be mutiny among his own Guardia detachment, and in 1931, received a SPECIAL LETTER OF COMMENDATION for Valor from Secretary of the Navy Charles Adams. On June 1, 1932, he was awarded the NAVY CROSS for Valor and Distinguished Service. Since the copy of the Citation extracted from his service records is nearly illegible (fig. 1), it is necessary to cite it here:

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the NAVY CROSS to FIRST LIEUTENANT GREGON A. WILLIAMS, U.S.M.C., for service in Nicaragua as set forth in the following:

CITATION:

"For distinguished service in the line of his profession as commander of patrols of Guardia Nacional operating in the District of Somoto, Nicaragua. First Lieutenant Gregon A. Williams, U.S. Marine Corps, successfully led his forces into three engagements against superior numbers of armed bandit forces; namely, on 3 October 1931 an attack against a bandit group of forty or more under the jefe Colindres, in a partially entrenched position; on 13 October 1931 near Zapote Mountain and near Las Canas on 11 November 1931. His display of courage and leadership enabled his patrol to completely rent superior bandit groups with loss of lives and ammunition, without suffering casualties themselves."

For the President,

C.F. Adams

Secretary of the Navy

Lt Williams continued his combat patrols in the Somoto region until shortly before he departed Nicaragua in January 1933, this time bound for Headquarters, Marine Corps.

His new assignment consisted of helping compile and write, "A Review of the Organization and Operations of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua," in which a substantial number of his combat patrols are written. He was also ordered to attend the Officers Junior Course at Quantico. After finishing the course he reported to the Fleet Marine Force headquarters at Marine Base, San Diego, now better known as the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, where he served as an intelligence officer.

Lt Williams was promoted to captain in March, 1935, and, in September, he was awarded the Nicaraguan CROSS OF VALOR with Diploma. Also at San Diego he encountered and served with now-LtGen Edward A. Craig, UCMC (Ret.), whom he'd known in Santo Domingo. He also befriended an enlisted Marine, Boyd Jackson, who would serve with him in the near future.

In June, 1937, Capt Williams took command of the Marine Detachment aboard the USS MISSISSIPPI and invited Boyd Jackson to join him, promising him a promotion to sergeant. However, Jackson declined by saying he'd rather be a private ashore than a sergeant aboard ship.

Capt Williams was promoted to major in June, 1939, and ordered to the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) in Washington. He was then assigned as Assistant Naval Attache in Shanghai, attached to the ONI. Enroute he invited now-Sergeant Jackson to join him in Shanghai as his clerk-typist, and Sergeant Jackson accepted.

The two were soon joined by Navy Lt (j.g.) Alfred Kilmartin, a Chinese linguist. During the next three years the three attempted to learn Japanese intentions and plans directed against the United States. After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the three attempted to escape from Shanghai to Peking but were unable to get out. They then were forced to surrender through the Swiss Consulate. Major Williams and Lt Kilmartin were housed in a hotel for diplomatic prisoners, whereas Sergeant Jackson was taken to Bridge House Prison. Major Williams then found ways to feed his NCO and to raise his morale, as well as to demand that the Japanese release him to his own custody prior to their diplomatic release and repatriation aboard the neutral Swedish vessel,