

1 June 1952.

Sir:

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the NAVY CROSS to

FIRST LIEUTENANT GREGG 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 Gregg 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 Sapote Mountain and near Las Camas on 11 November 1931. His display of courage and leadership enabled his patrol to completely rout superior bandit groups with loss of lives and ammunition, without suffering casualties themselves."

For the President.

C. F. ADAMS

Secretary of the Navy.

FIG. 2: COPY OF GENERAL WILLIAMS' NAVY CROSS CITATION EXTRACTED FROM HIS SERVICE RECORDS. HIS ORIGINAL WAS APPARENTLY LOST AFTER HIS DEATH IN 1968.

SS GRIPSHOLM. Major Williams also found ways to successfully resist Japanese interrogation as well as to intimidate his captors without being executed in the process.

After the three POWs returned Stateside, Major Williams was promoted to lieutenant colonel and awarded the LEGION OF MERIT as having served the ONI rather than as an attache. Sergeant Jackson was promoted and appointed a Marine gunner warrant officer.

In January, 1943, LtCol Williams and Gunner Jackson returned to China, this time assigned to the U.S. Naval Group China, also known as "SACO, the Rice Paddy Navy," in Chungking. They were in charge of conducting guerrilla and weapons training for Chinese Nationalist guerrillas against the Japanese. They remained there until July, 1944, when they were both promoted, LtCol Williams to full colonel and Gunner Jackson commissioned a

second lieutenant. They returned to the States for reassignment at that time.

Colonel Williams was ordered to Saipan to command the 6th Marines, Second Marine Division, relieving a Colonel Risely, who had commanded the Regiment for both the Saipan and Tinian amphibious assault landings.

While commanding the 6th Marines, the Regiment accounted for the destruction of over 600 Japanese hold-outs. In April, 1945, the 6th Marines also participated in the Okinawa "demonstration" landings, feints serving to draw Japanese defenders from the actual landing beaches. For both the destruction of Japanese forces on Saipan and the Okinawa "demonstration" Colonel Williams was awarded the BRONZE STAR with "V".

After the Japanese surrender and the Division moved to Japan for the occupation, Colonel Williams became the Division chief of staff, responsible for military government in the Division area. For the exemplary manner in which he conducted military government and Japanese disarmament, he received a LETTER OF COMMENDATION from Marine Corps Commandant General Alexander Vandegrift. He was also recommended for but failed to receive a second LEGION OF MERIT.

After the Division returned Stateside Colonel Williams served variously at both Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and Camp Pendleton, California before he became chief of staff of Fleet Marine Forces Pacific in Hawaii in 1948. He served there until late June, 1950 after the outbreak of the Korean War, when he became chief of staff of the First Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, which was preparing for the Inchon landings in Korea in September. He landed in Korea with the Division, moving with it to liberate Seoul, the South Korean capital, and then on to the east coast to move north to the Chosin Reservoir. He effectively helped keep the Division combat effective as it fought its way back to the sea, so for both his participation in the Inchon Landings and the Chosin Reservoir Campaign he received the "V" Device and second and third awards for the LEGION OF MERIT. He was finally promoted to brigadier general on 1 January 1951, the same day as the more famous "Chesty" Puller becoming assistant division commander. Both MajGen Craig and BrigGen Williams returned Stateside together for reassignment.

General Williams took command of Force Troops, FMFLant at Camp Lejeune, remaining there until 1953 when he was named Inspector General of the Marine Corps.

As the Marine Corps IG, sometime in either 1953 or 1954, while inspecting the Marine detachment at the Embassy in Rome, Italy, he had a warm reunion with a Miss Lyda Mae Francis, U.S. Consul General, whom he'd known in Shanghai, and with Master Sergeant Lewis Michelony, Jr., MCOIC of the Guard Detachment, with whom he'd served with the 6th Marines on Saipan. Sgt Michelony had coached the Regimental boxing team there after earning his second SILVER STAR during the Saipan invasion, earning his first on Tarawa.

General Williams retired in September, 1954, receiving his second star upon retirement. He returned home to San Diego where he remained until his death on 8 September 1968, survived only by his equally unmarried brother, Charles. Following his death a large number of his papers, photographs, possibly some of his original medals, uniforms, and insignia disappeared, with his brother sending nothing to the Marine Corps Historical Center in Washington.

During his long and interesting career General Williams earned the NAVY CROSS, LEGION OF MERIT with "V" and two gold stars, Secretary of the Navy's SPECIAL LETTER OF COMMENDATION, Marine Corps Commandant's LETTER OF COMMENDATION, BRONZE STAR with "V", NAVY/MARINE CORPS PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION with one star for Korean service, GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL, EXPEDITIONARY SERVICE MEDAL with 3 stars, WORLD WAR I VICTORY MEDAL with "WEST INDIES" Clasp, SECOND NICARAGUAN CAMPAIGN MEDAL, YANGTZE SERVICE MEDAL, CHINA SERVICE MEDAL, AMERICAN DEFENSE MEDAL with "BASE" Clasp, ASIATIC-PACIFIC CAMPAIGN MEDAL with one star, WORLD WAR II VICTORY MEDAL, NAVY/MARINE CORPS OCCUPATION SERVICE MEDAL, KOREAN SERVICE MEDAL with two stars, UNITED NATIONS SERVICE MEDAL, Nicaraguan CROSS OF VALOR with Diploma, and Dominican MEDAL FOR MILITARY MERIT with Diploma.

Fig. 3 shows General Williams' personal decorations and older service medals, including duplicate GOOD CONDUCT MEDALS, one rim-numbered 20311, the other named, dated, and with the other's rim number; EXPEDITIONARY SERVICE MEDAL, one numbered M.No. 8981, the other, M.No. 3404; and YANGTZE SERVICE MEDAL, one numbered, M.No. 3687, the other, M.No. 15. The SECOND NICARAGUAN SERVICE MEDAL is numbered M.No. 2494. Interestingly, none of his service records or other documents show medal numbers.

Fig. 4 shows the General's later service medals and foreign awards, including only a worn ribbon bar and miniature Dominican MEDAL FOR MILITARY MERIT. His original full-sized award was probably "misplaced" after he died.

Fig. 5 shows the named reverse of the duplicate GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL, including the other's rim number, and "20311, Gregon A. Williams, 1st Enlistment, 1917-1920."

Besides the two GOOD CONDUCT MEDALS, the author presumes the others in the author's possession to have been the General's, possibly replacing some which may have been lost during his captivity. The author also possesses the General's 1923 dated and named evening mess dress tunic, but bearing the pre-World War II cuff rank pattern for major.

AUTHOR'S NOTES: Chronological data came from General Williams' service records and other official documents obtained from both the Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, and the Military Personnel Records Center, St. Louis.

Personal anecdotes came from LtGen Edward A. Craig USMC (Ret.), LtGen William K. Jones, USMC (Ret.), LtCol Boyd Jackson, USMC (Ret.), and MSgt Lewis Michelony, Jr., USMC (Ret.).

The author previously wrote about General Williams in the Jan/Feb 1987 MEDALS COLLECTOR article, "The Attache and his Medal."