



General Oliver P. Smith, USMC

General Oliver P. Smith, a much decorated combat veteran of World War II and the Korean Conflict, died on 25 December 1977. He had been advanced to four-star rank on retirement, 1 September 1955, by reason of having been specially commended for heroism in combat.

General Smith was awarded the Army Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in Korea during November and December 1950, when he led the 1st Marine Division in its epic breakout from the Chosin Reservoir area. In the face of sub-zero temperatures and the onslaught of eight Chinese Communist divisions, his division broke the enemy stranglehold and completed a fighting 70-mile march to the seaport of Hungnam in thirteen days. The general took command of the 1st Marine Division in June 1950, and after assembling it in the Far East, led it in the Inchon assault, the Inchon-Seoul fighting, the Chosin Reservoir operation, the first UN Counter-Offensive, and the fight against the Communist China Spring Offensive of 1951. For his service in Korea, he was also awarded the Army and Navy Distinguished Services Medals, the Silver Star Medal, and the Air Medal.

During World War II, General Smith commanded the 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division, for the Talasea phase of the Cape Gloucester operation in March 1944. In the fall of that year, he participated in the Peleliu campaign as Assistant Division Commander of the 1st Marine Division. For the joint Army-Marine Corps Okinawa operation in 1945, he served as Deputy Chief of Staff with the Tenth Army.

General Smith was born 26 October 1893, in Menard, Texas. He attended the University of California, Berkeley, California, where he graduated in 1916. He reported for active duty as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps on 14 May 1917.

The following month he was assigned his first overseas tour at Guam, Marianas Islands, where he served with the Marine Barracks, Naval Station. In May 1919, he returned to the United States for duty with the Marine Barracks at Mare Island, California.

Ordered to sea duty in October 1921, General Smith served as Commanding Officer of the Marine Detachment aboard the USS Texas until May 1924. At that time he was ordered to Marine Corps Headquarters, Washington, D.C., for duty with the personnel section.

Returning overseas in June 1928, he joined the Gendarmerie d'Haiti, Port-au-Prince, as Assistant Chief of Staff. Following his return from foreign shore duty in June 1931, he became a student at the Field Officer's Course, Army Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia.

Graduating in June 1932, he was ordered to duty at the Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia, as an instructor in the Company Officers' Course. In September 1933, he was named Assistant Operations Officer of the 7th Marine Regiment at Quantico.

General Smith sailed for France in January 1934, where he joined the staff of the American Embassy at Paris for duty with the Office of the U.S. Naval Attaché. From November 1934 to July 1936, while in Paris he studied at the Ecole Supérieure de Guerre.

He returned to the United States in August 1936, and joined the staff of the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, as an instructor in the Three Section, (Operations and Training). General Smith was transferred to the West Coast in July 1939, where he joined the Fleet Marine Force as Operations Officer at the Marine Corps Base, San Diego, California.

In June of the following year he became Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, and in May 1941, sailed with the Regiment for Iceland where he remained until returning to the United States in March 1942.

In May of the same year the general was ordered to Headquarters, Marine Corps, Washington, DC, where he became Executive Officer of the Division of Plans and Policies. He remained in this capacity until January 1944, when he joined the 1st Marine Division on New Britain. There he took command of the 5th Marines and subsequently led the regiment in the Talasea phase of the Cape Gloucester operation.

In April 1944, he was named Assistant Division Commander of the 1st Marine Division and participated in operations against the Japanese in the Peleliu operation during September and October 1944.

General Smith became Marine Deputy Chief of Staff of the Tenth Army in November 1944, and participated in the Okinawa operation from April through June 1945.

In July 1945, the general returned to the United States and became Commandant of the Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, and in January 1948, was named Commanding General, Marine Barracks, Quantico, in addition to his duties at the school. Three months later he became Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps and Chief of Staff, Headquarters Marine Corps, Washington, DC.

Named Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division in June 1950, General Smith led his division through the bitter campaigns of the Korean conflict - from the late summer assault at Inchon, to the sub-zero winter drive north to the Chosin Reservoir.

In November 1950, with the 1st Marine Division surrounded and vastly outnumbered at Chosin, he directed the breakout and subsequent 70-mile march to the seaport of Hungnam.

General Smith returned to the United States in May 1951 and was assigned duties as Commanding General, Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, California.

In July 1953, he assumed his final duties as Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, and served in this capacity until his retirement, 1 September 1955.

His medals and decorations include: the Distinguished Service Cross; the Distinguished Service Medal (Navy); the Distinguished Service Medal (Army); the Silver Star Medal; Legion of Merit with Combat "V" and Oak Leaf Cluster; Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V", the Air Medal, the Presidential Unit Citation with three stars; the Navy Unit Commendation; World War I Victory Medal; the Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal, Haiti, 1929-31; American Defense Service Medal

with base clasp; European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with three stars; World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Medal; Korean Service Medal with five stars; U.N. Korean Service Medal; Haitian Distinguished Service Medal with diploma; the Order of the Orange Nassau, Rank of Commander; Korean Order of Military Merit with Silver Star; and Korean Presidential Unit Citation with Oak Leaf Cluster.

Source: http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/HD/Whos_Who/Smith_OP.htm