

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILLIAM M. KEYS, USMC (RET.)



William Morgan Keys was born in Fredericktown, PA, and entered the Naval Academy as a member of the Class of 1960. At the Academy, “Bull” excelled at many intramural sports during his time at the Academy. The *Lucky Bag* recalled “his easy going manner and great sense of humor that made him many friends.”

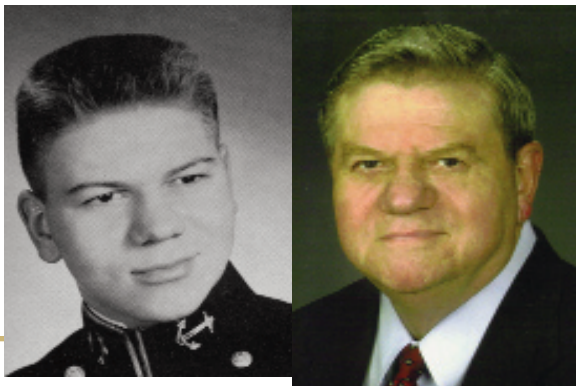
As a Marine, Lieutenant General Keys began his 34 years of service as a platoon leader with 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment. In Vietnam, he was decorated as company commander with the 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment. While Captain, he personally led units against numerically superior North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong forces, repelling attacks and overrunning the enemy.

He volunteered for a second tour in Vietnam as a Major and advisor to a Vietnamese Marine Brigade, part of the Division who recaptured and defended Quang Tri Province from the North Vietnamese Army. He also defended Quang Tri City with infantry armor attacks and helicopter-borne assaults during continuous combat conditions.

Twenty years later, as the Commanding General of the 2nd Marine Division at Camp Lejeune, NC, Lieutenant General Keys prepared more than 20,500 marines for deployment and combat operations in the Persian Gulf during Desert Storm, the heaviest Marine division ever assembled, breaching Iraqi barriers and minefields to retake Kuwait. He developed the rationale for the two-axis attack that proved highly successful, befitting his call sign “Pit Bull” and marking him as a superb tactical leader. General Norman Schwarzkopf said of his performance: “The two Marine divisions...what can I say? Simply brilliant!”

Lieutenant General Keys has been awarded the Navy Cross for conspicuous gallantry in action in 1967 taking his company on independent action, surrounding a North Vietnamese battalion and inflicting heavy casualties. He has also been awarded the Silver Star, Bronze Star with Combat “V”, two Distinguished Service Medals, the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Cross of Gallantry, Legion of

CLASS OF 1960



Merit with Combat “V”, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, and Vietnam Service Medal with four bronze stars.

Lieutenant General Keys is also one of a group of outstanding Marines who was chosen to wear Colonel Merritt A. “Red Mike” Edson’s rank insignia, an honor less than a dozen Marines have ever received. Edson was commander of the fabled World War II 1st Marine Raider Battalion, considered by the Marine Corps to be its first U.S. Special Operations Force. For 60 years, the passing of Edson’s Eagles has been unusual for its informality and privacy, honoring “the same mystical blend of intelligence, dignity, innovation, and raw courage that were the hallmark of their original owner.” This honor is no great surprise to his fellow Marines who call Lieutenant General Keys fearless, inspirational, exceptional and bold.

During his 34 years in the Corps he served at every level of operational command and was the Marine Corps Liaison Officer to the Senate and Deputy Secretary, Joint Secretariat, Joint Chiefs of Staff in DC. He retired as Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Atlantic; Commanding General, Fleet Marine Forces, Atlantic; Commanding General, II Marine Expeditionary Force; Commander, Marine Force, Atlantic; Commander, U.S. Marine Corp Forces, South (Designate); and Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Europe (Designate).

His friends and colleagues say, “Keys is a warrior! If I could have one person in my foxhole in combat, it would be Bill Keys.” “He deserves a place among our Academy heroes—he has been one from day one.” He mentored legions of young officers who “would, and did, follow him anywhere.” His “fighting spirit, keen intelligence, dedication to the mission and care for the personnel under his command are second to none.”

Lieutenant General Keys is a President’s Circle donor to the Naval Academy Foundation and participated in Naval Academy seminars for midshipmen interested in the Marine Corps. He is the President and CEO of Colt Firearms, Hartford, CT, and resides with his wife Gail and family in Hume, VA.