

Class of 1950

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Charles G. Cooper grew up in the Mississippi delta and was inspired to a military career by stories of his father's World War I experiences. At the U.S. Naval Academy, Charlie excelled at football and academics, exhibiting a determination in both that would serve him well in the future.

Soon after graduation in June 1950, Charlie, like many of his classmates, headed for duty in Korea. As leader of the Third Platoon, Baker Company, First Battalion, Fifth Marines, Second Lieutenant Cooper received baptism under fire, earning a Silver Star and becoming an experienced combat leader. In the heat of battle, he recognized the absolute importance of platoon unity, recalling Shakespeare's famous line, "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers." The band of brothers concept would be Charlie's guiding principle throughout his career.

He suffered life-threatening wounds during the fierce battle for Hill 907 on June 17, 1951 that would have ended most military careers. Initially paralyzed from the chest down, Second Lieutenant Cooper was informed by Navy doctors that he probably would never walk again. Charlie was determined to prevail, and he did. Charlie not only lived to fight another day, he compiled a 35-year Marine Corps career that encompassed command at every echelon.

He went on to command two infantry battalions, the prestigious 1st Marine Division, and held responsible staff assignments that influenced history and required tough decisions. Lieutenant General Cooper concluded his active duty career as Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, where he commanded two-thirds of the fighting Marine Corps.

Since his retirement from active duty in 1985, Charlie has been a guest lecturer at the Naval Academy and other colleges and has provided motivational speeches to the FBI National Executive Institute.

He is the author of "*Cheers and Tears, A Marine's Story of Combat in Peace and War.*" Lieutenant General Charles Cooper – a faithful defender of his nation – and a committed brother to his fellow Marines – and to all who fight for our country.