

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS JACKLYN H. LUCAS



PRIVATE FIRST CLASS
JACKLYN HARRELL LUCAS, USMCR
(DECEASED)

Medal of Honor Citation

Private First Class Jacklyn Harrell Lucas earned the Medal of Honor during the Iwo Jima campaign for unhesitatingly hurling himself over his comrades upon one grenade and for pulling another one under himself, absorbing the whole blasting force of the explosions with his own body.

Private First Class Lucas, the youngest Marine ever to receive the nation's highest military decoration, was presented the award by President Harry S. Truman at the White House on Friday, 5 October 1945.

Jacklyn Harrell Lucas was born in Plymouth, North Carolina, 14 February 1928. He attended high school at nearby Salemburg and was captain of the football team. He was an all-around sportsman, also taking part in baseball, softball, basketball, boxing, wrestling, horseback riding, trap and skeet shooting, and hunting.

Although only 14 years of age, five feet, five and one half inches high, weighing 158 pounds, he enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve with his mother's consent on 6 August 1942. He gave his age as 17, and went to Parris Island, South Carolina, for recruit training.

During his rifle training Pvt Lucas qualified as a sharpshooter. He was next assigned to the Marine Barracks, U.S. Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida. In June 1943 he was transferred to the 21st Replacement Battalion at New River, North Carolina, and one month later he went to the 25th Replacement Battalion, where he successfully completed schooling which qualified him as a heavy machine gun crewman.

He left the United States on 4 November 1943, and the following month he joined the 6th Base Depot of the V Amphibious Corps at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. He was advanced to private first class on 29 January 1944.

With statements to his buddies that he was going to join a combat organization, PFC Lucas walked out of camp on 10 January 1945, wearing a khaki uniform and carrying his dungarees and field shoes in a roll under his arm.

He was declared absent without leave (AWOL) when he failed to return that night and a month later, when there was still no sign of him, he was declared a "deserter," and a reward offered for his apprehension. He was also reduced to the rank of private at that time.

He stowed away on board the USS *Deuel* which was transporting units of the 5th Marine Division into combat. He surrendered to the senior troop officer present on 8 February dressed in neat, clean dungarees. He was allowed to remain, and shortly after he was transferred to Headquarters Company, 5th Marine Division. He reached his 17th birthday while at sea, six days before he earned the Medal of Honor.

On the day following the landing at Iwo Jima, he was creeping through a twisting ravine with three other men of his rifle team when the Japanese opened a hand grenade attack on them. The men jumped into two shallow foxholes. A grenade landed in Pvt Lucas' foxhole and he threw his body over it. Another one came hurtling in, and he reached out and pulled it beneath himself shortly before the explosion occurred, which lifted him off the ground and blew parts of his clothing into the air.

He was left for dead by his companions, although he was miraculously still alive. Severely wounded in the right arm and wrist, right leg and thigh, and chest, Pvt Lucas had undoubtedly saved his companions from serious injury and possible death.

He was evacuated and treated at various field hospitals prior to his arrival at San Francisco, California, 28 March 1945. The mark of desertion was removed from his record in August of that year while he was a patient at the U.S. Naval Hospital at Charleston, South Carolina.

He was discharged from the Marine Corps Reserve because of disability resulting from his wounds on 18 September 1945, following his reappointment to the rank of private first class.

Mr. Lucas passed away on 5 June 2008 in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, at the age of 80 after a battle with cancer. He was buried at Highland Cemetery in Hattiesburg four days later.

In addition to the Medal of Honor, PFC Lucas was awarded the Purple Heart; Presidential Unit Citation; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with one bronze star; American Campaign Medal and the World War II Victory Medal.