

## **General Christian Schilt, U.S. Marine Corps**

**First Lieutenant Christian Schilt**, received his Medal of Honor citation for the Second Nicaraguan Campaign in 1928: "During the progress of an insurrection at Quilali, Nicaragua, 6, 7, and 8 January 1928, 1st Lt. Schilt, then a member of a Marine expedition which had suffered severe losses in killed and wounded, volunteered under almost impossible conditions to evacuate the wounded by air and to transport a relief commanding officer to assume charge of a very serious situation. First Lt. Schilt bravely undertook this dangerous and important task and, by taking off a total of ten times in the rough, rolling street of a partially burning village, under hostile infantry fire on each occasion, succeeded in accomplishing his mission, thereby actually saving three lives and bringing supplies and aid to others in desperate need."

**Biography:** He was born 19 March 1895 in Richland County, Illinois. After attending Rose Poly Institute, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on 23 June 1917. As an enlisted man he served at Ponta Delgada, Azores, with 1st U.S. Marine Corps Aeronautical Company, a seaplane squadron assigned to anti-submarine patrol. This was the first organized U.S. air unit of any service to go overseas during WWI. Overall, he saw action with the U.S. Marine Corps Air Units in World War I, World War II, Haitian and Nicaraguan campaigns, and Korea.

**WW I:** Returning to the US as a Corporal, he entered flight training at U.S. Marine Corps Flying Field, Miami, FL. He was designated an aviator 5 June 1919, and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant five days later. In October, he began his first tour of expeditionary duty as a member of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Forces, 2nd Provisional Brigade, Santo Domingo.

He returned to the U.S. in February 1920, to enter the U.S. Marine Corps Officers Training School at Quantico, VA. Completing the course in August 1920, he went overseas again following month to Port-au-Prince, Haiti. After completing that assignment he returned to Quantico in October 1922.

Except for service at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, FL, from January to July 1923, and completing a 3-month photographic course at Air Service Technical School, Chanute Field, IL, in 1925, he remained at Quantico for next five years. There he won second place in Schneider International Seaplane Race at Norfolk, VA, in November 1926, flying a special Curtiss Racer at a speed of 231.3 miles per hour.

In November 1927, he was assigned to Managua, Nicaragua, where he joined Observation Squadron 7-M. It was during this tour of duty that he won Medal of Honor. He returned to the U.S. in August 1929, and after commanding Fighter Squadron 5-N at Quantico, he was named Chief Test Pilot and Flight-Aeronautical Officer at the USN Aircraft Factory, Philadelphia, PA. He served in that capacity for 2 years before returning to Quantico in June 1932 to enter the Company Officers Course at the U.S. Marine Corps Schools. Graduating in July 1933, a month later he entered the Air Corps Tactical School at Montgomery, AL. Graduating from that school in June 1934, he began another 4 years at Quantico, where he was Air Officer on the Staff of the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force. He then served from May 1938 to June 1940 as Executive Officer of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station at St Thomas, Virgin Islands. He returned to Quantico to complete Senior Course in the U.S.M.C. Schools.

He left Quantico in May 1941 for the U.S. Embassy in London, England, as Assistant U.S. Naval Attaché for Air. In that capacity he traveled throughout England and Scotland and served as a

U.S. Navy observer in North Africa and the Middle East. He returned to the US in August 1941, and was again assigned to Quantico as Engineer and Supply Officer of the 1st U.S.M.C. Air Wing.

In September 1942, he arrived on Guadalcanal as Assistant Chief of Staff, 1st U.S.M.C. Air Wing. After that he was Commander of U.S.M.C. Aircraft Group 11, Chief of Staff of the 1<sup>st</sup> Air Wing and Commander of Strike and Search Patrol Commands, Solomon Islands.

He returned to the U.S. September 1943, and commanded the U.S.M.C. Air Station, Cherry Point, NC, until March the following year. From April-June 1944, he headed the 9th U.S.M.C. Aircraft Wing during reorganization of that unit. He then served for six months as Chief of Staff of the Wing and for another month as its Commander before returning to the Pacific Theater in February 1945. This time he was Island Commander, Peleliu from March-August 1945, and Commanding General, Air Defense Command, 2nd U.S.M.C. Air Wing on Okinawa until taking command of 2nd Wing. Returning from Okinawa in March 1946 reported to the Naval Air Station at Glenview, Illinois, the following month. There he headed the US Marine Corps Air Reserve Training Command until July 1949, when he was ordered to Norfolk as Chief of Staff, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic. He served in that capacity until took he command of the 1st US Marine Corps Air Wing in Korea, July 1951.

In April 1952, he returned from Korea to serve in Hawaii as Deputy Commander, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, until February 1953 when he became Commanding General, Aircraft FMC, Pacific, at U.S.M.C. Air Station, El Toro, CA. He left El Toro in July 1955, and assumed duties at HQ U.S.M.C. as Director of Aviation, 1 August 1955, as a Lieutenant General. He served in this capacity until retired from the U.S.M.C. when he was promoted to General.

General Schilt was married to the former Elizabeth Weber of Olney, IL. They had four daughters—Martha, Alice, Susan, and Eleanor, and two sons—John and Christian.

Christian F. Schilt, 91, a retired US Marine Corps General who won the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest decoration for gallantry, died 8 January 1987 at the Lafayette Villa nursing home in Norfolk, Virginia. He had Alzheimer's disease. He was buried in Section 2, Grave 151-2, Arlington National Cemetery.

**Military Awards:** Medal of Honor, Navy Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit with valor device, Distinguished Flying Cross with gold star, Bronze Star with valor device, Air Medal with 4 gold stars, Navy Presidential Unit Citation with service star, Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal with service star, World War I Victory Medal with Overseas clasp, Nicaraguan Campaign Medal, American Defense Service Medal with Base clasp, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with 2 service stars, World War II Victory Medal, Navy Occupation Service Medal with Asia clasp, National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal with 5 service stars, Nicaraguan Medal of Merit with silver star, Nicaraguan Cross of Valor, Order of Military Merit, Taeguk Cordon Medal, Korean Presidential Unit Citation, and United Nations Korea Medal

**Masonic History:** Brother Schilt was a member of Olney Lodge #140 in Indianapolis, IN, and a National Sojourner.