

General John A. Lejeune

Lieutenant General John Archer Lejeune (luh-jern), 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps, was born at Pointe Coupee, Louisiana, on 10 January 1867. He was educated at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, from which he graduated with a B.A. degree. Subsequently, he secured an appointment as a midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy, from which he was graduated in 1888. At the expiration of a two-year cruise as a cadet midshipman he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps on 1 July 1890.



Second Lieutenant Lejeune reported for duty on 31 August 1890 at the Marine Barracks, New York, serving at that post until he was detached, joining Marine Barracks, Norfolk, Virginia, on 3 November 1890. From 1 October 1891 to 28 July 1893, Lt Lejeune served on board the USS Bennington and was promoted to first lieutenant on 26 February 1892. On 28 August 1893, he reported for duty at the Norfolk Barracks, where he served until 31 July 1897.

On 2 August 1897, 1stLt Lejeune assumed command of the Marine Guard of the USS Cincinnati, on which vessel he served throughout the Spanish-American War. He was detached from the USS Cincinnati 17 February 1899, and on 18 February 1899, joined the USS Massachusetts, to command the Marine Guard. He was promoted to captain on 3 March 1899 and left his position on the Massachusetts on 10 May 1900.

From 3 July 1900 to 12 November 1900, Capt Lejeune performed recruiting duty at Boston, Massachusetts, and on 22 November 1900 reported at the Marine Barracks, Pensacola, Florida, to command the Marines. From 12 January 1903 to 21 January 1903, Capt Lejeune was on duty at the Norfolk Barracks, going to recruiting duty at New York City on 26 January 1903. He was promoted to major on 3 March 1903 and was on duty at Headquarters, Washington, D.C. from 15 May 1903 to 8 August 1903.

On 8 August 1903, Maj Lejeune was ordered to the USS Panther to command the Marine Battalion on board that vessel, joining 16 August 1903. On 23 October 1903, the battalion, with Maj Lejeune in command, was transferred to the USS Dixie. From 16 December 1903 to 21 December 1904, Maj Lejeune was on duty ashore on the Isthmus of Panama in command of this battalion, leaving there on the latter date on board the USS Yankee.

From 27 January 1905 to 20 May 1906, Maj Lejeune served at the Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C. He then returned to Panama in command of a battalion of Marines from 29 May to 6 July 1906, the battalion being transported both ways on board the USS Columbia. This was detached duty, and on 29 March 1907, Maj Lejeune was detached from command of the Washington Barracks and ordered to the Philippines.

Arriving in the Philippines on 2 May 1907, Maj Lejeune assumed command of the Marine Barracks and Naval Prison, Navy Yard, Cavite, on 6 May 1907. He assumed command of the First Brigade of Marines on 15 June 1908 and was promoted to lieutenant colonel on 13 May 1909. He was detached on 8 June 1909 and ordered to return to the United States.

Lieutenant Colonel Lejeune embarked on board the USS Ohio on 26 May 1912 with the Second Regiment, First Provisional Brigade Marines, for Cuba. He disembarked at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, on 8 June 1912 and was in command of the District of Santiago from 9 June to 14 July 1912. On 15 July 1912, LtCol Lejeune embarked on board the USS Prairie and sailed for Colon, Panama. July 18-29, 1912 was spent at Camp Elliott, Panama.

After returning to the United States, LtCol Lejeune was again called upon for expeditionary duty. He sailed from Philadelphia, 20 February 1913 as second in command of the First Regiment, Second Provisional Brigade Marines and disembarked 27 February 1913, at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He returned to Philadelphia on board the USS Prairie on 2 May 1913.



On 27 November 1913, he sailed from New York with the 2d Advanced Base Regiment, with his ultimate destination Vera Cruz, Mexico, but returned to the United States to receive his promotion to colonel on 25 February 1914. Col Lejeune and his unit eventually landed in Mexico on 22 April 1914 and participated in the occupation of the city. He returned home in December 1914, this time to report to Marine Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C., to become assistant to the Major General Commandant of the Marine Corps. He was promoted to brigadier general on 29 August 1916.

With the outbreak of World War I, BGen Lejeune assumed command of the newly constructed Marine Barracks, Quantico, Virginia. His overseas service was, however, inevitable, and in June 1918, he arrived at Brest, France. He was promoted to major general 1 July 1918.

Upon reporting to the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, he was assigned to command a brigade of the 32nd Division and assumed command of the 4th Brigade of Marines of the 2d Division immediately following the attack of the division in the Soissons offensive.

On 28 July 1918, MajGen Lejeune assumed command of the 2d Division and remained in that capacity until August 1919, when the unit was demobilized. He was the first Marine officer to hold an Army divisional command, and following the Armistice he led his division in the march into Germany.

During that war he was recognized by the French Government as a strategist and leader, as

evidenced by the Legion of Honor, and the Croix de Guerre bestowed upon him by that people. From General John J. Pershing he received the Distinguished Service Medal. The Navy Distinguished Service Medal was conferred upon him when he returned to the United States following the occupation of Germany.

In October 1919, he again was appointed Commanding General, Marine Barracks, Quantico, Virginia. He was appointed as Major General Commandant of the Marine Corps on 1 July 1920. Subsequent to that time, he left his headquarters at Washington several times for tours of inspection in Haiti, Santo Domingo, Cuba, Puerto Rico, to the West Coast and elsewhere.



Upon the expiration of his second term as Commandant, MajGen Lejeune indicated his desire not to retire from the Marine Corps, but was relieved as Commandant in March 1929. On 10 November 1929, he retired in order to accept the position of superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute, serving there until poor health necessitated his resignation in October 1937. In February 1942, he was advanced to the rank of lieutenant general on the Marine Corps retired list.

Lieutenant General Lejeune died 20 November 1942 at the Union Memorial Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland, and was interred in the Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors. Today, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, bears his name and he is often referred to as "the greatest of all Leathernecks," having served more than 40 years with the Marine Corps.

Lieutenant General Lejeune's awards include: Distinguished Service Medal (Navy); Distinguished Service Medal (Army); Sampson Medal (USS Cincinnati); Spanish Campaign Medal; Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal with three Bronze stars for Panama, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic; Mexican Service Medal; Victory Medal with St. Mihiel Champagne, Meuse-Argonne, and Defensive Sector Clasp for World War I; Second Nicaraguan Campaign Medal; French Legion of Honor (Commander); and French Croix de Guerre with Palm.