



# Marine General from the Ranks: The Life of LtGen Homer L. Litzenberg Jr. USMC

*Mr Bryan J Dickerson*

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Born in a Pennsylvania steel town in 1903, Homer L. Litzenberg Jr. began his long and distinguished military career as a private in the Pennsylvania National Guard. After less than two years of service, Litzenberg left the National Guard and enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. Demonstrating his great abilities and leadership potential while serving in stateside posts and in combat in Haiti, Litzenberg was able to earn a commission as a second lieutenant through the Officer Candidate School after only two years of service as a Marine. As a staff officer and planning officer, Homer Litzenberg served at various times at the highest levels of the U.S. Armed Forces command structure. He worked with and for such notable military leaders as Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, General of the Armies George C. Marshall, General George S. Patton Jr. and Commandant of the Marine Corps General Clifton B. Cates. In combat in Haiti and Nicaragua in the 1920s, and the Marshall and Marianas Islands during World War Two, Homer Litzenberg proved himself to be a courageous and skillful leader of Marines. He was one of the very few Marines to participate in amphibious assaults in both the North Africa / European Theater and the Pacific Theater. He faced the ultimate test as a combat leader during the Korean War when he led the 7th Marine Regiment in the 1st Marine Division's breakout from the Chosin Reservoir despite the horrendous cold and overwhelming numbers of Communist Chinese forces. For his leadership, he was awarded the Navy Cross, second only to the Medal of Honor in the hierarchy of American military/naval decorations. While many Marine officers and even several prominent generals including Lieutenant General Lewis "Chesty" Puller, General Graves B. Erskine and Commandant of the Marine Corps General Carl Mundy have begun their careers as enlisted Marines, very, very few earned their commissions without having earned college degrees or having even attended college before being commissioned. Homer Litzenberg was one of those very, very few Marines to have done so.

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