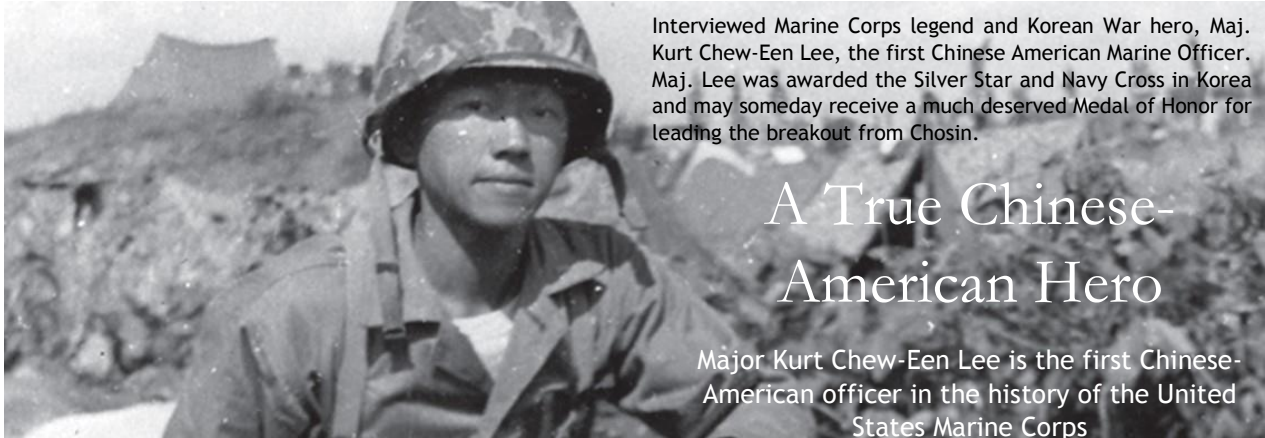


FEATURE



Interviewed Marine Corps legend and Korean War hero, Maj. Kurt Chew-Een Lee, the first Chinese American Marine Officer. Maj. Lee was awarded the Silver Star and Navy Cross in Korea and may someday receive a much deserved Medal of Honor for leading the breakout from Chosin.

A True Chinese-American Hero

Major Kurt Chew-Een Lee is the first Chinese-American officer in the history of the United States Marine Corps

BY ROGER S. DONG

In 1950, First Lieutenant Kurt Chew-Een Lee led five hundred Marines through a blizzard to save eight thousand more from certain capture. But his greatest victory may have been changing the way our country regards Asian Americans.

Major Kurt Chew-eeen Lee, US Marines Corps, Retired has accepted an invitation from Chinese American Heroes to visit San Francisco and Cathay Post from February 7-13, 2011.

Major Lee lives in Washington, D.C. so that he can be close to his late wife who is interned near their home. He was born in Hawaii, but spent most of his youth in Sacramento.

Major Lee was the first Asian American/Chinese American officer in the United States Marine Corps, and he joined the military to be a role model and prove that Chinese Americans were tough, loyal and brave warriors. His courage and leadership were proven on the battlefield beyond anyone's expectations. Today, at 85 he is still training new Marine recruits at the Marine Corps training center at Quantico, Virginia.

Major Lee served in WWII, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. Preparing his machine gun company for the Korean War, 1st Lieutenant Lee was extremely tough in training his men, who initially hated him for demanding so much of them. After meeting the enemy and defeating them in every battle, his men realized that they owed their survival and victories to the man who had trained them to be tough and unbeatable.

Major Lee's heroism was rewarded with the US Navy's second highest award, the Navy Cross. He is also the recipient of two Purple Hearts.

The Presidential citation for the Navy Cross beautifully described his well-earned award for bravery, leadership and heroism and reads as follows:

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Cross to First Lieutenant Kurt Chew-Een Lee (MCSN: 0-48880), United States Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United Nations while serving as Commanding Officer of a Machine-Gun Platoon of Company B, First

Battalion, Seventh Marines, FIRST Marine Division (Reinforced), in action against enemy aggressor forces in the Republic of Korea, on 2 and 3 November 1950.

Immediately taking countermeasures when a numerically superior enemy force fiercely attacked his platoon and overran its left flank during the defense of strategic terrain commanding approaches to the main supply route south of Sudong, first Lieutenant Lee boldly exposed himself to intense hostile automatic weapons, grenade and sniper small-arms fire to carry out a personal reconnaissance, well in advance of his own lines, in order to re-deploy the machine-gun posts within the defensive perimeter. Momentarily forced back by extremely heavy opposition, he quickly reorganized his unit and, instructing his men to cover his approach, bravely moved up an enemy held slope in a deliberate attempt to draw fire and thereby disclose hostile troop positions.

Despite serious wounds sustained as he pushed forward, First Lieutenant Lee charged directly into the face of the enemy fire and, by his dauntless fighting spirit and resourcefulness, served to inspire other members of his platoon to heroic efforts in pressing a determined counterattack and driving the hostile forces from the sector. His outstanding courage, brilliant leadership and unswerving devotion to duty were contributing factors in the success achieved by his company and reflect the highest credit upon First Lieutenant Lee and the United States Naval Service.”

Since he is a Chinese American distinguished veteran and hero, Cathay Post and Chinese American Heroes will honor Major Lee and arrange for appropriate events to celebrate his visit. We will be holding press conferences at either the Cathay Post Headquarters or the Bok Pon Memorial Hall.

For 65 years, the heroic story about Major Lee was known primarily by his own men in his unit and among some of the 4,000 plus Marines he saved during the Korean War.

MAJOR KURT CHEW-EEN LEE, USMC



A TRUE AMERICAN HERO

Major Kurt Chew-Een Lee is the first Chinese-American officer in the history of the United States Marine Corps. Honored for his heroic performance during the Korean War, Lee is a recipient of the Navy Cross, the second highest honor a marine can receive for valor. In an ironic twist of fate, the enemy forces that Lee fought so bravely against shared many of his same cultural values the enemy was the Chinese army.

DUAL CITIZENSHIP

Born and raised in northern California, Lee is the first-born son of Chinese immigrants. As a first-generation American, Lee says he and his siblings "grew up in an American way, but kept Chinese customs." As a high school student, Lee witnessed the events of World War II and determined to become an honored American soldier joined the Junior ROTC. During a time when very few minorities were in command, Private Lee rose through the ranks to become a First Lieutenant. Blowing past cultural barriers, he became Commanding Officer of a Machine-Gun Platoon of Company B, First Battalion, Seventh Marines, First Marine Division. His opportunity to earn the respect of his troops and prove his solidarity as an American citizen would soon arise on the rugged mountain ranges of northeast Korea.

LEADING THE CHARGE

Despite injuries sustained on the battlefield, Lee went on to lead 500 marines on a grueling night mission to save their fellow soldiers, the Fox Company, at the battle of Chosin Reservoir. In a mission unprecedented in Marine Corps history, Lee's company fought for every inch of ground and safely evacuated Fox Company to the Port City of Hungnam. As the first officer of Asian descent to be commissioned in the United States Marine Corps, Lee is not only a pioneer but also a shining example of resolve and courage. Major Lee currently resides in Virginia.

That is now starting to change. This past year, the Smithsonian Institute learned about Major Lee and told his story on the Smithsonian Channel on cable TV. Because few people subscribe to this cable channel, his story is still not well known. Check it out at <http://www.smithsonianchannel.com/site/sn/show.do?show=136060>.

Don't miss this very inspiring and extraordinary story of Major Kurt Lee who had to battle racial discrimination while risking his life for his country. I know that everyone is looking forward to meeting a true American military hero, Major Kurt Lee, at Cathay Post when he visits us after Chinese New Year on February 3, 2011.

I know I will be very proud to meet him and thank him for his very exceptional service.

###

Roger S. Dong is the Chairman of the Chinese American Heroes and board member of the Chinese American Forum.