

# Henry Hulbert – First Marine Gunner

**BLUF:** Henry Lewis Hulbert arrived in the United States in 1897, enlisting in the United States Marine Corps in 1898. His actions in Samoa in 1899 earned him the Medal of Honor. Hulbert served in the Marine Corps until 1918, when he was killed near Blanc Mont, France, during the First World War. He was 51 years of age at the time of his death. Hulbert was a highly decorated Marine during his career, including the Navy Cross and the Distinguished Service Cross, along with his Medal of Honor.

**LEADERSHIP TRAITS DISPLAYED:** Judgment, **Dependability**, Initiative, **Decisiveness**, Tact, **Integrity**, **Endurance**, **Bearing**, **Unselfishness**, **Courage**, **Knowledge**, **Loyalty**, and **Enthusiasm**.

**SETTING THE STAGE:** Hulbert was born in Kingston-upon-Hull, Yorkshire, England, in 1867. He was the son of a prosperous merchant, receiving a classical education at the Felstad School in Essex, England. At 17, Hulbert joined the British Colonial Service and was sent to the Straits Settlements in Malaysia. While living and working there, he met and married Anne Rose Hewitt, the sister of his mentor Robert Douglas Hewitt. Robert Hewitt was the State Auditor and confidant to the Royal Governor of Malaysia. Hulbert's career was on the rise until he had an affair with his wife's sister. Helen, the sister-in-law, was sent back to Britain in disgrace but drowned when the ship carrying her sank off near Aden. There was a discreet divorce, and Hulbert was ordered out of the Malay States.

In 1897 Hulbert arrived in Skagway, Alaska, traveling to the Klondike gold fields in Canada's Yukon Territory. Running out of money and luck, he arrived in San Francisco, CA, in the spring of 1898. On 28 March 1898, at age 31, Hulbert enlisted as a private in the Marine Corps at the Marine Barracks, Mare Island Navy Yard, Vallejo, CA. He completed eight weeks of training at Mare Island before being assigned as a member of the Marine Guard on the protected cruiser *USS Philadelphia* on 9 July 1898. The *Philadelphia* was the Pacific Station flagship, and Hulbert was under Marine First Lieutenant Constantine Perkins's command. Hulbert served at sea for the next eight months until the *Philadelphia* arrived at Apia, Samoa, on 6 March 1899. The Marines were in Samoa to protect American interests during the Second Samoan Civil War. On 22 May 1899, Hulbert was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in Samoa.

The *Philadelphia* left Samoa on 21 May 1899 and returned to Mare Island. Hulbert was promoted to corporal's rank on 29 May and the rank of sergeant on 23 November 1899. Hulbert eventually transferred to the *USS Concord* on 30 October 1901. When he left the *Concord* in 1902, Hulbert was reduced to sergeant because of staffing quotas. Until the end of his enlistment on 23 March 1903, Hulbert served on the *USS Boston* and at Mare Island. He ended his first enlistment with the rank of first sergeant.

**THE STORY:** Hulbert re-enlisted in the Marine Corps four times. Between 1903 and 1917, Hulbert served on seven different U.S. Navy ships, his last being on the *USS Prairie* with Sgt. Dan Daly. Hulbert also served at three different foreign posts as part of various Marine Corps contingents.

When the U.S. entered World War I in April 1917, Hulbert was stationed at the Marine Corps Barracks in Washington, D.C., as part of the Commandant's Office Staff. He was promoted to the rank of warrant grade Marine Gunner on 27 March 1917. Hulbert was the first Marine to hold this rank. He requested and received permission to join the Fifth Marine Regiment, headed to France as part of the American Expeditionary Force.

Hulbert served under Col. Wendell Neville when he became a part of the Toulon defensive section near Verdun from March to May 1918. Hulbert also participated in the Third Battle of the Aisne and the Soissons and St. Mihiel offensives.

Though he was assigned to safe areas at regimental headquarters, Hulbert "indulged himself in a bit of free-lance fighting," according to Neville. He was awarded the Army Distinguished Service Cross and Navy Cross for his actions at Chateau Thierry, but Hulbert's luck ran out on 4 October 1918 near Blanc Mont Ridge. During a counterattack, Hulbert led his platoon against a group of German machine guns. Though wounded, he pressed the attack against the fleeing Germans. During the melee, he fell mortally wounded, dying on the battlefield. For his actions at Mont Blanc, Hulbert was awarded the French Croix de Guerre with Palm.

**AFTERMATH:** Hulbert was recommended by General John Pershing, USA, for the rank of captain, but the Senate did not approve it. He is one of the most respected and decorated Marines in the history of the Marine Corps. After his death, the destroyer *USS Hulbert* was named and commissioned in honor of Hukbert on 27 October 1920. The *Hulbert* was present at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 and survived the Japanese attack, decommissioned on 3 November 1945. The ship's bell hung on the quarterdeck of Mitchell Hall at Quantico until 2019.

## QUESTIONS

1. Henry Hulbert most displayed which leadership traits during his career as a Marine?
2. In what ways did Hulbert's past prepare him for his life in the Marines?
3. What lessons can one take from Hulbert's conduct during battle?

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