



## General Michael J. Williams

July 12, 1943 - December 6, 2025

General Michael J. Williams, 28th Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, died on December 6, 2025, at Asbury Solomons in Calvert County, Maryland. He was 83. He is survived by his wife, Barbara Williams; his son, Matthew; his daughter-in-law, Kim; his two grandsons, Evan and Aiden; and his twin brothers, Alan and David Williams.

General Williams was born on July 12, 1943, in Baltimore, Maryland. He was raised on C.S. Forester's novels about the seafaring Horatio Hornblower, shaping his ambitions for adventure and danger. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy in June 1967, commissioning as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. Shortly before attending The Basic School for Marine Corps officers, he married Barbara Silva, a childhood friend since second grade. He was promoted to First Lieutenant on September 7, 1968, and upon completion of Naval Flight Training at Pensacola, Florida, he was designated a Naval Aviator in February 1969. After earning his Naval Aviator designation, he began a distinguished 35-year career in aviation, operational leadership, strategic planning, and senior service stewardship.

Promoted to Captain on February 1, 1971, Captain Williams served operational tours in both the continental United States and the Republic of Vietnam, gaining experience that shaped him into a combat-ready aviator and

an emerging leader. In 1973, he was assigned to the Marine Corps Amphibious Warfare School in Quantico, Virginia. Upon graduating in June 1974, he joined the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing on Okinawa, Japan, where he served in a range of operational billets essential to Marine aviation in the Pacific.

Returning to the United States in the summer of 1975, Captain Williams reported to Marine Helicopter Squadron One (HMX-1) at Quantico, Virginia. There, he was designated a Presidential Helicopter Pilot, serving in high-trust roles in support of the President of the United States. His professionalism and character earned him increasing responsibility within the squadron. He was promoted to Major on August 1, 1977, and, in July 1978, selected to attend the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, from which he graduated in June 1979.

Following school, Major Williams returned to the U.S. Naval Academy to serve as a Company Officer and later as Executive Assistant to the Commandant of Midshipmen. In July 1982, he transferred to the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing at Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, California, serving first as Executive Officer of Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron 16 and later as Commanding Officer of Marine Helicopter Training Squadron 301. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel on October 1, 1982.

From June 1984 to June 1985, Lieutenant Colonel Williams attended the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Upon graduation, he was assigned to the 3d Marine Division on Okinawa, where he served as the Assistant Division G-3. Returning to Washington, D.C. in the summer of 1986, he assumed duties at Headquarters Marine Corps as the Marine Corps Program Development Officer, and later as Head of the Program Development Branch within the Requirements and Program Division. He was promoted to Colonel on October 1, 1988.

In July 1989, Colonel Williams transferred to the 2d Marine Aircraft Wing at MCAS Cherry Point, first serving as the Wing Inspector and then as Executive Officer of Marine Aircraft Group 26 (MAG-26). He assumed command of MAG-26 on July 16, 1990, deploying the unit to Saudi Arabia for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Under his leadership, MAG-26 executed complex aviation missions in support of coalition forces before returning to the United States in May 1991.

In November 1991, he was assigned to the Joint Staff as Vice Director for Operational Plans and Interoperability, J-7, and Vice Director for Military Education. He was selected for promotion to Brigadier General in December 1991 and advanced to that grade on April 1, 1992.

Brigadier General Williams assumed command of 2d Force Service Support Group (2d FSSG) on July 16, 1993. On June 8, 1994, he was appointed Commanding General, Joint Task Force 160, leading a major humanitarian relief mission for approximately 44,000 Haitian and Cuban migrants at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. When asked why Brigadier General Williams was chosen, then Major General Wilkerson, Director of Marine Corps Plans, stated that "I could not find a better guy to be in that kind of crucible. Mike [Brigadier General Williams] has a heart of gold, and he's a leader." Brigadier General Williams was often seen walking around the encampment, handing candy to children. Brigadier General Williams resumed command of 2d FSSG on October 31, 1994. Following his time with Task Force 160, he was promoted to Major General in March 1995 and, in July, appointed Director of the Marine Corps Staff in Washington, D.C.

On July 23, 1996, Major General Williams assumed command of Marine Corps Systems Command (MARCORSYSCOM), overseeing modernization efforts across the service. He was promoted to Lieutenant General on August

5, 1998, and subsequently served as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Programs and Resources at Headquarters Marine Corps.

Lieutenant General Williams became the 28th Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps on September 8, 2000, and was advanced to General on November 1, 2000. One year later, the attacks of September 11, 2001, thrust the nation into a new era of conflict. Serving as the Corps' second-in-command during those pivotal days, General Williams helped lead the Marine Corps through the immediate transition to a wartime footing. His steady guidance shaped the Corps' early posture, readiness, and operational response as Marines prepared for the opening stages of the Global War on Terror. In the uncertainty that followed 9/11, his calm leadership, deep experience, and unshakeable devotion to Marines provided continuity and confidence across the force. He served as Assistant Commandant until September 9, 2002, and retired from active duty in November 2002.

General Williams' awards and decorations, listed in order of precedence, include the Superior Service Medal with gold star; Legion of Merit with gold star; Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V"; Meritorious Service Medal; Air Medal with Strike/Flight Numeral "25" and bronze star; Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with gold star and Combat "V"; Joint Meritorious Unit Award; Navy Unit Commendation; Meritorious Unit Commendation with bronze star; National Defense Service Medal with two bronze stars; Vietnam Service Medal with three bronze stars; Southwest Asia Service Medal with three bronze stars; Humanitarian Service Medal; Sea Service Deployment Ribbon with three bronze stars; Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation (Gallantry Cross Medal Color with Palm); Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation (Civil Actions Medal First Class Color with Palm); Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal; Kuwait Liberation Medal (Saudi Arabia); Kuwait Liberation Medal (Kuwait); Naval Aviator Insignia; Rifle Expert Badge second award; and Pistol Expert Badge 11th award.

Beyond the uniform, General Williams was a devoted husband to his wife. She accompanied him throughout decades of service, from squadron deployments to senior leadership positions across the Marine Corps. Her steadfast support—both publicly and privately—was integral to his success. They had one son, Matthew, and together built a life grounded in loyalty, service, and community.

After retirement, General Williams continued to contribute to national defense and professional military education. His counsel was sought by Marine Corps leaders, academic institutions, and defense organizations. He and Barbara made their home in LaPlata, Maryland, where they supported Marine Corps causes, charitable initiatives, and veteran communities.

General Williams leaves behind a legacy of steady leadership, quiet professionalism, and unwavering devotion to the Marines he led. His life's work strengthened the Marine Corps in peace and war, shaped generations of aviators and commanders, and embodied the highest standards of service.

Memorial Service for General Michael Joel Williams will be held on Thursday, December 18, 2025 at 10AM at the U. S. Marine Memorial Chapel, 3251 Embry Lane, Quantico, Virginia 22134. Base access will be granted to those attending the Memorial Service.

Burial with full military honors will occur at the National Memorial Cemetery at Quantico on December 18, 2025. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to the National Military Family Association in tribute to General Williams' lifelong commitment to Marines and their families.

General Michael J. Williams devoted his life to service, to the Corps, and to all those he was privileged to lead. His example endures. Semper Fidelis.



# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

DEC 18. 10:00 AM (ET)

U. S. Marine Memorial Chapel  
3251 Embry Loop  
Quantico, VA 22134

*Base access will be granted to those attending the Memorial Service.*

## Interment

DEC 18. 11:30 AM (ET)

National Memorial Cemetery at Quantico  
1824 Joplin Road  
Triangle, VA 22172  
<https://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/NMCQ.asp>

# Tribute Wall

FW

“*Sadly I was just made aware of the passing of General Michael Williams. I had the distinct honor of working with then Major Mike Williams who served as a Company Officer in the Second Battalion at USNA. General Williams was the consummate professional and instrumental in helping me through my first Plebe Summer (as a civilian) in the Hall.*

*My deepest condolences to the Williams Family and please know that I offer a prayer for you and the soul of this great man. Bravo Zulu, Sir!*

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**Felicia A Walker** - January 27 at 12:04 PM

AC

“*General Williams was true gentleman and an amazing Marine. He had such a great sense of humor and always knew how to make something better when it appeared the skies were dark. I just saw the General this past May at an evening parade and we talked for quite awhile. I wish his wife Barbara my deepest condolences during this difficult time. On behalf of the entire Women Marines Association, we send our deepest sympathies and highest regard for this wonderful man. Semper Fidelis, Ann Crittenden*

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**Ann Crittenden** - December 20, 2025 at 08:29 AM

RR

“ Prayers and thoughts for Family You will be truly missed Sir Semper Fi. It was true honored when you Pinned on my Gunnery Sgt Stripes



Robert Pennington Mgysgt Retired - December 19, 2025 at 08:51 PM

RP

“ Had Great Pleasure working for General Williams as his Enlisted Aide while he was serving As ACMC. He was a great Man and His Wife Barbara a wonderful lady

Robert Pennington - December 19, 2025 at 08:47 PM

G(

“ General and Mrs. Terry Dake, USMC (Ret) planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of General Michael J. Williams.

General and Mrs. Terry Dake, USMC (Ret) - December 16, 2025 at 11:54 AM

G(

“ General and Mrs. Terry Dake, USMC (Ret) purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of General Michael J. Williams.



General and Mrs. Terry Dake, USMC (Ret) - December 16, 2025 at 11:54 AM

DW

“ *Not just a great Marine an extraordinary brother and brother-in-law who we dearly loved. A donation has been made to the National Military Family Association in his honor.*

David Williams - December 15, 2025 at 06:39 PM

JS

“ *James a. S. planted a grove of 5 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of General Michael J. Williams.*

James a. S. - December 15, 2025 at 03:42 PM

BS

“ *BGen USMC (Ret) David V Shuter purchased the Beautiful Dreams for the family of General Michael J. Williams.*



BGen USMC (Ret) David V Shuter - December 14, 2025 at 04:54 PM

MM

“ My very first flight at HMX was in the early fall of '76 and it was with then-Captain Mike Williams in a '53. At that point we were both Captains -- but you know as I do that a Captain with 9 months time in grade, as I was, is not equal to a Captain who's been selected for Major. Mike Williams could have treated me as a snot-nosed Second Lieutenant, but he didn't. He treated me like an equal. He did so the entire time we were in HMX that tour. In years since, when I would encounter him at a social event like an HMX Reunion it was the same, even though he was a "multi-star" General officer. What a good man. He was the best.

*May he rest in peace. Amen.*

*Mel De Mars*

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**Mel De Mars** - December 14, 2025 at 01:34 PM

MM

*Barbara, Matthew, and other family members, I have known Mike since we served on Okinawa in 1985-85 with 3d Mar Div. Mike made that year bearable for so many of us by sheer force of personality. He is the funniest man I have ever known. He missed his family and talked about them so often that I felt like I knew "Babs" and could to this day describe the satin jacket with the embroidered dragon on the back that one of Mike's aviator buddies had "gifted" her with. When I am with Marine flyer friends, especially if they have served with HMX-1, I tell the story about "Drake and Wilson" in Plains, GA.*

*All this is by way of saying, I adored Mike, looked up to him, and am devastated at the news of his passing. Please know you are all in my prayers.*

*Mitzi Manning  
Colonel, USMC (Ret)*

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**Mitzi Manning** - December 19, 2025 at 07:38 PM

BP

*I was on Mike's staff when we were Firstties at USNA. He was great man then and he was great for the rest of his life. All who knew him, respected and truly loved him. His sense of humor was legendary. He cared about his people and we all knew it. My condolences to his family.*

Barry Pollara - March 24 at 03:41 PM

ED

“ God bless you Sir. Thank you for your service.

Elaine Dixon - December 14, 2025 at 11:58 AM

-M

“ - Amy, Callie, Chris, Maggie, Marilyn purchased the Fairest of All for the family of General Michael J. Williams.



- Amy, Callie, Chris, Maggie, Marilyn - December 14, 2025 at 10:51 AM

JF

“ Barbara and Matt: My deepest condolences and prayers for you and your family. I’m saddened by your loss and the passing of a great Marine. I do have many very fond memories of our time at R&P 85-87 building POM 88-89. Mike was a wonderful addition to the “Romper Room” and bringing his sense of humor and quick wit, not to mention, his intelligence to the demands of building the future of the MarineCorps. While we would be working late nights preparing briefs for various committees, CMC, and SecNav, Mike would entertain us with his inventions, the PCS dog and my favorite, the McYuppie, a kale goat cheese on rice cakes sandwich in a BMW shaped box. Our paths crossed later at the final brief before the kick off of Desert Storm, we didn’t miss a beat on reliving our times together. His impact on the legacy of our Corps will never be forgotten. Again, our prayers are with you and yours. Very Respectfully, Jim Fulks

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**Jim Fulks** - December 14, 2025 at 10:06 AM