



"My hope is that midshipmen will recognize the Distinguished Graduate Award for its true goal of inspiring Naval Academy graduates to give something back to the Academy, the Naval Service and our nation."

LIEUTENANT GENERAL **MATTHEW COOPER '58, USMC (RET.)**

Born and raised in Lexington, NC, Lieutenant General Matthew T. Cooper '58, USMC (Ret.), attended the University of North Carolina prior to entering the Naval Academy. Upon graduation, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps.

During his 35-year career in the Marine Corps, Cooper served more than 20 years in command billets which included command of two Marine Divisions and a Marine Corps Base. He also served as Deputy Commander of U.S. Forces, Japan. He served two combat tours in Vietnam and commanded the Marine Corps Ground Reserve during Operation Desert Shield/Storm. Cooper's final years on active duty were spent as Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Reserve Affairs at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps.

Cooper, a lifetime member of the Naval Academy Alumni Association, served as a national trustee of the U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association Board of Trustees, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Naval Mutual Aid Association and a director of Marine Toys for Tots Foundation. Following his retirement from the Marine Corps, Cooper served for 15 years as the president and CEO of Marine Toys for Tots Foundation, a non-profit charity dedicated to bringing the joy of Christmas to underprivileged

children throughout America. Under his leadership, this once struggling organization was transformed into one of the nation's premier charities with annual revenue of more than \$200 million.

In addition to the Distinguished Graduate Award, Cooper's other decorations include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V" and one star, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster, the Navy Commendation Medal, the Combat Action Ribbon, the Presidential Unit Citation, the Navy Unit Commendation and the Meritorious Unit Commendation along with a number of campaign medals and foreign decorations. Cooper is also the recipient of the Navy Distinguished Public Service Award and the Boy Scouts of America "Distinguished Eagle Scout" award.

Cooper is an honor graduate of the Marine Corps Basic School, an honor graduate of the Marine Corps Command & Staff College and a distinguished graduate of the U.S. Naval War College. He earned a masters degree from George Washington University and completed a Senior Executive Program at Harvard University.

Cooper and his wife, Bettie, have been married nearly 50 years and are the proud parents of Hudson, David and Caroline.