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## MEDAL OF HONOR

The Medal of Honor is the highest award for bravery that can be given to any individual serving in the Armed Forces of the United States of America. Since its inception in 1861 3,412 Medals have been authorized and bestowed to 3,394 recipients. (Note: 13 men received two Medals for two separate actions and five men received both the Army and Navy Medals of Honor for the same action.)

The Medal of Honor is awarded for a deed of personal bravery or self-sacrifice above and beyond the call of duty while the person as a member of the Armed Forces is in action against an enemy of the United States, or is engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force, or is serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

The deed must be proved by incontestable evidence of a least two eye witnesses; it must be so outstanding that it clearly distinguishes his gallantry beyond the call of duty from lesser forms of bravery; it must involve the risk of his life. Each of the Armed Forces regulations permits no margin of doubt or error for judging whether a person is entitled to the Medal of Honor.

It is presented by the President or by a high official "in the name of the Congress of the United States," thus being referred to as the Congressional Medal of Honor.

There is a gallant fighting  
history of more than  
100 years behind today's

# AIR FORCE MEDALS OF HONOR

by Capt. GARRY E. MITCHELMORE

Drawings by WOODI ISHMAEL  
Air Force Art Collection



Paris is lovely in September—or any other time of year if you want to enjoy the city. But the young lieutenant was there to brood. His second Distinguished Service Cross within two months had been a hollow award. The young aviator's closest companion had been killed on their last mission together.

France's finest city couldn't hold his attention for 10 days. The Meuse-Argonne offensive began September 26, 1918, and he cut short his leave to return to home base—voluntarily.

Flying was his forte. He began his last, fateful mission on September 29. Early in the evening he flew over an American balloon position and dropped a note. The troops on the ground were told to watch some enemy balloons a short distance behind the German lines. They soon saw each of the three German, sky-borne observation platforms burst into flames.

This gallant aviator was not again seen alive by friendly forces. Later, when the action was reconstructed, it was learned that the lieutenant had been pursued by eight German planes, and subjected to heavy German ground fire. Severely wounded, he dropped close to the ground near the town of Murvaux, firing on enemy troops, killing at least six and wounding at least as many more. Forced down, the young officer was ordered to surrender by the German troops who surrounded him. Instead, he drew

his automatic pistol and fought until he was killed by a bullet in the chest.

The 21-year-old flyer who died on the ground was 2d Lt. Frank Luke, Jr., from Phoenix, Ariz. Because of his heroic action against the enemy that evening, he became the first airman of the Air Service to be awarded the Medal of Honor, the United States' highest award for heroism.

1st. Lt. Eddie Rickenbacker eventually was likewise honored for action that took place four days prior to Luke's. But the posthumous ceremonies held for Luke marked the first presentation of a Medal of Honor to an Army aviator.

Only 55 years prior to that evening in France, six Union soldiers preceded Luke's first aviator award with a first of their own. The six were survivors of a group of 19 volunteers who had conducted a raid behind Confederate lines to sabotage the vital rail link between Atlanta and Chattanooga. Disguised as civilians, the daring raiders captured the locomotive "General" at Big Shanty, Ga., 200 miles deep in enemy territory. As the men fled north, they attempted to burn bridges and destroy tracks along the way. Hot on their trail, Confederate pursuers finally forced the saboteurs to scatter. Within a few days, all were captured. Eight were tried and executed. Later the six survivors were paroled from a Confederate prison and on March 25, 1863 became the first people in history to be awarded the newly created Medal of Honor. More than a century later their exploit was recreated in a movie, "The Great Locomotive Chase."

Although America's armed forces had numerous medals for bravery, the citizens had given scant thought to them. But suddenly, in the throes of the Civil War, existing awards for heroism seemed inadequate and

antiquated. They were all right, it seemed, for professional soldiers. For the neighbor boy fighting for a cause that lay close to home, however, something more was needed.

In late 1861 and early 1862, Congress created the initial Medal of Honor. It was for enlisted Naval people. But by March, 1863, legislative amendments had created a Navy Medal of Honor and an Army Medal of Honor for which enlisted men and officers of each service respectively were eligible. And for the record, that's the way it stands today. The award is not the "Congressional Medal of Honor." Instead there are three, distinct medals named for the three major services. Each Medal of Honor is presented by the President, "in the name of Congress."

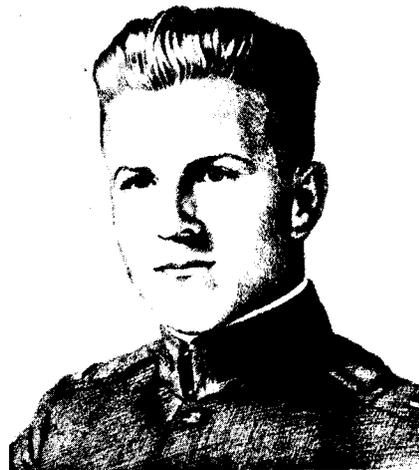
After the Civil War, Medals of Honor were presented for feats of bravery during the Indian Campaigns, the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection. Gallantry earned medals for seamen and Marines alike in China during the Boxer Rebellion. Heroes were honored for actions in Mexico (Vera Cruz), Haiti, and the Dominican Campaign in 1916 when the last awards were presented before World War I. And after the war, the nation honored its unknown dead with the Army medal. Special Congressional action also honored the unknown dead of five World War I allies.

Captain Charles A. Lindbergh, U.S. Army Air Corps Reserve, flew to France and fame, becoming the first airman to be honored with a peacetime Medal of Honor. His ci-

tation read, "for displaying heroic courage and skill as a navigator, at the risk of his life, by his nonstop flight in his airplane the 'Spirit of St. Louis,' from New York City to Paris, France. . . ." Other peacetime medals were awarded by the Navy.

Thirty-eight airmen of the Army Air Forces flew into the nation's honor roll during World War II. Five were awarded for one mission, the air raid on the Ploesti oil fields, August 1, 1943. On that day, 176 B-24s carrying 1,725 American airmen roared down the runway at Benghazi, North Africa. Only 163 aircraft reached the Roumanian oil fields and 54 of these were lost in action. At least 440 airmen died or were listed as missing in action that day. Of the five Medals of Honor awarded for heroism on that strike, three were posthumous.

Major Louis J. Sebille entered the record book as the first airman in a blue suit to be awarded a Medal of Honor after the Air Force gained autonomy in 1947. Sebille's posthumous award was for air action in Korea, August 5, 1950. Leading a group of F-51s on a strike near Hamchang, he attacked a camouflaged area containing a concentra-



World War I hero, Frank Luke, Jr., was the first aviator awarded the Medal of Honor.

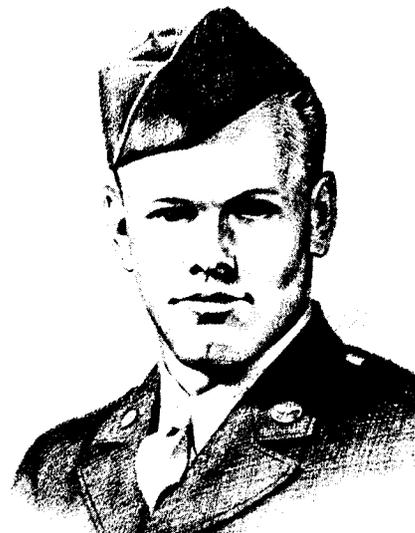
tion of enemy troops, artillery and armored vehicles. Although hit on his first pass, he ignored any possibility of survival by returning to the attack. Guns blazing, he dived to his death on target, crashing into the midst of a group of armored vehicles in order to save friendly ground troops nearby.

Following Korea, during which three more airmen were also awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously, work continued on the design of an Air Force Medal of Honor. (All Medals of Honor awarded to airmen were the Army medal.) The Air Force design was approved by the then Secretary of the Air Force Eugene M. Zuckert in September 1963. Congressional action was not required since the new medal involved only a change in design, not in criteria for its award. In early 1966, the Air Force received the first medals.

A Shau Valley in the Republic of Vietnam was hot March 10, 1966. The primary heat came from lead sent flying through the air by 2,000 Viet Cong who had overrun a small airstrip and were attacking a Special Forces outpost. Five American A-1Es dropped through dense cloud cover to lend the outpost a hand by bombing and strafing the enemy. One A-1E shuddered from hits and was forced down on the small airstrip, surrounded by the enemy. Into a hail of lead flew the downed pilot's rescuer. Landing on the littered, shell-torn strip, the pilot somehow managed to pick up the downed man. The two then flew out under fire, the rescued pilot sitting in the rescuer's lap. For his bravery that day, Major Bernard F. Fisher became the first airman to receive the Air Force Medal of Honor.

What kind of men are these who risk all, and even make the supreme sacrifice in a few moments of unbelievable bravery? Most certainly

they cannot be categorized in a neat little package. They come from varied social and economic backgrounds—from Maine to California. Some were real "tigers," others modest, unassuming people. Captain Bill Shomo, a Pennsylvanian, entered the Army Air Corps in August, 1941. "I had waited 16 months in combat for an opportunity to tangle with a Japanese airplane while airborne," he recalled. "Then on January 10, 1945 over Tugueguero Airport, I spotted an enemy dive bomber while it was approaching the airstrip to land. I shot it down for my first win." Shomo had no way of knowing it at the time, but that first kill was the prelude to a historic mission. The next day he and Lt. Paul Lipscomb were assigned the mission of photographing Japanese airdromes on the northern tip of Luzon. The two jumped a superior Japanese force. While his partner clobbered three, Shomo shot down seven Japanese aircraft, an all-time high attained by an airman of the Army Air Forces for a single



SSgt Henry E. Erwin was severely burned during World War II heroism that won the Medal.

combat sortie. Shomo was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Soon after, Gen. George Kenney, area air commander, talked with Shomo and Lipscomb. "I asked what they did for a living before they got into the Air Force," Kenny later revealed. "Lipscomb was a Texas cowboy. Shomo—believe it or not—was a licensed embalmer."

Friendly competition marked at least two flying heroes. Majors Tommy McGuire and Richard Bong were in an unofficial race for the leading number of kills during World War II. Both were in action in the Pacific. Bong's final tally of 40 enemy aircraft nosed out McGuire by two.

A thread of commonality can be found in circumstances and places.



Major Louis Sebille died as the first airman in the U.S. Air Force to be awarded the Medal of Honor.

More than one fighter pilot earned his place on the Air Force Honor Roll when he attacked an enemy force of overwhelming superiority. Several bomber pilots have been honored for pressing attacks on targets when their planes were in no condition to do so—when bail-out or a return to base were logical and acceptable alternatives. The August 1943 raid at Ploesti was the first of three raids on that target in which airmen earned the Medal of Honor, but died in the action for which it was awarded. Lt. David R. Kingsley won one for a Ploesti raid on June 23, 1944. Another posthumous Medal of Honor went to Lt. Donald D. Pucket for a July 9, 1944 raid over the oil fields.

Most aviator awards have been presented to officers—simply because most of our rated people are officers, and most of the combat action occurs in the air. Enlisted crew members have gotten a share, however. For instance, Staff Sgt. Henry Erwin was on a strike over Koriyama, Japan, 25 years ago. He was a radio operator, and had the additional duty of dropping phosphorescent smoke bombs as markers to assemble the group when the launching point was reached. His



The first Air Force designed Medal of Honor was awarded to Major Bernard Fisher for heroism in Vietnam.

B-29 encountered antiaircraft fire and enemy fighter opposition over the assembly point. One marking bomb exploded in the launching chute, shooting back into the plane's interior and striking Erwin in the face. The burning bomb obliterated Erwin's nose and blinded him completely. Smoke filled the aircraft, obscuring the pilot's vision. Erwin realized the aircraft and crew would be lost if the bomb remained in the plane. Without regard for his own safety, he picked up the burning bomb and felt his way around the gun turret, crawling toward the copilot's window. The plane was in a dive, and Erwin found the navigator's table blocking his way. Grasping the burning bomb between his forearm and body, he unleashed the spring lock and raised the table. He struggled through the narrow passage, stumbling forward into the smoke-filled pilots' compartment. Erwin felt his way to the open window and threw the bomb out. Clothes completely aflame, he fell back on the floor.

As the smoke cleared the pilot pulled the airplane out of its dive at 300 feet. Erwin lived. One and one-half years later this Medal of Honor winner was discharged from Valley Forge General Hospital, Pa., and returned to his home in Alabama.

And, speaking of enlisted service, four of the six officers awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism in Vietnam have had prior enlisted service—in one branch of the service or other.

Motivation behind medal actions cannot be pinned down. Most award winners have been well-trained professionals, doing their job. They just seemed to be able, under a certain set of circumstances and in a given moment, to carry their training and dedication one extra step. Thirty-one of the 53 who took that extra step in combat paid for it with their lives.



File  
17-52

## PART I.—HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### THE MEDAL OF HONOR

The Medal of Honor is the highest military award for bravery that can be given to any individual in the United States of America. Conceived in the early 1860's and first presented in 1863, the medal has a colorful and inspiring history which has culminated in the standards applied today for awarding this respected honor.

In their provisions for judging whether a man is entitled to the Medal of Honor, each of the armed services has set up regulations which permit no margin of doubt or error. The deed of the person must be proved by incontrovertible evidence of at least two eyewitnesses; it must be so outstanding that it clearly distinguishes his gallantry beyond the call of duty from lesser forms of bravery; it must involve the risk of his life; and it must be the type of deed which, if he had not done it, would not subject him to any justified criticism.

A recommendation for the Army or Air Force Medal must be made within 2 years from the date of the deed upon which it depends. Award of the medal must be made within 3 years after the date of the deed. The recommendation for a Navy Medal of Honor must be made within 3 years and awarded within 5 years.

Apart from the great honor which it conveys, there are certain small privileges which accompany the Medal of Honor. Its recipients can, under certain conditions, obtain free air transportation on military aircraft within the continental United States on a "space available" basis. A veteran who has been awarded the medal for combat in any war is eligible for a special pension of \$200 per month, starting from the date he applies for the pension.

The Medal of Honor is presented to its recipients by a high official "in the name of the Congress of the United States." For this reason it is sometimes called the Congressional Medal of Honor.

As a general rule, the Medal of Honor may be awarded for a deed of personal bravery or self-sacrifice above and beyond the call of duty only while the person is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States in action against an enemy of the United States, or while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force, or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party. However, until passage of Public Law 88-77, the Navy could and did award Medals of Honor for bravery in the line of the naval profession. Such awards recognized bravery in saving life, and deeds of valor performed in submarine rescues, boiler explosions, turret fires, and other types of disaster unique to the naval profession.

Congress has often voted special medals for important victories and other contributions to the Nation, the first having been awarded to General Washington for his success at Boston in 1776. These are truly Congressional medals to honor individuals and events. By Congressional action, and signed by the President, the Medal of Honor was awarded to the following Unknown Soldiers: Britain and France, on March 4, 1921; United States—World War I, on August 24, 1921; Italy, on October 12, 1921; Belgium, on December 1, 1922; and Rumania, on June 6, 1923. On two occasions the Army Medal of Honor has been awarded by separate acts of Congress—the first being the act of December 1927 honoring Captain Charles A. Lindbergh; the second being the act of 21 March 1935 honoring Major General Adolphus W. Greely. In each case, the medal presented was the Army Medal of Honor in use at the time, not a special medal struck for the purpose expressed in each act of Congress. In addition, five members of the Navy—Machinist Floyd Bennett, Commander Richard E. Byrd, Jr., Boatswain's Mate George R. Cholister, Ensign Henry C. Drexler, and Lieutenant Richmond P. Hobson, each received the Navy Medal of Honor by acts of Congress. By Congressional approval the Medal of Honor was also awarded to the American Unknown Soldier of World War II, on March 9, 1948; and to the American Unknown Soldier of the Korean conflict on August 31, 1957. In peace or war, this medal is the highest decoration which can be given in any of the Armed Forces—Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard.

#### **"IN THE NAME OF THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES"**

The Medal of Honor was not the idea of any one American. Like most of the ideas which have flowered into institutions and practices in our Nation, it was the result of group thought and action and evolved in response to a need of the times.

In the winter of 1861-62, following the beginning of hostilities in the Civil War, there was much thought in Washington concerning the necessity for recognizing the deeds of the American soldiers, sailors, and marines who were distinguishing themselves in the fighting.

The American Nation, which had given little thought to its Armed Forces during times of peace, now found them to be the focal point of attention. The serviceman, unpublicized and isolated during the preceding years, many of which were spent guarding the national frontiers against Indian raids and the coastline against smugglers, now became a great looming figure in the fight to preserve the Union. Overnight, he ceased to be a man plying some remote and mysterious trade out on the plains of Kansas or North Dakota, or on some ship at sea. He was the boy next door, or indeed the son of the household, sent out to fight for a cause that, in a very real sense, lay close to home.

His contribution was not just in fighting, but in fighting gallantly, sometimes displaying a sheer heroism which, when looked upon by the Nation in whose name it was called forth, quite naturally caused that Nation to seek some means of rewarding him.

But the thought did not stop there. For the first time since the Revolution, Americans realized not only what important citizens its soldiers, sailors, and marines were, but how important they had always been. They realized that the far-off lonely trooper, walking his post on the frontier, or the equally lonely sailor or marine standing watch from the bridge of his ship at sea along the coast, during the years of "peace," had been doing the same essential work as that of the soldier, sailor, or marine of the Civil War—protecting the Nation. And they realized that in doing this work they had very often displayed a little-known and unrecognized heroism which, by its nature, rendered them capable of being killed in action in their posts of duty, just as they could have been during the winter of 1861-62.

In looking back for a precedent for honoring our servicemen, Americans could note the "Certificate of Merit," which had been authorized for soldiers in 1847. Originally this award did not provide a medal, but rather a certificate signed by the President. Later, in 1905, a medal and ribbon bar for wear on the uniform were authorized. Congress also passed a provision that holders of the certificate who were still in the service should have extra pay of \$2 per month. But money alone could not honor the servicemen for his deed.

There also had been a method of honoring officers by means of the "brevet" system of promotions, whereby an officer mentioned for gallantry in dispatches could be granted a "brevet rank" higher than that of his actual rank, and be entitled to wear the insignia which went with the brevet. But this system had fallen victim to a series of political abuses, and by 1861 much of its honor had grown meaningless.

The best precedent for honoring servicemen—and the only precedent in our Nation's history which had involved the award of decorations—went back to 1782. On August 7 of that year, in Newburg, N.Y., George Washington had created the Purple Heart as a decoration for "singular meritorious action." Three men had received the award in 1783. The records show no others.

The philosophy behind the Purple Heart had been that since his honor is something which no true soldier, sailor or marine likes to talk about, those who sought to honor him should give him a token of that honor which he could wear without words.

A similar philosophy and purpose characterized the American people and the Congress of the United States in 1861. Senator James W. Grimes, of Iowa, took the lead as chairman of the Senate Naval Committee. He introduced a bill to create a Navy medal. It was passed by both Houses of Congress and approved by President Abraham Lincoln on December 21, 1861. It established a Medal of Honor for enlisted men of the Navy and Marine Corps—the first decoration formally authorized by the American Government to be worn as a badge of honor.

Action on the Army medal was started 2 months later, when, on February 17, 1862, Senator Henry Wilson, of Massachusetts, introduced a Senate resolution providing for presentation of "medals of honor" to enlisted men of the Army and Voluntary Forces who "shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldierlike qualities."

President Lincoln's approval made the resolution law on July 12, 1862. It was amended by an act approved on March 3, 1863, which extended its provision to include officers as well as enlisted men, and made the provisions retroactive to the beginning of the Civil War.

This legislation was to stand as the basis upon which the Army Medal of Honor could be awarded until July 9, 1918, when it was superseded by a completely revised statute.

As soon as the Navy Medal of Honor had been authorized, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles wrote to James Pollock, Director of the U.S. Mint at Philadelphia, asking for his assistance in obtaining a design for the medal. Pollock had submitted five designs to the Navy by the time the Army bill had been introduced in the Senate. When he heard that a similar medal was being considered for the Army, Pollock wrote to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, enclosing one of the designs prepared for the Navy, and pointing out that it would be appropriate for use by the Army as well. Two more designs were submitted to the Navy on May 6, 1862, and on May 9, the Navy approved one of them.

In bas-relief, on the star, the Union held a shield in her right hand against an attacker, who crouched to the left, holding forked-tongued serpents which struck at the shield. In the left hand of the Union was held the fasces, the ancient Roman symbol of unified authority, an ax bound in staves of wood—still a common symbol on many of our 10-cent pieces. The 34 stars which encircle these figures represent the number of States at the time the medal was designed. The reverse of the medal bore a blank for the name of the awardee and the date and place of his deed.

On November 17, 1862, the War Department contracted with the firm of William Wilson & Son, Philadelphia, where the Navy medals were being made, for 2,000 of the same type of medals for the Army. The only difference between the Army medal and that of the Navy was that the Army medal, instead of being attached to its ribbon by an anchor, was attached by means of the American Eagle symbol, standing on crossed cannon and cannon balls.

And now the Navy and the Army had a Medal of Honor. Heroic deeds would entitle their authors to the decoration. On March 25, 1863, the first Army medals were awarded "in the name of the Congress of the United States." A few days later, on April 3, 1863, the first Navy medals were awarded sailors and marines.

#### PROTECTING THE MEDAL

There were some sincere men who believed that the idea of a Medal of Honor would not prove popular with Americans. By the end of the Civil War, and in succeeding years, this view was definitely proved to be incorrect. If anything, the medal was too popular, and the glory which it conferred upon its recipients had the effect of inspiring the human emotion of envy in many breasts. A flood of imitations sprang up following the Civil War, and had the effect of causing Congress, eventually, to take steps to protect the dignity of the original medal.

## NUMBER OF MEDALS OF HONOR AWARDED BY WARS AND CAMPAIGNS

	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force*	Coast Guard
Civil War (1861-1865) .....	1,200	310	17	0	0
Indian Campaigns (1861-1898) .....	419	0	0	0	0
Korean Campaign (1871) .....	0	9	6	0	0
Spanish-American War (1898) .....	30	66	15	0	0
Philippine Insurrection (1899-1913) .....	70	9	9	0	0
Boxer Rebellion (1900) .....	4	22	33	0	0
Action Against Philippine Outlaws (1911) .....	0	5	0	0	0
Mexican Campaign (Vera Cruz) (1911) .....	1	46	9	0	0
Haitian Campaign (1915) .....	0	0	6	0	0
Dominican Campaign (1916) .....	0	0	3	0	0
World War I (1917-1918) .....	95	21	7	*4	0
Haitian Campaign (1919-1920) .....	0	0	2	0	0
Second Nicaraguan Campaign (1925) .....	0	0	2	0	0
Unknowns (1921-1957) .....	8	0	0	0	0
World War II (1941-1945) .....	293	57	80	*38	1
Mitchell, William, former a Colonel (Private Law 884) .....	1	0	0	0	0
Korean conflict (1950-1953) .....	78	7	42	4	0
Vietnam era .....	154	15	56	12	0
Number of Medals of Honor awarded by interim period:					
1866-1870 .....	0	9	0	0	0
1871-1898 .....	0	99	2	0	0
1901-1910 .....	0	46	2	0	0
1915-1916 .....	0	8	0	0	0
1920-1940 .....	2	15	1	*1	0
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>2,355</b>	<b>744</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>*43 (16)</b>	<b>1</b>

\*From 1907 to Sept. 18, 1947, the Air Force was a part of the Army. The awards here tabulated and designated with an asterisk are reported in the Army tabulation.

Note: The grand total number of Medals of Honor awarded by wars is 3,408.

### MEDAL OF HONOR AWARDS MADE BY SPECIAL LEGISLATION

BENNETT, Floyd, Machinist, United States Navy.  
 BYRD, Richard Evelyn, Commander, United States Navy.  
 CHOLISTER, George Robert, Boatswain's Mate First Class, United States Navy.  
 DREXLER, Henry Clay, Ensign, United States Navy.  
 HOBSON, Richmond Pearson, formerly Naval Constructor, United States Navy.  
 LINDBERGH, Charles A., Captain, United States Army Air Corps Reserve.  
 GREELY, Adolphus W., Major General, United States Army, Retired.  
 MITCHELL, William, formerly a Colonel, United States Army (Posthumous).  
 UNKNOWN SOLDIER of Belgium.  
 UNKNOWN SOLDIER of Great Britain.  
 UNKNOWN SOLDIER of France.  
 UNKNOWN SOLDIER of Italy.  
 UNKNOWN SOLDIER of Rumania.  
 UNKNOWN SOLDIER of the United States (1921)—World War I.  
 UNKNOWN AMERICAN, World War II.  
 UNKNOWN AMERICAN, Korean conflict.

Chief of Naval Personnel to all present and former members of the naval service who are recipients of the Medal of Honor.

## Summary of Laws Concerning the Congressional Medal of Honor

[From Library of Congress Report, 1976]

The law authorizing the President to award medals of honor in the name of Congress appears to be derived specifically from Resolution No. 52 of July 12, 1862 (12 Stat. 623) which authorized the President to prepare 2,000 "medals of honor" to be presented "in the name of Congress to such non-commissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldier-like qualities, during the present insurrection (Civil War)." Prior to the 1862 resolution, the Act of Dec. 12, 1861 (12 Stat. 330), authorized the Secretary of the Navy to prepare 200 "medals of honor" to be bestowed on "such petty officers, seamen, landsmen, and marines who shall distinguish themselves by gallantry in action and other seamanlike qualities during the present war (Civil War)." The 1861 act appears to be the first enactment where the term "medal of honor" was used and the 1862 act appears to be the first enactment which provided for the presentation of "medals of honor" in "the name of Congress."

Prior Congressional recognition of distinguished military service appears as early as the Act of March 3, 1847, which authorized the President to issue certificates of merit to private soldiers who distinguish themselves in the service and entitled such soldiers to additional pay of \$2 per month and the Act of March 3, 1857, which authorized presentation of medals to Dr. Kane, his officers, and men as will "express the high estimation in which Congress hold(s) their respective merits and services."

A chronological list with brief descriptions of the laws pertaining to the Congressional Medal of Honor including the acts of 1847 and 1857 follows:

### ACT OF MARCH 3, 1847

(9 Stat. 184, 186)

SEC. 17. Authorized the President when any private soldier distinguishes himself in the service to issue him a certificate of merit which entitles him to additional pay of \$2 per month.

### ACT OF MARCH 3, 1857

(11 Stat. 225)

Authorized presentation of medals to Dr. Kane, his Officers and men as will "express the high estimation in which Congress hold[s] their respective merits and services."

### ACT OF DECEMBER 21, 1861

(12 Stat. 330)

SEC. 7. Authorized the Secretary of the Navy to prepare 200 "medals of honor" to be bestowed on "such petty officers, seamen, landsmen, and marines as shall distinguish themselves by gallantry in action and other seamanlike qualities during the present war [Civil War]."

### RESOLUTION NO. 52, JULY 12, 1862

(12 Stat. 623)

Authorized the President to prepare 2,000 "medals of honor" to be presented "in the name of Congress, to such non-commissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldier-like qualities, during the present insurrection [Civil War]."

ACT OF JULY 9, 1918

(40 Stat. 845, 870)

Amended the provisions of existing law relating to the award of medals of honor to members of the Army "so that the President is authorized to present, in the name of the Congress, a medal of honor only to each person who, while an officer or enlisted man of the Army, shall hereafter, in action involving actual conflict with an enemy, distinguish himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty."

ACT OF FEBRUARY 4, 1919

(40 Stat. 1056)

Authorized the President to present Congressional Medals of Honor to members of the naval service on the same basis as provided for members of the Army with the added requirement that such action not be detrimental to the mission of the command.

ACT OF APRIL 7, 1922

(42 Stat. 493)

Extended the period of limitations on the issuance of medals of honor for one year.

ACT OF AUGUST 7, 1942

(56 Stat. 743)

Amended the Act of February 4, 1919 (40 Stat. 1056) to permit awarding of Congressional Medals of Honor to members of the naval service for distinguished service "in line of his profession" at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty and without detriment to the mission of his command.

ACT OF AUGUST 4, 1949

(63 Stat. 495, 535)

Revised, codified, and enacted into law, title 14, United States Code, sec. 491. Authorized President to award medal of honor in name of Congress to members of Coast Guard on same basis as for members of naval service.

ACT OF OCTOBER 12, 1949

(63 Stat. 802, 839)

Career Compensation Act of 1949—Repealed provision of Act of July 9, 1918, which provided additional pay of \$2 per month for enlisted members of Army who were awarded certain medals including Congressional Medal of Honor.

ACT OF AUGUST 10, 1956

(70A Stat. 1,215,389,540)

Revised, codified, and enacted into positive law title 10 and title 32, United States Code. Codified provisions of prior law dealing with the awarding of the Congressional Medal of Honor to members of the Army and Navy and added provisions for awarding such medals to members of the Air Force.

ACT OF SEPTEMBER 2, 1958

(72 Stat. 1105, 1139)

Revised, codified, and enacted into positive law title 38, United State Code. Designated the Medal of Honor Roll as the "Army, Navy, and Air Force Medal of Honor Roll." Reenacted the provisions of the Act of April 27, 1916 (39 Stat. 53) which authorized a special pension of \$10 per month at age 65 for persons awarded a Congress-

sional Medal of Honor for "Having in action involving actual conflict with an enemy distinguished himself conspicuously by gallantry or intrepidity, at the risk of his life, above and beyond the call of duty . . ."

ACT OF AUGUST 14, 1961

(75 Stat. 338, 339)

Increased the special pension for recipients of Medals of Honor for gallantry in actual conflict with an enemy from \$10 per month to \$100 per month and provided for the payment of such pension at age 50 instead of age 65.

ACT OF JULY 25, 1963

(77 Stat. 93)

Amended titles 10 and 14 of the United States Code with respect to awarding the Medal of Honor in the name of Congress to permit awarding such medals for distinguished service "in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force" or for such service with friendly foreign forces engaged in armed conflict.

ACT OF OCTOBER 13, 1964

(78 Stat. 1078)

Permits payment of the special pension of \$100 per month at age 50 to recipients of the Medal of Honor for noncombatant service and at age 40.

ACT OF OCTOBER 31, 1965

(79 Stat. 1154, 1156)

Eliminates the age requirement for payment of the special pension to recipients of the Medal of Honor.

ACT OF JUNE 11, 1969

(83 Stat. 33)

Amends title 38, United States Code, by deleting "Treasury" and adding "Transportation." This reflects the change in jurisdiction over the Coast Guard.

ACT OF OCTOBER 24, 1974

(88 Stat. 1422)

Extends the time limit for the award of certain military decorations.

ACT OF DECEMBER 23, 1975

(Public Law 94-169)

Makes a number of technical and conforming amendments to chapter 15 of title 38, United States Code, to eliminate unnecessary or unwarranted gender references.

ACT OF OCTOBER 18, 1978

(92 Stat. 1565)

Increased the special pension for recipients of the Medal of Honor for gallantry in actual conflict with an enemy from \$100 per month to \$200 per month.

## Chapter 857.—DECORATIONS AND AWARDS—AIR FORCE

Sec.

8741. Medal of honor: award.

\* \* \* \* \*  
8744. Medal of honor; Air Force cross; distinguished-service medal: limitations on award.

8745. Medal of honor; Air Force cross; distinguished-service medal: delegation of power to award.

\* \* \* \* \*  
8747. Medal of honor; Air Force cross; distinguished-service cross; distinguished-service medal; silver star: replacement.

8748. Medal of honor; Air Force cross; distinguished-service cross; distinguished-service medal; silver star: availability of appropriations.

### §8741. Medal of honor: award

The President may award, and present in the name of Congress, a medal of honor of appropriate design, with ribbons and appurtenances, to a person who, while a member of the Air Force, distinguishes himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty—

- (1) while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States;
- (2) while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or
- (3) while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

### §8744. Medal of honor; Air Force cross; distinguished-service medal: limitations on award

(a) No more than one medal of honor, Air Force cross, or distinguished-service medal may be awarded to a person. However, for each succeeding act that would otherwise justify the award of such a medal or cross, the President may award a suitable bar or other device to be worn as he directs.

(b) Except as provided in subsection (d), no medal of honor, Air Force cross, distinguished-service medal, or device in place thereof, may be awarded to a person unless—

- (1) the award is made within three years after the date of the act justifying the award;
- (2) a statement setting forth the distinguished service and recommending official recognition of it was made within two years after the distinguished service; and
- (3) it appears from records of the Department of the Air Force that the person is entitled to the award.

(c) No medal of honor, Air Force cross, distinguished-service medal, or device in place thereof, may be awarded or presented to a person whose service after he distinguished himself has not been honorable.

(d) If the Secretary of the Air Force determines that—

- (1) a statement setting forth the distinguished service and recommending official recognition of it was made and supported by sufficient evidence within two years after the distinguished service; and
  - (2) no award was made, because the statement was lost or through inadvertence the recommendation was not acted on;
- a medal of honor, Air Force cross, distinguished-service medal, or device in place thereof, as the case may be, may be awarded to the person concerned within two years after the date of that determination.

### §8745. Medal of honor; Air Force cross; distinguished-service medal: delegation of power to award

The President may delegate his authority to award the medal of honor, Air Force cross, and distinguished-service medal, to a commanding general of a separate air force or higher unit in the field.

\* \* \* \* \*

**§8747. Medal of honor; Air Force cross; distinguished-service cross; distinguished-service medal; silver star: replacement**

Any medal of honor, Air Force cross, distinguished-service cross, distinguished-service medal, or silver star, or any bar, ribbon, rosette, or other device issued for wear with or in place of any of them, that is lost or destroyed, or becomes unfit for use, without fault or neglect of the person to whom it was awarded, shall be replaced without charge.

**§8748. Medal of honor; Air Force cross; distinguished-service cross; distinguished-service medal; silver star: availability of appropriations**

The Secretary of the Air Force may spend, from any appropriation for contingent expenses of the Department of the Air Force, amounts necessary to provide medals and devices under sections 8741, 8742, 8743, 8744, 8746, 8747, and 8752 of this title.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Medal of Honor

In 1861 Senator James Grimes of Iowa, Chairman of the Senate Naval Committee, took an interest in the subject of awards. As a result, he introduced a bill in Congress which was a landmark in the history of United States decorations. On December 21, 1861, Congress enacted this bill when it passed an "Act to Promote the Efficiency of the Navy." Section 7 of this Act provided that, "The Secretary of the Navy be, and is hereby, authorized to cause two hundred medals of honor to be prepared with suitable emblematic devices which shall be bestowed upon such petty officers, seamen, landsmen and marines as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action and other seamanlike qualities during the present war...."

The first federal decoration (in the modern sense) was created when Senator Grimes' bill was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln. The exact wording of the Act is important, for it appears that the Congress actually intended for the Medal of Honor to be temporary (restricted to the Civil War), fixed in number (two hundred), and to be divided among those most qualified. Five months after the enactment authorizing the Medal of Honor, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles received a letter from James Pollock, who was at that time Director of the United States Mint. In his letter dated May 9, 1862, Pollock advised Welles that design number one, which had been submitted on May 6, 1862, by Christian Schussel, had been approved and would be adopted as the official design for the Navy's Medal of Honor. Pollock went on to describe the scene on the medal as one in which "The foul spirit of secession and rebellion is represented in a crouching attitude holding in his hands serpents, which with forked tongues are striking at a large figure representing the Union or Genius of our country, who holds in her right hand a shield and in her left the fasces. Around these figures are thirty-four stars, indicating the number of the states composing the Union. At the top of the medal or star is the holder, in the form of an anchor around which a cable is entwined indicating the naval service." This symbolism lends clear support to the thesis that the medal was specifically considered to be a Navy award for service during the Civil War.

However, three months after Welles wrote his letter to Pollock, Congress passed another act (on July 16, 1862) which provided that "Seamen distinguishing themselves in battle or by extraordinary heroism in the line of their profession may be promoted to forward warrant officers or acting master's mates, as they may best be qualified, upon the recommendation of the commanding officer, approved by the flag officer and the department. Upon such promotion they shall receive a gratuity of one hundred dollars and a medal of honor to be prepared by the Navy

Department." This second act raises several interesting questions. Did the "medal of honor" referred to in the second Act refer to the same "medal of honor" authorized by the Act of December 21, 1861 (which had been limited to two hundred)? Or, did it intend for a special medal to be designed for each recipient as had been done on several occasions in the past? Also, did the medal of honor created by the second act constitute a reward in and of itself, or was it intended to represent the brevet promotion for valor? What did the Navy intend to be more meaningful: the one hundred dollars, the promotion, or the medal? The facts of the case indicate that the Navy intended by the second act to issue the same medals of honor prepared under the aegis of the Act of December 21, 1861, if for no other reason than it was more economical and would save time. However, since the Act of July 16, 1862, did not restrict its provisions to the Civil War, it made (at least in theory) the Medal of Honor a permanent decoration. The fact that the medal itself was probably considered trivial is suggested by its being accompanied by one hundred dollars and a promotion. However, this should come as no surprise, for as of the passage of the Act of 1862 none of the medals had yet been awarded. The glory and esteem in which the Medal of Honor would subsequently be held had to wait for an accumulation of deeds yet to be performed.

On February 17, 1862, Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts introduced a Senate Resolution proposing a similar medal of honor for enlisted men of the Army. Accordingly, on July 12, 1862, Congress approved a Joint Resolution which provided that the "President of the United States be, and he is hereby, authorized to cause two thousand medals of honor to be prepared with suitable emblematic devices, and to direct that the same be presented in the name of Congress, to such noncommissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldier-like qualities, during the present insurrection." This Joint Resolution was amended by Section 6 of the Sundry Civil Appropriations Act of March 3, 1863, to allow commissioned officers of the Army to receive the medal and to remove the "other soldier-like qualities" proviso. This left gallantry in action as the sole qualification for the Army Medal of Honor. The Act of July 12, 1862, restricted the total number of Army Medals of Honor to two thousand and specified that they were to be awarded for acts performed during the Civil War, implying that the Army Medal of Honor was to be a temporary decoration.

## Medal of Honor

When he heard that a Medal of Honor was being considered for the Army, Secretary of the Navy Welles wrote to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton suggesting that the basic design adopted by the Navy might also be appropriate for the Army. Secretary Stanton agreed. Thus, with minor differences, the Army and Navy shared a medal of honor similar in design for a number of years.

The first Army Medals of Honor were presented on March 25, 1863, to six survivors of a group of twenty-two volunteers who were members of a raiding party sent to sabotage the vital rail link between Atlanta and Chattanooga in April of 1862. The first Navy Medals of Honor were awarded on April 3, 1863, to a number of sailors for various acts of gallantry during attacks on Forts Jackson, Fisher, and St. Philip a year earlier (April 24, 1862).

Both the design of the Medal of Honor and the laws which govern it have changed over the years. The best way to describe these changes is to break them down chronologically by service branch.

### **THE FIRST NAVY MEDAL OF HONOR: December 21, 1861, to August 11, 1913.**

As already noted, the first style Medal of Honor was designed by Christian Schussel and the dies were made from a model prepared by Anthony Paquet. The Schussel design is a five-pointed star in bas relief with trefoils. In the center of each arm of the star is a crown of oak and laurel, combining the two ancient symbols for achievement and valor. Surrounding the center of the star, and forming a base to each of its arms, is an annulet charged with thirty-four stars representing the number of states in the Union as of 1861 (the United States government never recognized the Confederate states as having left the Union, and they are therefore represented among the thirty-four stars in the annulet). In the center of the medal is Columbia, previously described, who is warding off Discord. The star is suspended by an anchor which is connected to the medal itself by two suspension rings which pass through holes drilled in the star and then cross over the flukes of the anchor. The anchor is entwined (or fouled) in rope (or by a line, to use correct naval parlance) and hangs from a suspension ring which passes through the base of an open fasces which has a star in its center. The ribbon passes through a bar on the back of the fasces and then through a fasces of identical design (minus the star) at the top of the ribbon. This upper fasces is the pin bar by which the medal was to be affixed to the wearer's uniform. The ribbon itself was one inch wide and is a variation of the United States flag. At the top of the ribbon is a field of dark blue and the

## Medal of Honor

In its early years, the Medal of Honor was the only decoration the Army had. It became obvious over the years that in some cases it had been awarded for acts for which it was clearly inappropriate. In order to strengthen the integrity of the medal, Section 122 of the National Defense Act of June 3, 1916, provided for the establishment of an Army board of review which was to examine all awards of the Medal of Honor and to eliminate those which were deemed inappropriate. By October 16, 1916, the board had met and began to gather data and study individual cases. Between October 16, 1916, and January 17, 1917, all of the 2,625 Medals of Honor which had been awarded as of that date were reviewed. On February 15, 1917, nine hundred and eleven names were struck from the list. Those removed included the 864 medals awarded to the members of the 27th Maine Volunteers, six that went to similar regiments, the 29 Medals of Honor that were awarded to the honor guard that accompanied Lincoln's body home after he was assassinated, five medals that went to Indian Scouts (including the one awarded to Buffalo Bill Cody), and seven which were miscellaneous awards not earned in combat. As an interesting historical footnote, one of the seven miscellaneous Medals of Honor was awarded to Dr. Mary Walker, a contract surgeon of bizzare character who had served with the Army during the Civil War. As a result of intensive lobbying by feminists Dr. Walker's Medal of Honor was restored by the Carter administration.

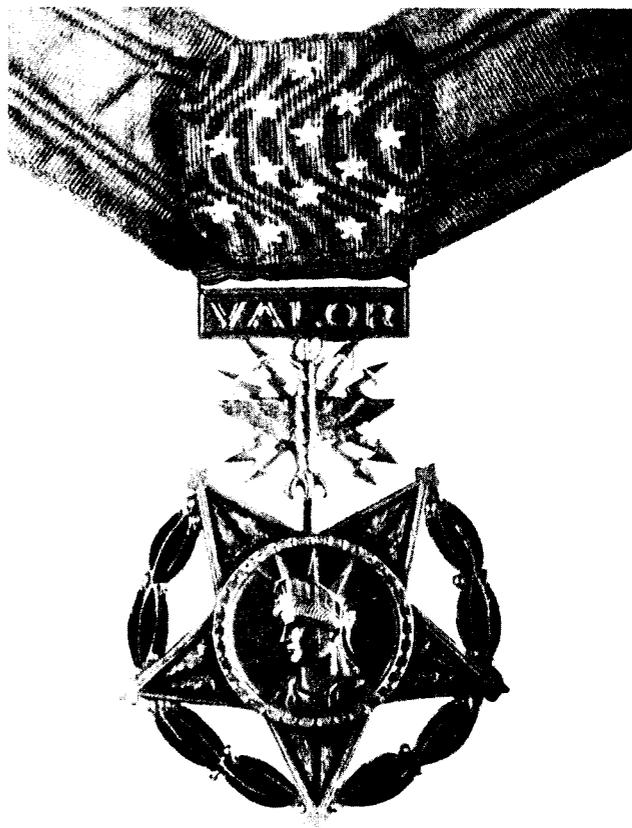
### **THE US AIR FORCE MEDAL OF HONOR: November 1, 1965, to the present.**

After becoming a separate service in 1947, the US Air Force continued to award medals and decorations of the Army design. However, the Air Force later decided that it would be more appropriate to award medals of its own design and accordingly secured legislation permitting it to do so. Air Force decorations are generally considered as deriving from their earlier comparable Army awards; that is, they are not legally "new" decorations but rather the Air Force design versions of previously established Army decorations. The Air Force is authorized to issue its own version of the Army Medal of Honor by Section 8741 of Title 10 of the U.S. Code. The Air Force Medal of Honor became effective on November 1, 1965, and was designed by Lewis J. King, Jr., of the Army's Institute of Heraldry. The version selected was the fifth design submitted. The medal is officially described as follows: within a wreath of laurel in green enamel, a gold finished five-pointed star, one point down, tipped with trefoils and each point containing a crown of laurel and oak on a green enamel background. Centered upon the star is an annulet of thirty-four stars which surround the profile of the head from the Statue of Liberty.

## Military and Naval Decorations of the United States

The star is suspended by a connecting bar and pinned hinge from a trophy consisting of a bar inscribed with the word *VALOR* above an adaptation of a thunderbolt. The bar is suspended from a pale blue moire silk neckband behind an elongated square pad in the center, with the corners turned back and charged with thirteen white stars in the form of a triple chevron. The star is a replica of the design originally adopted by the Navy and the Army. The profile taken from the Statue of Liberty represents those ideals for which the United States is known throughout the world. The thunderbolt is taken from the Air Force coat of arms and distinguishes the medal as an Air Force decoration. The medal is two inches in overall height and two and one-sixteenth inches in overall width, making it larger than either the Army or Navy Medals of Honor. The reverse is plain, providing space for the name of the recipient.

The first Air Force Medal of Honor was presented by President Lyndon B. Johnson on January 19, 1967, to Major Bernard F. Fisher, a soft-spoken Mormon fighter pilot who earned his medal during a daring and courageous combat rescue of a downed pilot in Vietnam.

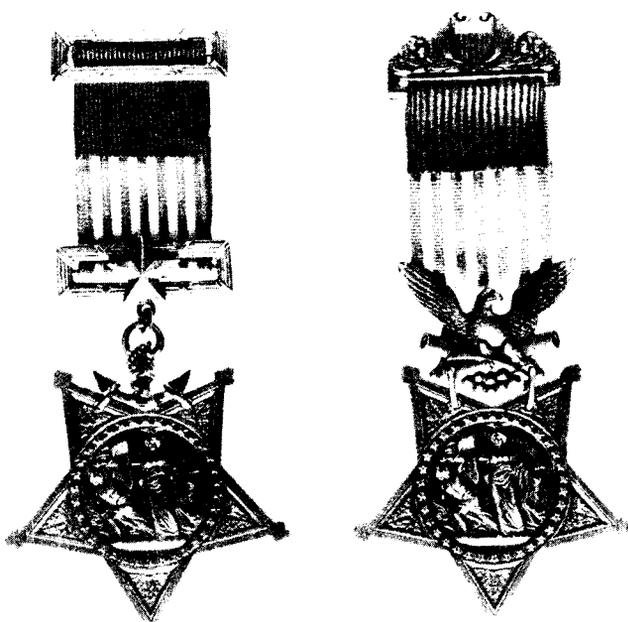


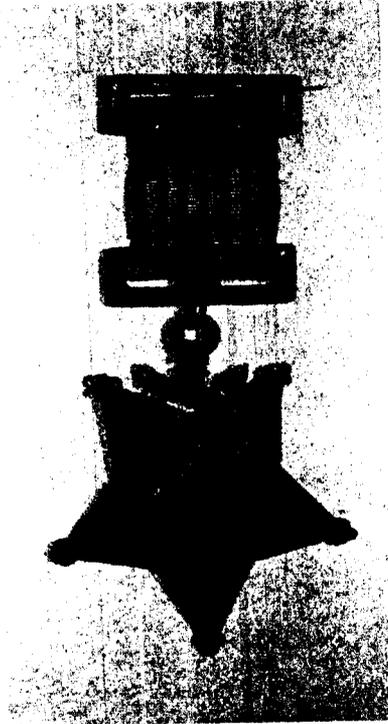
Air Force Medal of Honor

## Medal of Honor

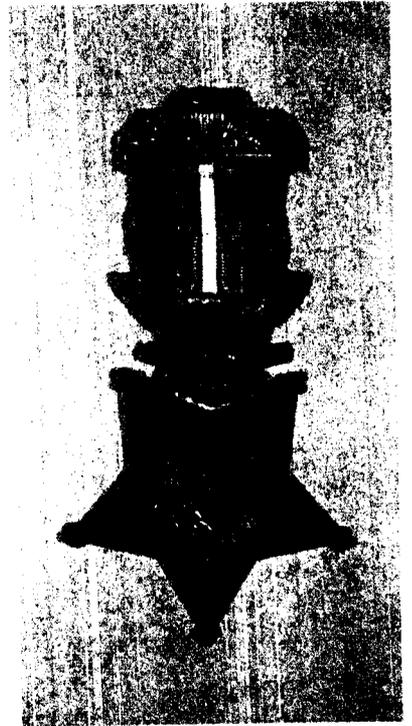
The Medal of Honor is currently awarded under three circumstances: (1) while engaged in action against an enemy of the United States, (2) while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force, or (3) while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party. The last provision was enacted to allow the Medal of Honor to be awarded during periods of undeclared war (as in Vietnam).

For award of the Medal of Honor there must be no margin of doubt or any possibility of error: to justify the Medal of Honor, an individual must clearly render himself conspicuously above his comrades by an act so outstanding that it clearly distinguishes his gallantry as being beyond the call of duty. It must be the type of deed which if not done would not leave him open to criticism, and must be done without detriment to his mission or to the command to which he is attached. Further, the recommendation must be submitted within three years of the act, and the medal must be awarded within five years of the act (there have, however, been exceptions to the rules governing the timing of recommendations and awarding the Medal of Honor). The Medal of Honor is the highest decoration which can be awarded to a member of the armed forces, making it the most prestigious decoration the United States can grant -- and the most difficult to earn.

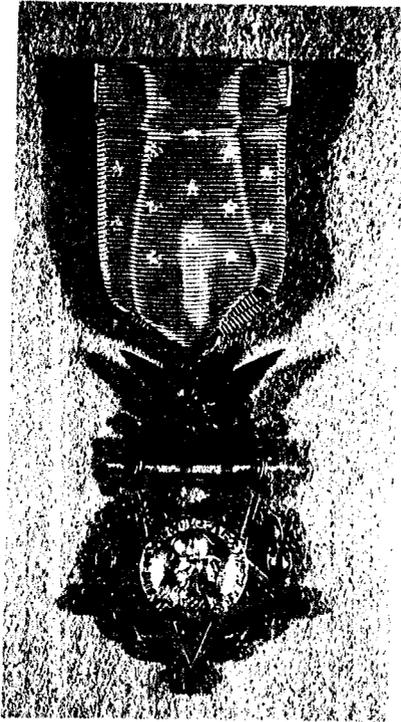




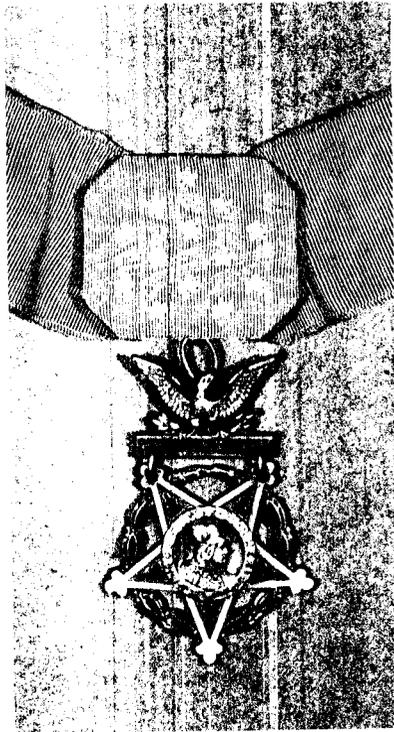
Army Medal of Honor  
(1862 - 1896)



Army Medal of Honor  
(1896 - 1904)



Army Medal of Honor  
(1904 - 1944)



Army Medal of Honor  
(1944 - present)

## USAF Medal of Honor Recipients

**Names, Alphabetically  
by Wars, and Rank  
at Time of Action**

**Home Town**

**Date and Place of Action**

**Present Address or Date of Death**

Bleckley, 2d Lt. Erwin R.  
Goettler, 2d Lt. Harold E.  
Luke, 2d Lt. Frank, Jr.  
Rickenbacker, Capt. Edward V.

Wichita, Kan.  
Chicago, Ill.  
Phoenix, Ariz.  
Columbus, Ohio

**World War I**

Oct. 6, 1918, Binarville, France  
Oct. 6, 1918, Binarville, France  
Sept. 29, 1918, Murvaux, France  
Sept. 25, 1918, Billy, France

KIA Oct. 6, 1918  
KIA Oct. 6, 1918  
KIA Sept. 29, 1918  
Died July 23, 1973

Baker, Lt. Col. Addison E.  
Bong, Maj. Richard I.  
Carswell, Maj. Horace S., Jr.  
Castle, Brig. Gen. Frederick W.  
Cheli, Maj. Ralph  
Craw, Col. Demas T.  
Doolittle, Lt. Col. James H.  
Erwin, SSgt. Henry E.  
Femoyer, 2d Lt. Robert E.  
Gott, 1st Lt. Donald J.  
Hamilton, Maj. Pierpont M.  
Howard, Lt. Col. James H.  
Hughes, 2d Lt. Lloyd H.  
Jerstad, Maj. John L.  
Johnson, Col. Leon W.  
Kane, Col. John R.  
Kearby, Col. Neel E.  
Kingsley, 2d Lt. David R.  
Knight, 1st Lt. Raymond L.  
Lawley, 1st Lt. William R., Jr.  
Lindsey, Capt. Darrell R.  
Mathies, SSgt. Archibald  
Mathis, 1st Lt. Jack W.  
McGuire, Maj. Thomas B., Jr.  
Metzger, 2d Lt. William E., Jr.  
Michael, 1st Lt. Edward S.  
Morgan, 2d Lt. John C.  
Pease, Capt. Harl, Jr.  
Pucket, 1st Lt. Donald D.  
Sarnoski, 2d Lt. Joseph R.  
Shomo, Maj. William A.  
Smith, Sgt. Maynard H.  
Truemper, 2d Lt. Walter E.  
Vance, Lt. Col. Leon R., Jr.  
Vosler, TSgt. Forrest L.  
Walker, Brig. Gen. Kenneth N.  
Wilkins, Maj. Raymond H.  
Zeamer, Maj. Jay, Jr.

Chicago, Ill.  
Poplar, Wis.  
Fort Worth, Tex.  
Manila, P. I.  
San Francisco, Calif.  
Traverse City, Mich.  
Alameda, Calif.  
Adamsville, Ala.  
Huntington, W. Va.  
Arnett, Okla.  
Tuxedo Park, N. Y.  
Canton, China  
Alexandria, La.  
Racine, Wis.  
Columbia, Mo.  
McGregor, Tex.  
Wichita Falls, Tex.  
Portland, Ore.  
Houston, Tex.  
Leeds, Ala.  
Jefferson, Iowa  
Scotland  
San Angelo, Tex.  
Ridgewood, N. J.  
Lima, Ohio  
Chicago, Ill.  
Vernon, Tex.  
Plymouth, N. H.  
Longmont, Colo.  
Simpson, Pa.  
Jeannette, Pa.  
Caro, Mich.  
Aurora, Ill.  
Enid, Okla.  
Lyndonville, N. Y.  
Cerrillos, N. M.  
Portsmouth, Va.  
Carlisle, Pa.

**World War II**

Aug. 1, 1943, Ploesti, Romania  
Oct. 10–Nov. 15, 1944, Southwest Pacific  
Oct. 26, 1944, South China Sea  
Dec. 24, 1944, Liège, Belgium  
Aug. 18, 1943, Wewak, New Guinea  
Nov. 8, 1942, Port Lyautey, French Morocco  
Apr. 18, 1942, Tokyo, Japan  
Apr. 12, 1945, Koriyama, Japan  
Nov. 2, 1944, Merseburg, Germany  
Nov. 9, 1944, Saarbrücken, Germany  
Nov. 8, 1942, Port Lyautey, French Morocco  
Jan. 11, 1944, Oschersleben, Germany  
Aug. 1, 1943, Ploesti, Romania  
Oct. 11, 1943, Wewak, New Guinea  
June 23, 1944, Ploesti, Romania  
Apr. 25, 1945, Po Valley, Italy  
Feb. 20, 1944, Leipzig, Germany  
Aug. 9, 1944, Pontoise, France  
Feb. 20, 1944, Leipzig, Germany  
Mar. 18, 1943, Vegesack, Germany  
Dec. 25–26, 1944, Luzon, P. I.  
Nov. 9, 1944, Saarbrücken, Germany  
Apr. 11, 1944, Brunswick, Germany  
July 28, 1943, Kiel, Germany  
Aug. 7, 1942, Rabaul, New Britain  
July 9, 1944, Ploesti, Romania  
June 16, 1943, Buka, Solomon Is.  
Jan. 11, 1945, Luzon, P. I.  
May 1, 1943, St. Nazaire, France  
Feb. 20, 1944, Leipzig, Germany  
June 5, 1944, Wimereaux, France  
Dec. 20, 1943, Bremen, Germany  
Jan. 5, 1943, Rabaul, New Britain  
Nov. 2, 1943, Rabaul, New Britain  
June 16, 1943, Buka, Solomon Is.

KIA Aug. 1, 1943  
Killed Aug. 6, 1945, Burbank, Ca  
KIA Oct. 26, 1944  
KIA Dec. 24, 1944  
Died while POW, Mar. 6, 1944  
KIA Nov. 8, 1942  
Carmel, Calif. (Ret. Gen.)  
Leeds, Ala.  
KIA Nov. 2, 1944  
KIA Nov. 9, 1944  
Died Mar. 4, 1982  
Belleair Bluffs, Fla. (Ret. Brig. G)  
KIA Aug. 1, 1943  
KIA Aug. 1, 1943  
McLean, Va. (Ret. Gen.)  
Chester, Pa. (Ret. Col.)  
KIA Mar. 5, 1944, Wewak, New G  
KIA June 23, 1944  
KIA Apr. 25, 1945  
Montgomery, Ala. (Ret. Col.)  
KIA Aug. 9, 1944  
KIA Feb. 20, 1944  
KIA Mar. 18, 1943  
KIA Jan. 7, 1945, Negros, P. I.  
KIA Nov. 9, 1944  
Fairfield, Calif. (Ret. Lt. Col.)  
Died Jan. 17, 1991  
KIA Aug. 7, 1942  
KIA July 9, 1944  
KIA June 16, 1943  
Died June 25, 1990  
Died May 11, 1984  
KIA Feb. 20, 1944  
Killed July 26, 1944, near Iocet  
Died Feb. 27, 1992  
KIA Jan. 5, 1943  
KIA Nov. 2, 1943  
Stoneham, Mass. (Ret. Lt. Co

Davis, Maj. George A., Jr.  
Loring, Maj. Charles J., Jr.  
Sebille, Maj. Louis J.  
Walmsley, Capt. John S., Jr.

Dublin, Tex.  
Portland, Me.  
Harbor Beach, Mich.  
Baltimore, Md.

**Korea**

Feb. 10, 1952, Sinuiju-Yalu River, N. Korea  
Nov. 22, 1952, Sniper Ridge, N. Korea  
Aug. 5, 1950, Hamch'ang, S. Korea  
Sept. 14, 1951, Yangdok, N. Korea

KIA Feb. 10, 1952  
KIA Nov. 22, 1952  
KIA Aug. 5, 1950  
KIA Sept. 14, 1951

Bennett, Capt. Steven L.  
Day, Col. George E.  
Dethlefsen, Maj. Merlyn H.  
Fisher, Maj. Bernard F.  
Fleming, 1st Lt. James P.  
Jackson, Lt. Col. Joe M.  
Jones, Col. William A. III  
Levitow, A1C John L.  
Sijan, Capt. Lance P.  
Thorsness, Lt. Col. Leo K.  
Wilbanks, Capt. Hilliard A.  
Young, Capt. Gerald O.

Palestine, Tex.  
Sioux City, Iowa  
Greenville, Iowa  
San Bernardino, Calif.  
Sedalia, Mo.  
Newnan, Ga.  
Warsaw, Va.  
South Windsor, Conn.  
Milwaukee, Wis.  
Seattle, Wash.  
Cornelia, Ga.  
Anacortes, Wash.

**Vietnam**

June 29, 1972, Quang Tri, S. Vietnam  
Conspicuous gallantry while POW  
Mar. 10, 1967, Thai Nguyen, N. Vietnam  
Mar. 10, 1966, A Shau Valley, S. Vietnam  
Nov. 26, 1968, Duc Co, S. Vietnam  
May 12, 1968, Kham Duc, S. Vietnam  
Sept. 1, 1968, Dong Hoi, N. Vietnam  
Feb. 24, 1969, Long Binh, S. Vietnam  
Conspicuous gallantry while POW  
Apr. 19, 1967, N. Vietnam  
Feb. 24, 1967, Dalat, S. Vietnam  
Nov. 9, 1967, Da Nang area, S. Vietnam

KIA June 29, 1972  
Shalimar, Fla. (Ret. Col.)  
Died Dec. 14, 1987  
Kuna, Idaho (Ret. Col.)  
Active-duty Col., McGuire AFB  
Kent, Wash. (Ret. Col.)  
Killed Nov. 15, 1969, Woodbr  
South Windsor, Conn.  
Died while POW, Jan. 1968  
Seattle, Wash. (Ret. Col.)  
KIA Feb. 24, 1967  
Died June 6, 1990

## USAF Medal of Honor Recipients

**Names, Alphabetically  
by Wars, and Rank  
at Time of Action**

**Home Town**

**Date and Place of Action**

**Present Address or Date of Death**

Bleckley, 2d Lt. Erwin R.  
Goettler, 2d Lt. Harold E.  
Luke, 2d Lt. Frank, Jr.  
Rickenbacker, Capt. Edward V.

Wichita, Kan.  
Chicago, Ill.  
Phoenix, Ariz.  
Columbus, Ohio

**World War I**

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Oct. 6, 1918, Binarville, France  
Sept. 29, 1918, Murvaux, France  
Sept. 25, 1918, Billy, France

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Carswell, Maj. Horace S., Jr.  
Castle, Brig. Gen. Frederick W.  
Cheli, Maj. Ralph  
Craw, Col. Demas T.  
Doolittle, Lt. Col. James H.  
Erwin, SSgt. Henry E.  
Femoyer, 2d Lt. Robert E.  
Gott, 1st Lt. Donald J.  
Hamilton, Maj. Pierpont M.  
Howard, Lt. Col. James H.  
Hughes, 2d Lt. Lloyd H.  
Jerstad, Maj. John L.  
Johnson, Col. Leon W.  
Kane, Col. John R.  
Kearby, Col. Neel E.  
Kingsley, 2d Lt. David R.  
Knight, 1st Lt. Raymond L.  
Lawley, 1st Lt. William R., Jr.  
Lindsey, Capt. Darrell R.  
Mathies, SSgt. Archibald  
Mathis, 1st Lt. Jack W.  
McGuire, Maj. Thomas B., Jr.  
Metzger, 2d Lt. William E., Jr.  
Michael, 1st Lt. Edward S.  
Morgan, 2d Lt. John C.  
Pease, Capt. Harl. Jr.  
Pucket, 1st Lt. Donald D.  
Sarnoski, 2d Lt. Joseph R.  
Shomo, Maj. William A.  
Smith, Sgt. Maynard H.  
Truemper, 2d Lt. Walter E.  
Vance, Lt. Col. Leon R., Jr.  
Vosler, TSgt. Forrest L.  
Walker, Brig. Gen. Kenneth N.  
Wilkins, Maj. Raymond H.  
Zeamer, Maj. Jay, Jr.

Chicago, Ill.  
Poplar, Wis.  
Fort Worth, Tex.  
Manila, P. I.  
San Francisco, Calif.  
Traverse City, Mich.  
Alameda, Calif.  
Adamsville, Ala.  
Huntington, W. Va.  
Arnett, Okla.  
Tuxedo Park, N. Y.  
Canton, China  
Alexandria, La.  
Racine, Wis.  
Columbia, Mo.  
McGregor, Tex.  
Wichita Falls, Tex.  
Portland, Ore.  
Houston, Tex.  
Leeds, Ala.  
Jefferson, Iowa  
Scotland  
San Angelo, Tex.  
Ridgewood, N. J.  
Lima, Ohio  
Chicago, Ill.  
Vernon, Tex.  
Plymouth, N. H.  
Longmont, Colo.  
Simpson, Pa.  
Jeannette, Pa.  
Caro, Mich.  
Aurora, Ill.  
Enid, Okla.  
Cerrillos, N. Y.  
Lynchville, N. M.  
Portsmouth, Va.  
Carlisle, Pa.

**World War II**

Aug. 1, 1943, Ploesti, Romania  
Oct. 10–Nov. 15, 1944, Southwest Pacific  
Oct. 26, 1944, South China Sea  
Dec. 24, 1944, Liège, Belgium  
Aug. 18, 1943, Wewak, New Guinea  
Nov. 8, 1942, Port Lyautey, French Morocco  
Apr. 18, 1942, Tokyo, Japan  
Apr. 12, 1945, Koriyama, Japan  
Nov. 2, 1944, Merseburg, Germany  
Nov. 9, 1944, Saarbrücken, Germany  
Nov. 8, 1942, Port Lyautey, French Morocco  
Jan. 11, 1944, Oschersleben, Germany  
Aug. 1, 1943, Ploesti, Romania  
Oct. 11, 1943, Wewak, New Guinea  
June 23, 1944, Ploesti, Romania  
Apr. 25, 1945, Po Valley, Italy  
Feb. 20, 1944, Leipzig, Germany  
Aug. 9, 1944, Pontoise, France  
Feb. 20, 1944, Leipzig, Germany  
Mar. 18, 1943, Vegesack, Germany  
Dec. 25–26, 1944, Luzon, P. I.  
Nov. 9, 1944, Saarbrücken, Germany  
Apr. 11, 1944, Brunswick, Germany  
July 28, 1943, Kiel, Germany  
Aug. 7, 1942, Rabaul, New Britain  
July 9, 1944, Ploesti, Romania  
June 16, 1943, Buka, Solomon Is.  
Jan. 11, 1945, Luzon, P. I.  
May 1, 1943, St. Nazaire, France  
Feb. 20, 1944, Leipzig, Germany  
June 5, 1944, Wimereaux, France  
Dec. 20, 1943, Bremen, Germany  
Jan. 5, 1943, Rabaul, New Britain  
Nov. 2, 1943, Rabaul, New Britain  
June 16, 1943, Buka, Solomon Is.

KIA Aug. 1, 1943  
Killed Aug. 6, 1945, Burbank, Ca  
KIA Oct. 26, 1944  
KIA Dec. 24, 1944  
Died while POW, Mar. 6, 1944  
KIA Nov. 8, 1942  
Karmel, Calif. (Ret. Gen.)  
Leeds, Ala.  
KIA Nov. 2, 1944  
KIA Nov. 9, 1944  
Died Mar. 4, 1982  
Belleair Bluffs, Fla. (Ret. Brig. G)  
KIA Aug. 1, 1943  
KIA Aug. 1, 1943  
McLean, Va. (Ret. Gen.)  
Chester, Pa. (Ret. Col.)  
KIA Mar. 5, 1944, Wewak, New G  
KIA June 23, 1944  
KIA Apr. 25, 1945  
Montgomery, Ala. (Ret. Col.)  
KIA Aug. 9, 1944  
KIA Feb. 20, 1944  
KIA Mar. 18, 1943  
KIA Jan. 7, 1945, Negros, P. I.  
KIA Nov. 9, 1944  
Fairfield, Calif. (Ret. Lt. Col.)  
Died Jan. 17, 1991  
KIA Aug. 7, 1942  
KIA July 9, 1944  
KIA June 16, 1943  
Died June 25, 1990  
Died May 11, 1984  
KIA Feb. 20, 1944  
Killed July 26, 1944, near Ica  
Died Feb. 5, 1992  
KIA Jan. 5, 1943  
KIA Nov. 2, 1943  
Stoneham, Mass. (Ret. Lt. Col.)

Davis, Maj. George A., Jr.  
Loring, Maj. Charles J., Jr.  
Sebille, Maj. Louis J.  
Walmsley, Capt. John S., Jr.

Dublin, Tex.  
Portland, Me.  
Harbor Beach, Mich.  
Baltimore, Md.

**Korea**

Feb. 10, 1952, Sinuiju-Yalu River, N. Korea  
Nov. 22, 1952, Sniper Ridge, N. Korea  
Aug. 5, 1950, Hamch'ang, S. Korea  
Sept. 14, 1951, Yangdok, N. Korea

KIA Feb. 10, 1952  
KIA Nov. 22, 1952  
KIA Aug. 5, 1950  
KIA Sept. 14, 1951

Bennett, Capt. Steven L.  
Day, Col. George E.  
Dethlefsen, Maj. Merlyn H.  
Fisher, Maj. Bernard F.  
Fleming, 1st Lt. James P.  
Jackson, Lt. Col. Joe M.  
Jones, Col. William A. III  
Levitow, A1C John L.  
Sijan, Capt. Lance P.  
Thorsness, Lt. Col. Leo K.  
Wilbanks, Capt. Hilliard A.  
Young, Capt. Gerald O.

Palestine, Tex.  
Sioux City, Iowa  
Greenville, Iowa  
San Bernardino, Calif.  
Sedalia, Mo.  
Newnan, Ga.  
Warsaw, Va.  
South Windsor, Conn.  
Milwaukee, Wis.  
Seattle, Wash.  
Cornelia, Ga.  
Anacortes, Wash.

**Vietnam**

June 29, 1972, Quang Tri, S. Vietnam  
Conspicuous gallantry while POW  
Mar. 10, 1967, Thai Nguyen, N. Vietnam  
Mar. 10, 1966, A Shau Valley, S. Vietnam  
Nov. 26, 1968, Duc Co, S. Vietnam  
May 12, 1968, Kham Duc, S. Vietnam  
Sept. 1, 1968, Dong Hoi, N. Vietnam  
Feb. 24, 1969, Long Binh, S. Vietnam  
Conspicuous gallantry while POW  
Apr. 19, 1967, N. Vietnam  
Feb. 24, 1967, Dalat, S. Vietnam  
Nov. 9, 1967, Da Nang area, S. Vietnam

KIA June 29, 1972  
Shalimar, Fla. (Ret. Col.)  
Died Dec. 14, 1987  
Kuna, Idaho (Ret. Col.)  
Active-duty Col., McGuire AFB  
Kent, Wash. (Ret. Col.)  
Killed Nov. 15, 1969, Woodbury  
South Windsor, Conn.  
Died while POW, Jan. 1968  
Seattle, Wash. (Ret. Col.)  
KIA Feb. 24, 1967  
Died June 6, 1990

## APPENDIX II

### Number of Medals of Honor Won Throughout the History of the Army

1861-1865 (Civil War) . . . . .	1,200
1861-1898 (Indian Campaigns) . . . . .	416
1898 (War with Spain) . . . . .	30
1899-1913 (Philippine Insurrection) . . . . .	70
1900 (Boxer Rebellion) . . . . .	4
1911 (Mexican Campaign) . . . . .	1
1918 (World War I) . . . . .	95
1922-1935 (Unknown Soldiers, Lindbergh and Greeley) . . . . .	8
1942-1945 (World War II) . . . . .	292
Total . . . . .	2,116

*Cardinal Squadron - AFA - 1950*  
*Boston - Mass*  
*Hotel Statler*

*George D. March - Central East Vice President - AFA*  
*Lloyd J. Streifus - Vice Wing Commander.*  
*Paul S. Devine - Second Vice Squadron Commander*  
*Raymond D. Gray - D.C. Wing Commander.*  
*Walter Pagan*      *Boston*  
*Mayor Cella*

# A Gathering of Heroes



by SSgt. Jim Katzaman  
photos by TSgt. G. Dennis Plummer, AAVS

*Airman 27.26-34 March 1993*

## It was an event to remember when the Medal of Honor recipients got together.

Only Henry E. Erwin betrayed the common bond among those at the head table. Next to him James H. Howard sat tall and aristocratic. Leo K. Thorsness sported boyish good looks, even though his dark hair was flecked with gray. And Bernard F. Fisher's eyes twinkled, radiating a serenity born of living life to the brim and savoring every minute of it.

Erwin's face, unlike the others, bore the scars of unspeakable violence. Plastic surgeons had reconstructed his nose. His creaseless skin was a patchwork creation. Where he once had an entire right ear only the upper lobe remained. His right arm hung useless from his side.

MSgt. Erwin had been through hell.

So, too, had Brig. Gen. Howard, Col. Fisher, and Lt. Col. Thorsness, who like the sergeant were retired. They and 12 other past and one present airmen of un-

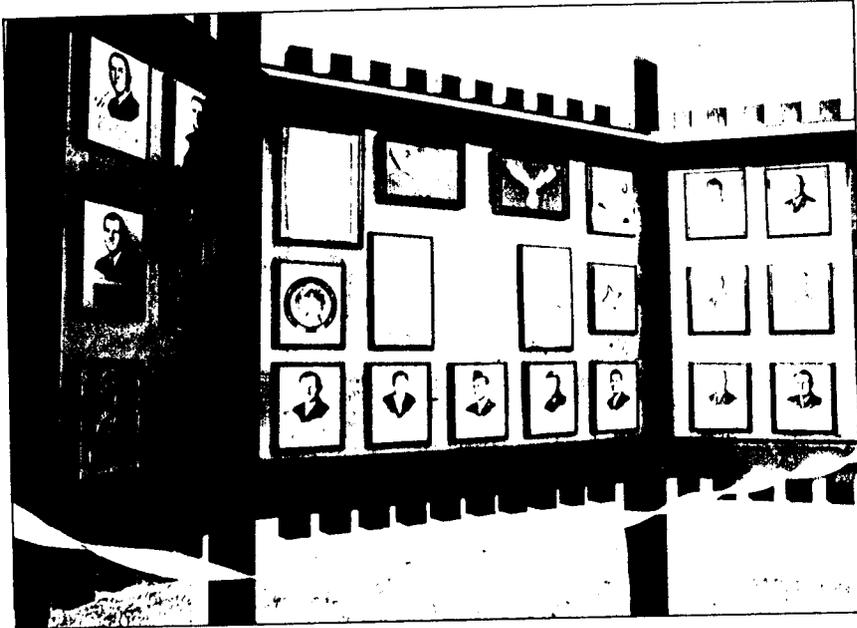
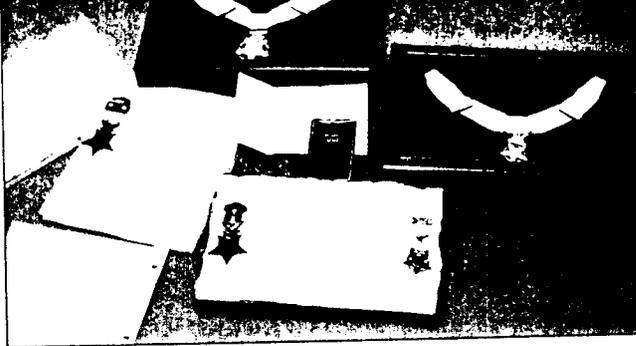


common stature had gathered at Griffiss AFB, N.Y., to be honored by the Air Force as the service's most eminent heroes. This, then, was their common bond: Each of them had received the Medal of Honor.

Together, these placid men of many backgrounds winced noticeably at being called heroes when the word came up. But there were no more fitting words for those who at least once in their military careers had put their lives on the line to save comrades in battle or single-handedly turned the tide of conflict.

This gathering of heroes whose bravery soared above and beyond the call of duty marked the first time the Air Force's Medal of Honor winners had ever visited a base as a group to meet with present-day airmen.

Present-day Army and Air Force Medals of Honor with blue ribbons (right) lie next to their ancestral medals from the 1800s. Griffiss AFB commemorated the historic gathering of Air Force holders of the medal by dedicating a Medal of Honor board (below) where Sgt. Maynard H. Smith (below right) views his World War II portrait.



Rome civic leaders recognized the visiting heroes with an ox roast in their behalf. Blue-suiters and civilians listened to the Dukes of Dixie band, mingled with their guests, and eagerly waited as cooks prepared the main course.



The idea for such a get-together belonged to a lieutenant working in the Rome Air Development Center at Griffiss. He thought it would be tragic not to have the Air Force's living legends re-create, at least once, their special stories for today's generation of men and women in blue.

First Lt. Robert A. Kasprzak proposed the informal assemblage with a sense of compassion mixed with reality. "A lot of these men are up in years. When they're gone, we'll have lost a treasure. We'll never again have the golden opportunity to meet with or hear from them."

As the lieutenant envisioned it, those who heard them might learn from the heroes' experiences. What better teachers than those whose exploits make up the pages of the Air Force's book of valor?

At the same time, the Air Force could show through a massive outpouring of hospitality and good will that today's flying force had not forgotten its most valiant airmen from years past. It would take two years for the lieutenant's idea to come to fruition.

The idea also caught the imagination of those at Griffiss and from the neighboring city of Rome. Because of Rome's affinity with the Medal of Honor recipients through the years, townspeople were particularly interested in the occasion. Rome takes pride in its Medal of Honor recipients—including Dr. Mary Walker, who served as a nurse in the Civil War and is the only woman to have been awarded the decoration. There was also Cpl. Andrew Traynor, who led a daring prisoner escape during that conflict. And Sgt. Oscar Burkard, who distinguished himself in the Indian wars of the late 1800s.

The base and city worked together to plan a remarkable three-day event to honor 17 (of 20) surviving medal holders who said they would attend. It took place last September.

The guests of honor made themselves completely available to those at Griffiss, breaking down into four separate seminar groups that met with as many as 150 airmen each. Often tension hung heavy and thick in the meeting rooms as the Medal of Honor recipients tried with obvious difficulty to put words to happenings that left the mouth dry, the eyes wet, and the imaginations of those in the audience spinning in disbelief. Some of those happenings had scarred the memories of those recounting them for 40 years.

Col. William R. Lawley Jr.'s recollection of his fateful day was at once horrifying and inspiring, strengthened by his self-effacing manner. Indeed, he won over the audience by admitting mistakes he made on Feb. 20, 1944: "The first was getting out of bed."

He told the young airmen how his B-17 was attacked by 20 fighters over Germany. He and eight other crewmen were wounded and the co-pilot was killed. One engine caught fire and the pilot's flight controls were damaged. The plane was in a dive. However, then-1st Lt. Lawley managed to pull the plane out of it in the face of the continuing attack.

When his bombs refused to fall from the bay, he ordered everyone to bail out. He himself stayed behind because two airmen were too badly hurt to jump. Then the lieutenant flew the aircraft back to England where he made a successful crash landing.

When one medal recipient finished his story another began. Although none of them downplayed their deeds, all spoke simply and to the point. No embellishments were needed. The terror of their tales was a silent shout that all could hear.

MSgt. Erwin remembered that he was flying aboard a B-29 over Japan on April 12, 1945, dropping phosphorescent smoke bombs that were white hot when detonated. As he released the last one, "we hit an air pocket. The bomb came back into the plane, exploded, and took my eyes out [blinding him momentarily], and burned my ear off. The pilot lost control because of the smoke, and we started diving. At that point I simply said, 'God, I need your help now!'"

"Instantly the pain was gone. I found the bomb [the size of a grenade], which was still burning, on the floor near my seat. I picked it up and began to crawl with it. I put it under my right arm and used the left to raise the navigator's table. When I finally got forward I hollered for the pilot to open the window and I flipped it out. I was never unconscious and I had no pain." As soon as the smoke cleared, the pilot regained control of the aircraft, pulling it out of the dive some 300 feet above the ground.

Although he didn't tell his audience, the sergeant's ordeal was far from finished. He spent the next three years in a hospital where he underwent 43 operations. He was never as good as new, but he did survive. Because of that, MSgt. Erwin considers himself lucky.

"As for the Medal of Honor," he said, "I didn't anticipate getting it. I'm proud of it, but I *received* it. I didn't *win* it. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time."

After the stories had ended and the applause had subsided, the medal holders fielded questions from their audiences. The lessons the men had learned from their experience in battle was a frequent query.

"Never stop training and never stop learning," said Col. John C. Morgan. "You must maintain discipline at all costs." MSgt. Erwin said people in combat "must have both a heart of steel and compassion. And remember the buddies you're flying with."

If people doubted how well they would perform under fire, Lt. Col. Thorsness assured them that "99 percent of the people in combat really did a super job." And he said that was also true for prisoners of war. He spoke from firsthand experience as a POW in North Vietnam.

Lt. Col. Thorsness told how the subhuman conditions at Hanoi laid bare each man's strengths and weaknesses. "To me," he said, "that was more of a test of courage, bravery, and patriotism [than what he had done to earn the Medal of Honor]. I found men who were much stronger than I. One man never broke

Long lines formed during a midday picnic held on base so more people could see and meet the medal recipients.



A Fort Stanwix "soldier" joins most of the medal holders who toured the reconstructed Revolutionary War stronghold.

under torture, and he died. We'd stood up for our country, like everyone's supposed to do, but it was very difficult."

Many listeners came away from the seminars with renewed admiration for the men, themselves, and their accomplishments. The Medal of Honor recipients had turned Air Force history into something real and alive. They would never be forgotten by those who heard them. SSgt. Mark Sanders was one of those listeners who, before the Griffiss gathering, had only read about the guest speakers in books. "It was a lot different hearing their stories firsthand," he said. "It really brought Air Force history to life."

The guests of honor were also taken back, it was apparent, by each other's accomplishments. They understood. The circumstances differed, but they had been there, too, in their own way.

It showed in several instances.

When the guests arrived, for example, to dedicate Griffiss' Medal of Honor display board, Col. Morgan posed for several pictures with his friends. The three-paneled memorial standing at the center of the base was built by Griffiss airmen in tribute to the medal recipients. When the colonel looked at the portraits etched on brass of him and his buddies mounted for permanent display, he stood in silence for a few moments.

Then he confessed, "I'm in complete awe of these

## A Lesson Learned--Almost!

In less time than it takes to say "Medal of Honor," Col. John C. Morgan could see himself switching from hero to jailbird, and all because he didn't show a citation he was not legally required to carry.

The colonel's unusual brush with military law occurred when he was a first lieutenant and just a few weeks after he returned stateside following World War II. Today the holder of America's highest military decoration says the Medal of Honor has brought him nothing but good things, and he recalls that long-ago night in New York City with a broad grin. "It was a joke," he said, but, like many funny incidents, it wasn't funny when it happened.

Fresh from the war in Europe, the B-17 co-pilot was assigned to Camp Dix, N.J., not far from his parents' home in New York. One afternoon, just before leaving for a night in the Big Apple, his commander called him in for a get-acquainted chat.

However, the tone of the meeting changed when the CO set his eyes on his resident hero. Col. Morgan said, "I just had my RAF and U.S. wings on my uniform, and no ribbons. The commander gave me a good talking to and said the Medal of Honor and all other ribbons awarded were part of my identification and I was to wear them at all times." Then the commanding officer called the tailor and *ordered* the rib-

people. My picture's up there, but I don't feel like I should be part of the display. And I don't think any other recipient here feels like he's part of a special group." Other people in similar circumstances would have reacted the same way in combat, he said.

Brig. Gen. Howard put it more succinctly almost 40 years before. Back then he was dumbfounded when an eager young reporter questioned him about his medal and asked the officer, "Why did you do it?" The general recalled that "I looked at that nut and said, 'I seen my duty and I done it!'" The calculated misuse of verb tenses made the sentence stick.

One of the highlights of the three days of activities was a show in Rome's Capitol Theater, which had been closed for several years. The bows for refurbishing the theater and staging the show went to SrA. Michael E. Furnell and A1C William R. Thrash, who thought the one-time grand dame of entertainment in Rome was just the right place to hold such an event and pieced together a crew that worked day and night to spruce her up.

Some 1,800 people turned out for the variety show that featured the Air Force Band of New England and the Rome Choral Society playing and singing songs with patriotic themes.

The most poignant moments came, however, when the lights dimmed and projectors on stage lit, one at a time, the individual portraits of the Medal of Honor

recipients as they appeared when they were presented the nation's highest military decoration for gallantry at the risk of life. At the same time, a spotlight searched the front rows until it rested on that same man today. Each sat erect as the narrator announced:

"Major Jay Zeamer Junior. . . pilot of a B-17. . . over the Solomon Islands. . . [was] attacked by enemy fighters. . . was wounded, his leg broken, and his plane heavily damaged. . . fought off the enemy for 40 minutes. . . crew destroyed four hostile planes and shot one down himself. . . refused medical aid. . . directed the flight safely to a friendly base 580 miles away."

"Major Merlyn Hans Dethlefsen. . . [a pilot in] a flight of F-105F aircraft. . . [his] aircraft was extensively damaged. . . rendered the [enemy's] defense complex ineffective."

"Sergeant Maynard Harrison Smith. . . a B-17 gunner. . . threw exploding ammunition overboard."

"Second Lieutenant John Cary Morgan. . . co-pilot of a B-17 badly damaged by fighters. . . pilot had been shot in the head, was in a crazed condition, and would not release the controls. . . interphone destroyed. . . could not request help. . . for two hours Lieutenant Morgan flew the aircraft in formation while holding off the struggling pilot."

"Lieutenant Colonel James Howell Howard led a

bons sewn onto the lieutenant's uniform as a requirement for a pass.

With ribbons firmly attached, the lieutenant left Camp Dix for New York to meet his date. They were to meet at a jazz club, and he arrived first. The ribbon-bedecked lieutenant plopped down on a stool and quickly drew the attention of a second lieutenant.

The two men chatted for a few minutes before the stranger pointed to 1st Lt. Morgan's uniform and asked, "Isn't that the Medal of Honor? Where did you get it?" Hearing of 1st Lt. Morgan's actions against the Third Reich, the officer asked: "Do you have your citation? I'd love to see it."

First Lt. Morgan could not believe his ears. He had spent some time that afternoon in the tailor's shop having his ribbons sewn on and now this. "No," he replied in bewilderment, "I don't have a copy of the citation with me."

The war hero found himself swiftly surrounded by four military policemen and heard the words, "I'm afraid you're going to have to come with me." As he was led away, the second lieutenant—a military police officer—told him that there were a lot of phony Medal of Honor winners running around New York and the MPs had to round up the frauds.

The genuine medal holder could have resolved the situation easily by scrounging up a copy of his citation that was only a few blocks away. "But I was a hardhead, arguing that an AGO card and an affidavit should be enough," said Col. Morgan.

The standoff ended when 1st Lt. Morgan led the police to his parents' house where a framed copy of his citation was hanging. "I picked it off the wall," said Col. Morgan, "and showed them where it was signed by President Roosevelt." Then, ungratefully, the second lieutenant said, "That's what you should have done in the first place." He walked out and 1st Lt. Morgan never heard from him again.

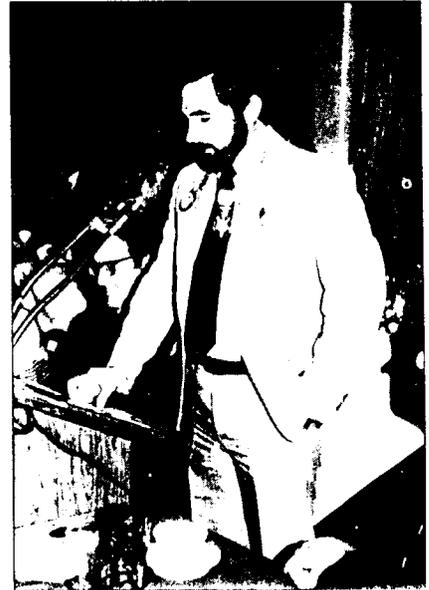
He vowed never to let himself get placed in that predicament again. From that day until he left the service a short time later, he chose not to wear his ribbons.

That is until one day after he was recalled to active duty during the Korean War. He reported to his new commander and wore only his RAF and U.S. wings on his uniform. Aghast, the commander said, "I'm going to send you to the tailor. . . ."

—SSgt. Jim Katzaman



A sergeant loans his back to Col. Morgan after requesting an autograph.



The Rome Choral Society (top left), Fort Stanwix Honor Guard (top right), and the Air Force Band of New England (above left) were some of the acts that entertained the packed Capitol Theater. The next night Congressman Donald Mitchell (left, standing next to Gen. Robert T. Marsh, Air Force Systems Command commander) was guest speaker at a banquet. Sgt. John L. Levitow (above) was one of those who thanked the base and community for their hospitality.

P-51 fighter group supporting bombers. . . attacked by numerous fighters. . . lost contact with group. . . attacked single-handedly more than 30 German planes, destroying three.”

“Colonel George Everette Day. . . ejected over North Vietnam. . . taken to a prison camp, interrogated, and severely tortured. . . escaped. . . was ambushed, recaptured, and returned to his prison camp. . . continued maximum resistance.”

“Lieutenant Colonel Leo Keith Thorsness. . . flew an F-105 on a surface-to-air missile [SAM] suppression mission over North Vietnam. . . destroyed one SAM site. . . [he] and his wingman attacked and eliminated a second site. . . wingman’s aircraft fell to anti-aircraft fire. . . Colonel Thorsness sighted and destroyed a MiG-17. . . circled parachutes to relay position for rescue. . . without receiving [more] fuel, damaged one MiG and drove others from scene, protecting the rescue effort.”

“Technical Sergeant Forrest Lee Vosler. . . radio operator-air gunner of a severely damaged B-17. . . repeatedly attacked by enemy fighters. Sergeant Vosler was painfully wounded, but continued a steady stream of deadly fire. Again wounded, with greatly impaired vision, he kept firing, declining first aid. . . when plane ditched, he crawled to the wing to keep wounded tail gunner from slipping off.”

“First Lieutenant Edward Stanley Michael piloted a B-17. . . that was riddled by cannon fire, began losing altitude. . . enemy fighters. . . inflicted more damage. Lieutenant Michael was seriously wounded. . . bomb bay, loaded with incendiaries, was in flames. . . emergency release failed to function. . . [he] flew on until losing consciousness. . . co-pilot flew plane to England. . . Lieutenant Michael regained consciousness and landed without mishap.”

“Sergeant John Lee Levitow. . . an AC-47 load-master. . . his aircraft was hit by enemy ground fire [that] released an activated aerial flare within the airplane. Though badly wounded, [then-] Airman Levitow dragged himself forward, fell on the smoking flare, and hurled it from the aircraft just before it ignited.”

“Captain Gerald Orren Young, in an HH-3E helicopter, escorted another helicopter attempting night rescue of an Army team. . . heavy enemy fire severely damaged the lead helicopter. . . Captain Young hovered under intense fire until remaining survivors were aboard. . . then his aircraft crashed in flames. . . disregarding serious burns. . . aided one of wounded men. . . attempted to lead the enemy from his position. . . for more than 17 hours he evaded capture until rescued.”

“Captain James Phillip Fleming [still on active duty as a lieutenant colonel]. . . aircraft commander of a UH-1F transport helicopter. . . flew to the aid of a six-man Special Forces long-range reconnaissance patrol. . . descended twice. . . through a barrage of enemy fire. . . balanced his helicopter on the bank of a river with its tail boom hanging over the open



Lt. Col. James P. Fleming (top) is the only Air Force Medal of Honor recipient on active duty. Joseph R. Zyla shows his Medal of Honor collection to Brig. Gen. James H. Howard and Gen. Leon W. Johnson (center), and (above) TSgt. Forrest L. Vosler, Col. Joe M. Jackson, and Lt. Col. Jay Zeamer.

water. . . remained in this exposed position, with bullets smashing through his windscreen, until the entire patrol could board his helicopter."

"Major Bernard Francis Fisher. . . an A-1E pilot [when] Special Forces camp was attacked by 2,000 North Vietnamese Army regulars. . . During the battle, Major Fisher observed a fellow airman crash-land on the damaged airstrip. . . [the major] landed, taxied the length of the runway littered with battle debris, and effected the rescue. . . barely achieved takeoff in his badly damaged aircraft.

"Lieutenant Colonel Joe Madison Jackson. . . aircraft commander of an unarmed C-123 transport flying a tactical emergency evacuation mission to rescue three remaining survivors at Special Forces camp. . . intense automatic weapons fire was directed at his aircraft on the landing approach, while on the ground, and during takeoff, in addition to the rocket and mortar barrage. . . succeeded in rescuing survivors."

"Colonel Leon William Johnson led a mass low-level B-24 bombing attack. . . his formation became separated from the main force due to adverse weather. . . discovered that the target assigned his group had already been attacked. . . elected to continue the attack. Despite the now-alerted ground and air defenses, danger from exploding delayed-action bombs, and from oil fire explosions, and harassed by intense smoke. . . inflicted severe losses to enemy's vital oil resources."

The venerable theater shook as ovation after ovation followed each medal holder's introduction, narration, and his subsequent "thank you" bow to the audience. None of the men had expected a reception like that, and there was more to come the next day.

The morning began with a drive to downtown Rome where the distinguished guests toured Fort Stanwix. It was there that the Stars and Stripes first flew in battle in 1777. Then came a visit to the Rome Art and Community Center, which displayed three Medals of Honor presented to soldiers in the 1800s.

Sandwiched between these stops was a parade through Rome in honor of the men. Feeling a part of all that was going on around them, those who could make the walk spontaneously joined the procession. They led the parade over its mile-and-a-half route and happily waved to people who lined the streets.

As the three-day observance drew to a close, John L. Levitow, now a civilian, spoke for all the Medal of Honor recipients when he said, "I thought the proudest day of my life was when the president awarded me my medal. But this trip to Rome and the treatment we've received here tops that. Thank you."

Later, after the festivities had ended, the last banquet held, and the final words of tribute spoken, each of the 17 Medal of Honor recipients quietly left to return to his business, farm, or whatever his pursuit.

Ordinary people back to their ordinary lives, but for a terrible, swift flash in time. . . .

## Heroes Yet Unsung

When Col. Bernard F. Fisher was asked what coming to Griffiss AFB for the gathering of Medal of Honor recipients meant to him, he had an unexpected reply. The first Air Force member to receive the medal in the Vietnam War unhesitatingly paid tribute to the unsung heroes, those who performed above and beyond the call of duty in battle, but who did not receive the military's highest decoration.

"I'm grateful when events like this occur," he said, "because I have the chance to talk about what happened in the war and mention other people you never heard about. I was not in a single-man operation, and I would be very remiss to think that I flew in there by myself and rescued a crewman."

It was during an enemy offensive in Southeast Asia that a Special Forces base was surrounded. The only way to save a downed pilot who had made a crash landing on the base airstrip was for then-Maj. Fisher, himself, to attempt to rescue him by making a daring landing in his A-1E on the same short strip under mortar fire.

"I had people there that day," continued the colonel, "who stuck by me and laid their heads on the line. John Lucas and Denny Haig were my wing men and they were flying cover for me by shooting at the enemy on the ground.

"Just as I was ready to take off with the crewman aboard, John said, 'Denny has a Winchester!' That means 'I'm out of ammunition.' And Denny came back on the radio and said, 'They [the enemy] don't know the difference. Let's keep making dry runs.'

"And they did. The 'birds' had 14-foot props on them, but somehow I think Lucas and Haig flew right down to the grass. Denny later joked, 'Bernie, if one of them had stuck his head up, we'd have gotten him!'

"I owe an awful lot to people like that. John Lucas was shot up far worse than I was. He was on fire; he lost his hydraulics system. We lost 13 planes and more than 20 men in the battle to save that pilot.

"I'm really grateful to those dedicated people, and now I get a chance to talk about them. They're just like you and me. They make America great and I'm very proud of them."—SSgt. Jim Katzaman



Col. Fisher and his wife pass through the gate of historic Fort Stanwix.