



ABOVE AND BEYOND

MEDAL OF HONOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

Volume 6 Issue 2

Special Edition



President's Report

Hello everybody. As most of you are aware, on March 18, 2014, the Medal of Honor was awarded to 24 individuals for service in WWII, Korea and Vietnam. It is nearly impossible to do all of them justice in one edition so what we've done is compile their information and photograph into a format similar to that in the widely used book by George Lang, Ray Collins and Gerard White, *Medal Of Honor Recipients 1863-1994*

It was with deep regret that the Board accepted the resignation of Sue Fox as Treasurer and Board member. Sue will continue to be an active member of the MOHHSUS and we look forward to working with her and hopefully sharing a Medal of Honor article or two. Ann Pate has graciously agreed to join the Board as Treasurer and complete Sue's term. Memberships and renewals should be sent to Ann; her address is on the back page of this newsletter. We will have a formal introduction to Ann in the next regular edition. ★

Remarks by the President at Presentation Ceremony for the Medal of Honor

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated. Well, welcome to the White House. The presentation of our nation's highest military decoration ~ the Medal of Honor ~ is always a special occasion. But today, it is truly historic. This is the single largest group of servicemembers to be awarded the Medal of Honor since the Second World War. And with several of these soldiers recognized for their valor during that war, this ceremony is 70 years in the making. As one family member has said, this is long overdue.

Many of these families ~ and I had a chance to meet all of them who are present here today ~ they've known these stories of heroism for decades. Still, they were pretty surprised when we called them to break the news about the Medal of Honor. Some of them thought it was a prank. Some of them thought it was a scam. A few of them thought it might be some trick to get their credit card number. When I called Melvin Morris ~ who we'll recognize in a moment for his actions in Vietnam ~ his first reaction was, "Oh, my God, what have I done?" When I told him it was all good ~ the Medal of Honor ~ I could hear through the phone, he almost passed out.

You see, for their gallantry under fire each of these soldiers was long ago recognized with the Army's second-highest award ~ the Distinguished Service Cross. But ask their fellow veterans, ask their families, and they'll tell you that their extraordinary deeds merited the highest recognition. And today, we have the chance to set the record straight.

This ceremony reminds us of one of the enduring qualities that makes America great ~ that makes us exceptional. No nation is perfect, but here in America we confront our imperfections and face a sometimes painful past ~ including the truth that some of these soldiers fought, and died, for a country that did not always see them as equal. So with each generation we keep on striving to live up to our ideals of freedom and equality, and to recognize the dignity and patriotism of every person, no matter who they are, what they look like, or how they pray.

And that's why, more than a decade ago, Congress mandated a review to make sure that the heroism of our veterans wasn't overlooked because of prejudice or discrimination. Our military reviewed thousands of war records. They teamed up with veterans groups and museums to get this right. It was painstaking work, made even harder because sometimes our servicemembers felt as if they needed to change their last names to fit in. That tells a story about our past. But, ultimately, after years of review, these two dozen soldiers ~ among them Hispanic, African American and Jewish veterans ~ were identified as having earned the Medal of Honor. This is the length to which America will go to make sure everyone who serves under our proud flag receives the thanks that they deserve.

So this is going to be a long ceremony. We're going to read all 24 citations, because every one is a story of bravery that deserves to be told. But first, I want to take just a few minutes to describe the Americans behind these actions, the men these families know ~ the brilliant lives behind the smiling faces in those old photographs, and how they reflected all the beauty and diversity of the country that they served.

They were Americans by birth and Americans by choice ~ immigrants, including one who was not yet even a citizen. They grew up in big city neighborhoods like Brooklyn, rural communities like Hooper, Nebraska, small towns in Puerto Rico. They loved to fish and play baseball. They were sons who made their parents proud, and brothers who their siblings looked up to. They were so young ~ many in their early 20s. And when their country went to war, they answered the call. They put on the uniform, and hugged their families goodbye ~ some of them hugged the wives and children that they'd never see again.

They fought in the rocky hills of Italy, the blood-stained beaches of France, in the freezing mountains of Korea, the humid jungles of Vietnam. Their courage almost defies imagination. When you read the records of these individuals, it's unimaginable, the valor that they displayed. Running into bullets. Charging machine gun nests and climbing aboard tanks and taking them out. Covering their comrades so they could make it to safety. Holding back enemies, wave after wave, even when the combat was hand-to-hand..

Manning their posts ~ some to their very last breaths ~ so that their comrades might live. Of the 24 American soldiers we honor today, 10 never came home. One of them ~ Corporal Joe Baldonado, from the Korean War ~ is still missing, reminding us that, as a nation, we have a sacred obligation to keep working to give the families of our missing servicemembers from all wars a full accounting of their loved ones.

Through their grief, the families of our fallen summoned the strength to carry on: wives whose hearts ached for their husbands; sons and daughters who grew up without their dad; nieces and nephews and grandchildren. These families join us here today. And they know, more than most, that because others laid down their lives for us, we've been able to live our lives in freedom, pursue our dreams. So there's a legacy here born of sacrifice.

That includes a soldier's nephew ~ a kid from New York, who grew up to become one of the great rock stars of all time and who honors his uncle here today. It includes soldiers who came home and took different paths ~ some continued to serve in uniform, some beginning new careers, some getting married and raising their kids, serving their communities, taking care of their fellow vets.

These veterans lived out their lives in the country that they helped to defend, and doing what they loved ~like William Leonard, who at age 71 passed away in his backyard, sitting in his chair, listening to his beloved Yankees play on the radio.

And that's where this story might have ended. But Mitchel Libman ~ a friend of one of these soldiers and an Army vet himself ~ set out on a mission. He and his wife Marilyn spent years writing letters and working with Congress and our military to get this done. And so we thank all those who worked so hard for so long to bring us to this moment, especially Marilyn and Mitchel ~ now 83 years old ~ who I'd ask to stand so that we can all say thank you.

Finally, of these 24 soldiers, three remain with us and have joined us here today ~ men who remind us that sometimes the heroes we seek are right in front of us, literally living right next door.

Most days, you can find Jose Rodela in his San Antonio home ~ a 76-year-old retiree who enjoys watching baseball on TV, and working on his 1975 Chevy pickup, and mowing the grass for his neighbors. Jose is such a humble guy that he did not even mention the ceremony to his neighbors ~ who I think would be pretty shocked to turn on the news tonight ~ and see that the guy who cuts their lawn is getting the Medal of Honor. Today, we remember how 32-year-old Sergeant First Class Rodela fought through his wounds in Vietnam and rallied his men during 18 hours of constant combat.

Most days, you can find Melvin Morris at home in Port St. John, Florida ~ 72 years old, a retired salesman and a great-grandfather. You'll find him working on his boat, going fishing, reading the Bible, spending time with his beautiful wife Mary ~ married 53 years this month. You're going to have to give me some tips. We're not that far along yet. Today, we remember how 27-year-old Staff Sergeant Morris ~ one of our nation's very first Green Berets ~ one of our very first Green Berets ~ think about that. I mean, that's legendary ~ how Staff Sergeant Morris recovered a fallen comrade in Vietnam, took out several enemy bunkers, and kept going even after he was shot three times. And on most days, you can find Santiago Erevia at home in San Antonio ~ he's a 68-year-old retired postal worker. He's fixing up his house, typically, tending to the garden, going on walks with his wife, or doing some push-ups to stay in shape.

Today, we remember how 23-year-old Specialist Four Erevia, under a hail of bullets in Vietnam, gave first aid to his wounded comrades and single-handedly destroyed four enemy bunkers. These are extraordinary Americans.

THREE MEN RECEIVED THE MEDAL IN PERSON

Erevia, Santiago Jesus
War: Vietnam War
Unit: Co C, 1st Bn (Airmobile),
501st Inf Regt, 101st Airborne
Div (Airmobile)
Branch: US Army
Served as: Radio Telephone Op-
erator

Rank (highest achieved): Specialist Four (Sergeant)

Date of Birth: 1946

Place of Birth: Nordheim, TX

Entered Service at: San Antonio, TX

Date of Action: 21 May 1969

Place of Action: near Tam Ky City, Republic of Vietnam

Citation: Specialist Four Santiago J. Erevia distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a radio telephone operator in Company C, 1st Battalion (Airmobile), 501st Infantry, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) during search and clear mission near Tam Ky, Republic of Vietnam on May 21, 1969. After breaching an insurgent perimeter, Specialist Four Erevia was designated by his platoon leader to render first aid to several casualties, and the rest of the platoon moved forward. As he was doing so, he came under intense hostile fire from four bunkers to his left front. Although he could have taken cover with the rest of the element, he chose a retaliatory course of action. With heavy enemy fire directed at him, he moved in full view of the hostile gunners as he proceeded to crawl from one wounded man to another, gathering ammunition. Armed with two M-16 rifles and several hand grenades, he charged toward the enemy positions behind the suppressive fire of the two rifles. Under very intense fire, he continued to advance on the insurgents until he was near the first bunker. Disregarding the enemy fire, he pulled the pin from a hand grenade and advanced on the bunker, leveling suppressive fire until he could drop the grenade into the bunker, mortally wounding the insurgent and destroying the fortification. Without hesitation, he employed identical tactics as he proceeded to eliminate the next two enemy positions. With the destruction of the third bunker, Specialist Four Erevia had exhausted his supply of hand grenades. Still under intense fire from the fourth position, he courageously charged forward behind the fire emitted by his M-16 rifles.



Melvin Morris, Jose Rodela and Santiago Erevia after being presented with the Medal of Honor. Photo Credit: www.army.mil

Arriving at the very edge of the bunker, he silenced the occupant within the fortification at point blank range. Through his heroic actions the lives of the wounded were saved and the members of the Company Command Post were relieved from a very precarious situation. His exemplary performance in the face of overwhelming danger was an inspiration to his entire company and contributed immeasurably to the success of the mission. Specialist Four Erevia's conspicuous gallantry, extraordinary heroism, and intrepidity at the risk of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



Morris, Melvin
War: Vietnam War
Unit: Det A-403, Co D, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces
Branch: US Army
Served as: Commander of a Strike Force

Rank (highest achieved): Staff Sergeant (Sergeant First Class)

Date of Birth: 7 January 1942

Place of Birth: Okmulgee, OK

Entered Service at: Fort Bragg, NC

Date of Action: 17 September 1969

Place of Action: near Chi Lang, Republic of Vietnam

Citation: Staff Sergeant Melvin Morris distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as Commander of a Strike Force drawn from Company D, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, during combat operations against an armed enemy in the vicinity of Chi Lang, Republic of Vietnam on September 17, 1969. On that afternoon, Staff Sergeant Morris's affiliated companies encountered an extensive enemy mine field and were subsequently engaged by a hostile force. Staff Sergeant Morris learned by radio that a fellow team commander had been killed near an enemy bunker and he immediately reorganized his men into an effective assault posture before advancing forward and splitting off with two men to recover the team commander's body. Observing the maneuver, the hostile force concentrated its fire on Staff Sergeant Morris's three-man element and successfully wounded both men accompanying him. After assisting the two wounded men back to his forces' lines, Staff Sergeant Morris charged forward into withering enemy fire with only his men's suppressive fire as cover. While enemy machine gun emplacements continuously directed strafing fusillades against him, Staff Sergeant Morris destroyed the positions with hand grenades and continued his assault, ultimately eliminating four bunkers. Upon reaching the bunker nearest the fallen team commander, Staff Sergeant Morris repulsed the enemy, retrieved his comrade and began the arduous trek back to friendly lines. He was wounded three times as he struggled forward, but ultimately succeeded in returning his fallen comrade to a friendly position. Staff Sergeant Morris's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



Rodela, Jose
War: Vietnam War
Unit: Det B-36, Co A, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces
Branch: US Army
Served as: Acting Company Commander
Rank (highest achieved): Sergeant First Class (Master Sergeant)

Date of Birth: 15 June 1937

Place of Birth: Corpus Christi, TX

Entered Service at: Corpus Christi, TX?

Date of Action: 1 September 1969

Place of Action: Phuoc Long Province, Vietnam

Citation: Sergeant First Class Jose Rodela distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as the company commander, Detachment B-36, Company A, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces during combat operations against an armed enemy in Phuoc Long Province, Republic of Vietnam on September 1, 1969. That afternoon, Sergeant First Class Rodela's battalion came under an intense barrage of mortar, rocket, and machine gun fire. Ignoring the withering enemy fire, Sergeant First Class Rodela immediately began placing his men into defensive positions to prevent the enemy from overrunning the entire battalion. Repeatedly exposing himself to enemy fire, Sergeant First Class Rodela moved from position to position, providing suppressing fire and assisting wounded, and was himself wounded in the back and head by a B-40 rocket while recovering a wounded comrade. Alone, Sergeant First Class Rodela assaulted and knocked out the B-40 rocket position before successfully returning to the battalion's perimeter. Sergeant First Class Rodela's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

WORLD WAR II

Cano, Pedro
Unit: Co C, 8th Inf Regt, 4th Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Infantryman
Rank (highest achieved): Private
Date of Birth: 7 July 1920
Place of Birth: La Morita, Mexico

Entered Service at: Texas

Date of Action: 2-3 December 1944

Place of Action: Hurtgen Forest, Schevenhutte, Germany

Presented: to his daughter, Dominga C. Perez

Date of Death: 24 June 1952

Place of Death: near Edinburg, TX

Cemetery: Hillcrest Memorial Park (Block 3, Lot 34, Space 3), Edinburg, TX

Citation: Private Pedro Cano distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving with Company C, 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Schevenhutte, Germany on December 2 and 3, 1944. On the afternoon of the 2nd, American infantrymen launched an attack against German emplacements but were repulsed by enemy machinegun fire. Armed with a rocket launcher, Private Cano crawled through a densely mined area under heavy enemy fire and successfully reached a point within ten yards of the nearest emplacement. He quickly fired a rocket into the position, killing the two gunners and five supporting riflemen. Without hesitating, he fired into a second position, killing two more gunners, and proceeded to assault the position with hand grenades, killing several others and dispersing the rest. Then, when an adjacent company encountered heavy fire, Private Cano crossed his company front, crept to within fifteen yards of the nearest enemy emplacement and killed the two machinegunners with a rocket. With another round he killed two more gunners and destroyed a second gun. On the following day, his company renewed the attack and again encountered heavy machinegun fire. Private Cano, armed with his rocket launcher, again moved across fire-swept terrain and destroyed three enemy machineguns in succession, killing the six gunners. Private Cano's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Gandara, Joe
Unit: Co D, 2d Bn, 507th Parachute Inf Regt, 17th Airborne Div
Branch: US Army
Rank (highest achieved): Private
Date of Birth: 25 April 1924
Place of Birth: Santa Monica, CA
Entered Service at: Los Angeles, CA

Date of Action: 9 June 1944

Place of Action: Amfreville, France

Presented: to his niece Miriam Theresa Adams

Date of Death: 9 June 1944

Place of Death: Amfreville, France

Cemetery: Woodlawn Cemetery (Block 7, Lot 134, Space A), Santa Monica, CA

Citation: Private Joe Gandara distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving with Company D, 2d Battalion, 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 17th Airborne Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Amfreville, France on June 9, 1944. On that day, Private Gandara's detachment came under devastating enemy fire from a strong German force, pinning the men to the ground for a period of four hours. Private Gandara voluntarily advanced alone toward the enemy position. Firing his machinegun from his hip as he moved forward, he destroyed three hostile machineguns before he was fatally wounded. Private Gandara's extraordinary heroism and selflessness at the cost of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Lara, Salvador J.
Unit: 2d Plt, Co L, 180th Inf, 45th Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Squad Leader of a Rifle Squad
Rank (highest achieved): Private First Class (Staff Sergeant)
Date of Birth: 1920

Place of Birth: Riverside, CA?

Entered Service at: Riverside, CA

Date of Action: 27-28 May 1944

Place of Action: Aprilia, Italy

Presented: to his brother Alfonzo Lara

Date of Death: 1 September 1945?

Place of Death: France?

Cemetery: Lorraine American Cemetery & Memorial (Plot F, Row 17, Grave 33), Lorraine, France

Citation: Private First Class Salvador J. Lara distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as the Squad Leader of a rifle squad with 2d Platoon, Company L, 180th Infantry, 45th Infantry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Aprilia, Italy on May 27 and 28, 1944. On the afternoon of the 27th, Private First Class Lara aggressively led his rifle squad in neutralizing multiple enemy strongpoints and in inflicting large numbers of casualties on the enemy. Having taken his initial objective, Private First Class Lara noticed that the unit to his right was meeting stiff resistance from a large, well-entrenched enemy force in a deep ditch. Private First Class Lara quickly gathered three men and attacked a wide section of the enemy position, killing four, forcing fifteen others to surrender and causing two enemy mortar crews to abandon their weapons. His fearless and efficient performance enabled both his own unit and the unit to his right to continue to their objective. The next morning, as his company resumed the attack, Private First Class Lara sustained a severe leg wound, but did not stop to receive first aid. His company suffered heavy casualties as a result of withering machinegun fire coming from an enemy strongpoint on the right flank. After requesting permission to destroy the enemy machineguns armed only with a Browning Automatic Rifle, Private First Class Lara crawled alone toward the nearest machinegun. Despite his painful wound and the extreme danger of the task, he rose and fearlessly charged the nest, killing the crew members. Another machinegun opened fire on him, but he quickly neutralized this weapon with accurate fire from his Browning, killing three more of the enemy. His aggressive attack forced two other machinegun crews to flee their weapons. After rejoining his company, Private First Class Lara continued his exemplary performance until he captured his objective. Private First Class Lara's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Leonard, William F.
Unit: Co C, 30th Inf Regt, 3d Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Squad Leader
Rank (highest achieved): Private First Class (Staff Sergeant)
Date of Birth: 9 August 1913
Place of Birth: Lockport, NY

Entered Service at: Lockport, NY

Date of Action: 7 November 1944

Place of Action: near St. Die, France

Presented: to his daughter Patricia Kennedy

Date of Death: 4 August 1985

Place of Death: Lockport, NY

Cemetery: Cold Springs Cemetery (Section 7, Lot 64, Grave 4), Lockport, NY

Citation: Private First Class William F. Leonard distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a Squad Leader in Company C, 30th Infantry Regiment, 3d Infantry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy near St. Die, France on November 7, 1944. Private First Class Leonard's platoon was reduced to eight men as a result of blistering artillery, mortar, machinegun, and rifle fire. Private First Class Leonard led the survivors in an assault over a hill covered by trees and shrubs which the enemy continuously swept with automatic weapons fire. Ignoring bullets which pierced his pack, Private First Class Leonard killed two snipers at ranges of fifty and seventy-five yards and engaged and destroyed a machinegun nest with grenades, killing its two-man crew. Though momentarily stunned by an exploding bazooka shell, Private First Class Leonard relentlessly advanced, ultimately knocking out a second machinegun nest and capturing the roadblock objective. Private First Class Leonard's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Nietzel, Alfred B.
Unit: Co H, 2nd Bn, 16th Inf Regt,
 1st Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Section leader
Rank (highest achieved): Sergeant
Date of Birth: 27 April 1921
Place of Birth: Queens, NY
Entered Service at: Jamaica, NY

Date of Action: 18 November 1944
Place of Action: Heistern, Germany
Presented: to his cousin Robert Nietzel
Date of Death: 18 November 1944
Place of Death: Heistern, Germany
Cemetery: Long Island National Cemetery (Section J, Site 14185), Farmingdale, NY
Citation: Sergeant Alfred B. Nietzel distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a section leader for Company H, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Heistern, Germany on November 18, 1944. That afternoon, Sergeant Nietzel fought tenaciously to repel a vicious enemy attack against his unit. Sergeant Nietzel employed accurate, intense fire from his machinegun and successfully slowed the hostile advance. However, the overwhelming enemy force continued to press forward. Realizing he desperately needed reinforcements, Sergeant Nietzel ordered the three remaining members of his squad to return to the company command post and secure aid. He immediately turned his attention to covering their movement with his fire. After expending all his machinegun ammunition, Sergeant Nietzel began firing his rifle into the attacking ranks until he was killed by the explosion of an enemy grenade. Sergeant Nietzel's extraordinary heroism and selflessness at the cost of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Schwab, Donald K.
Unit: Co E, 15th Inf Regt, 3d Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Company Commander
Rank: First Lieutenant
Date of Birth: 6 December 1918
Place of Birth: Hooper, NE
Entered Service at: TBD
Date of Action: 17 September 1944
Place of Action: near Lure, France

Presented: to his son Dr. Terry Don Schwab
Date of Death: 19 February 2005
Place of Death: Omaha, NE
Cemetery: Hooper Cemetery (Section 7, Lot 4, Grave 3), Hooper, NE
Citation: First Lieutenant Donald K. Schwab distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as the Commander of Company E, 15th Infantry Regiment, 3d Infantry Division, during combat operations against an armed enemy near Lure, France on September 17, 1944. That afternoon, as First Lieutenant Schwab led his company across four hundred yards of exposed ground, an intense, grazing burst of machinegun and machine-pistol fire sprung forth without warning from a fringe of woods directly in front of the American force. First Lieutenant Schwab quickly extricated his men from the attempted ambush and led them back to a defiladed position. Soon after, he was ordered to overwhelm the enemy line. He rapidly organized his men into a skirmish line and, with indomitable courage, again led them forward into the lethal enemy fire. When halted a second time, First Lieutenant Schwab moved from man to man to supervise collection of the wounded and organize his company's withdrawal. From defilade, he rallied his decimated force for a third charge on the hostile strong point and successfully worked his way to within fifty yards of the Germans before ordering his men to hit the dirt. While automatic weapons fire blazed around him, he rushed forward alone, firing his carbine at the German foxholes, aiming for the vital enemy machine-pistol nest which had sparked the German resistance and caused heavy casualties among his men. Silhouetted through the mist and rain by enemy flares, he charged to the German emplacement, ripped the half-cover off the hostile firing pit, struck the German gunner on the head with his carbine butt and dragged the German back through a hail of fire to friendly lines. First Lieutenant Schwab's action so disorganized hostile infantry resistance that the enemy forces withdrew, abandoning their formidable defensive line. First Lieutenant Schwab's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Mendoza, Manuel Verdugo
Unit: Co B, 350th Inf, 88th Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Platoon Sergeant
Rank (highest achieved): Staff Sergeant (Master Sergeant)
Date of Birth: 15 June 1922
Place of Birth: Miami, AZ
Entered Service at: Phoenix, AZ
Date of Action: 4 October 1944

Place of Action: on Mt. Battaglia, Italy

Presented: to his widow Alice Mendoza

Date of Death: 12 December 2001

Place of Death: Mesa, AZ

Cemetery: Mountain View Cemetery (Section B, Lot 50), Mesa, AZ

Citation: Staff Sergeant Manuel V. Mendoza distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a Platoon Sergeant with Company B, 350th Infantry, 88th Infantry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy on Mt. Battaglia, Italy on October 4, 1944. That afternoon, the enemy launched a violent counterattack preceded by a heavy mortar barrage. Staff Sergeant Mendoza, already wounded in the arm and leg, grabbed a Thompson sub-machinegun and ran to the crest of the hill where he saw approximately 200 enemy troops charging up the slopes employing flame-throwers, machine pistols, rifles, and hand grenades. Staff Sergeant Mendoza immediately began to engage the enemy, firing five clips and killing ten enemy soldiers. After exhausting his ammunition, he picked up a carbine and emptied its magazine at the enemy. By this time, an enemy soldier with a flame-thrower had almost reached the crest, but was quickly eliminated as Staff Sergeant Mendoza drew his pistol and fired. Seeing that the enemy force continued to advance, Staff Sergeant Mendoza jumped into a machinegun emplacement that had just been abandoned and opened fire. Unable to engage the entire enemy force from his location, he picked up the machinegun and moved forward, firing from his hip and spraying a withering hail of bullets into the oncoming enemy, causing them to break into confusion. He then set the machinegun on the ground and continued to fire until the gun jammed. Without hesitating, Staff Sergeant Mendoza began throwing hand grenades at the enemy, causing them to flee. After the enemy had withdrawn, he advanced down the forward slope of the hill, retrieved numerous enemy weapons scattered about the area, captured a wounded enemy soldier, and returned to consolidate friendly positions with all available men. Staff Sergeant Mendoza's gallant stand resulted in thirty German soldiers killed and the successful defense of the hill. Staff Sergeant Mendoza's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

KOREAN WAR



Baldonado, Joe R.
Unit: 3d Squad, 2d Platoon, Co B, 1st Bn, 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team, 11th Airborne Division
Branch: US Army
Served as: Acting Machine Gunner
Rank (highest achieved): Corporal
Date of Birth: 28 August 1930
Place of Birth: Colorado

Entered Service at: Santa Clara, CA

Date of Action: 25 November 1950

Place of Action: Hill 171, vicinity of Kangdong, Korea

Presented: to his brother Charles Baldonado

Date of Death: 25 November 1950

Place of Death: Hill 171, near Kangdong, Korea

Cemetery: MIA. IMO at Arlington National Cemetery

pending. Name engraved on Wall of the Missing

Citation: Corporal Joe R. Baldonado distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as an acting machinegunner in 3d Squad, 2d Platoon, Company B, 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment during combat operations against an armed enemy in Kangdong, Korea on November 25, 1950. On that morning, the enemy launched a strong attack in an effort to seize the hill occupied by Corporal Baldonado and his company. The platoon had expended most of its ammunition in repelling the enemy attack and the platoon leader decided to commit his 3d Squad, with its supply of ammunition, in the defensive action. Since there was no time to dig in because of the proximity of the enemy, who had advanced to within twenty-five yards of the platoon position, Corporal Baldonado emplaced his weapon in an exposed position and delivered a withering stream of fire on the advancing enemy, causing them to fall back in disorder. The enemy then concentrated all their fire on Corporal Baldonado's gun and attempted to knock it out by rushing the position in small groups and hurling hand grenades. Several times, grenades exploded extremely close to Corporal Baldonado but failed to interrupt his continuous firing. The hostile troops made repeated attempts to storm his position and were driven back each time with appalling casualties. The enemy finally withdrew after making a final assault on Corporal Baldonado's position during which a grenade landed near his gun, killing him instantly. Corporal Baldonado's extraordinary heroism and selflessness at the cost of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Espinoza, Victor Hugo
Unit: Co A, 1st Bn, 23d Inf Regt, 2d Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Acting Rifleman
Rank (highest achieved): Corporal (Master Sergeant)
Date of Birth: 15 July 1928
Place of Birth: El Paso, TX
Entered Service at: Texas
Date of Action: 1 August 1952

Place of Action: Chorwon, Korea

Presented: to his son Tyronne Espinoza

Date of Death: 17 April 1986

Place of Death: El Paso, TX

Cemetery: Fort Bliss National Cemetery, (Section F, Site 1115), Fort Bliss, TX

Citation: Corporal Victor H. Espinoza distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as an Acting Rifleman in Company A, 23d Infantry Regiment, 2d Infantry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Chorwon, Korea on August 1, 1952. On that day, Corporal Espinoza and his unit were responsible for securing and holding a vital enemy hill. As the friendly unit neared its objective, it was subjected to a devastating volume of enemy fire, slowing its progress. Corporal Espinoza, unhesitatingly and being fully aware of the hazards involved, left his place of comparative safety and made a deliberate one man assault on the enemy with his rifle and grenades, destroying a machinegun and killing its crew. Corporal Espinoza continued across the fire-swept terrain to an exposed vantage point where he attacked an enemy mortar position and two bunkers with grenades and rifle fire, knocking out the enemy mortar position and destroying both bunkers and killing their occupants. Upon reaching the crest, and after running out of rifle ammunition, he called for more grenades. A comrade who was behind him threw some Chinese grenades to him. Immediately upon catching them, he pulled the pins and hurled them into the occupied trenches, killing and wounding more of the enemy with their own weapons. Continuing on through a tunnel, Corporal Espinoza made a daring charge, inflicting at least seven more casualties upon the enemy who were fast retreating into the tunnel. Corporal Espinoza was quickly in pursuit, but the hostile fire from the opening prevented him from overtaking the retreating enemy. As a result, Corporal Espinoza destroyed the tunnel with TNT, called for more grenades from his company, and hurled them at the enemy troops until they were out of reach. Corporal Espinoza's incredible display of valor secured the vital strong point and took a heavy toll on the enemy, resulting in at least fourteen dead and eleven wounded. Corporal Espinoza's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Gomez, Eduardo Corral
Unit: Co I, 3rd Bn, 8th Cav Regt (Inf), 1st Cav Div
Branch: US Army
Rank (highest achieved): Sergeant First Class
Date of Birth: 28 October 1919
Place of Birth: Los Angeles, CA
Entered Service at: TBD

Date of Action: 3 September 1950

Place of Action: Tabu-dong, Korea

Presented: to his nephew Pete Corral

Date of Death: 29 January 1972

Place of Death: Cuajimalpa de Morelos, Mexico

Cemetery: Panteon Civil de San Nicolas Tolentino, Cuajimalpa de Morelos, Mexico (Not completely confirmed)

Citation: Sergeant Eduardo C. Gomez distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving with Company I, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Tabu-dong, Korea on September 3, 1950. That afternoon, while conducting combat patrol, Sergeant Gomez' company was ruthlessly attacked by a hostile force which moved within seventy-five yards of the command post before it was immobilized by rocket fire. However, an enemy tank and multiple enemy machineguns continued to rake the company perimeter with devastating fire. Realizing the tank posed a serious threat to the entire perimeter, Sergeant Gomez voluntarily crawled thirty yards across an open rice field vulnerable to enemy observation and fire, boarded the tank, pried open one of the hatches on the turret and dropped an activated grenade into the hull, killing the crew. Wounded in the left side while returning to his position, Sergeant Gomez refused evacuation. Observing that the tripod of a .30 caliber machinegun was rendered inoperable by enemy fire, he cradled the weapon in his arms, returned to the forward defensive positions, and swept the assaulting force with withering fire. Although his weapon overheated and burned his hands and his painful wound still bled, Sergeant Gomez maintained his stand and, upon orders to withdraw in the face of overwhelming enemy superiority, remained to provide protective fire. Sergeant Gomez continued to pour accurate fire into the enemy ranks, exacting a heavy toll in casualties and retarding their advance. Sergeant Gomez would not consent to leave his post for medical attention until the company established new defensive positions. Sergeant Gomez's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

Note: The grave would only exist for 6 years unless the "gravesite held in perpetuity."



Kravitz, Leonard Martin
Unit: Co M, 3rd Bn, 5th Inf Regt
 Combat Team, 24th Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Assistant Machine
 Gunner
Rank (highest achieved): Private
 First Class

Date of Birth: 8 August 1930

Place of Birth: Brooklyn, NY

Entered Service at: Kings Co., NY

Date of Action: 6-7 March 1951

Place of Action: Yangpyong, Korea

Presented: to his niece Laurie Wegner

Date of Death: 7 March 1951

Place of Death: Yangpyong, Korea

Cemetery: Mount Carmel Cemetery (Section 5, Block E,
 Lot 535, Grave 3)

Citation: Private First Class Leonard M. Kravitz distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as an assistant machinegunner with Company M, 5th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Yangpyong, Korea on March 6 and 7, 1951. After friendly elements had repulsed two probing attacks, the enemy launched a fanatical banzai charge with heavy supporting fire and, despite staggering losses, pressed the assault with ruthless determination. When the machinegunner was wounded in the initial phase of the action, Private First Class Kravitz immediately seized the weapon and poured devastating fire into the ranks of the onrushing assailants. The enemy effected and exploited a breach on the left flank, rendering the friendly positions untenable. Upon order to withdraw, Private First Class Kravitz voluntarily remained to provide protective fire for the retiring elements. Detecting enemy troops moving toward friendly positions, Private First Class Kravitz swept the hostile soldiers with deadly, accurate fire, killing the entire group. His destructive retaliation caused the enemy to concentrate vicious fire on his position and enabled the friendly elements to withdraw. Later, after friendly troops had returned, Private First Class Kravitz was found dead behind the gun he had so heroically manned, surrounded by numerous enemy dead. Private First Class Kravitz's extraordinary heroism and selflessness at the cost of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Negrón, Juan E.
Alias/AKA: Buried as Juan E. Negrón-
 Martínez
Unit: Co L, 65th Inf Regt, 3d Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Rank (highest achieved): Sergeant
 (Master Sergeant)

Date of Birth: 26 September 1929

Place of Birth: Corozal, Puerto Rico

Entered Service at: San Juan, Puerto Rico

Date of Action: 28 April 1951

Place of Action: near Kalma-Eri, Korea

Presented: to his daughter Iris Nereida Negrón-Febus

Date of Death: 29 March 1996

Place of Death: Bayamon, Puerto Rico

Cemetery: San Juan National Cemetery (Section J, Site
 3180), Bayamon, PR

Citation: Sergeant Juan E. Negrón distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a member of Company L, 65th Infantry Regiment, 3d Infantry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Kalma-Eri, Korea on April 28, 1951. That afternoon, Sergeant Negrón took up the most vulnerable position on his company's exposed right flank after an enemy force had overrun a section of the line. When notified that elements of his company were withdrawing, Sergeant Negrón refused to leave his exposed position, instead delivering withering fire at hostile troops who had broken through a road block. When the hostile troops approached his position, Sergeant Negrón accurately hurled hand grenades at short range, halting their attack. Sergeant Negrón held the position throughout the night while friendly forces organized and launched a counterattack. The next morning, after the enemy had been repulsed, friendly forces relieved Sergeant Negrón and found the bodies of fifteen enemy soldiers surrounding his position. Sergeant Negrón's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Pena, Mike Castaneda
Unit: Co F, 2nd Bn, 5th Cav Regt (Inf), 1st Cav Div
Branch: US Army
Rank (highest achieved): Master Sergeant
Date of Birth: 6 November 1924
Place of Birth: Newgulf, TX
Entered Service at: El Paso, TX

Date of Action: 4 September 1950
Place of Action: near Waegwan, Korea
Presented: to his son Michael David Pena
Date of Death: 5 September 1950
Place of Death: near Waegwan, Korea
Cemetery: Cedarvale Bay City Cemetery (Section 8, Block 25, Lot 3, Grave 4), Bay City, TX
Citation: Master Sergeant Mike C. Pena distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a member of Company F, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Waegwan, Korea, on September 4, 1950. That evening, under cover of darkness and a dreary mist, an enemy battalion moved to within a few yards of Master Sergeant Pena's platoon. Recognizing the enemy's approach, Master Sergeant Pena and his men opened fire, but the enemy's sudden emergence and accurate, point blank fire forced the friendly troops to withdraw. Master Sergeant Pena rapidly reorganized his men and led them in a counterattack which succeeded in regaining the positions they had just lost. He and his men quickly established a defensive perimeter and laid down devastating fire, but enemy troops continued to hurl themselves at the defenses in overwhelming numbers. Realizing that their scarce supply of ammunition would soon make their positions untenable, Master Sergeant Pena ordered his men to fall back and manned a machinegun to cover their withdrawal. He singlehandedly held back the enemy until the early hours of the following morning when his position was overrun and he was killed. Master Sergeant Pena's extraordinary heroism and selflessness at the cost of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Rivera, Demensio
Unit: 2d Plt, Co G, 2nd Bn, 7th Inf Regt, 3d Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Automatic Rifleman
Rank (highest achieved): Private (Private First Class)
Date of Birth: 29 April 1933
Place of Birth: Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico
Entered Service at: New York, NY

Date of Action: 22-23 May 1951
Place of Action: Changyongni, Korea
Presented: to his granddaughter Sgt. Ashley Randall
Date of Death: 19 March 1967
Place of Death: New York?
Cemetery: Cementerio San Miguel Arcangel (Section C, Row K -184), Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico
Citation: Private Demensio Rivera distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as an automatic rifleman with 2d Platoon, Company G, 7th Infantry Regiment, 3d Infantry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Changyong-ni, Korea on May 23, 1951. Early that morning, a large hostile force emerged from a dense fog and viciously attacked Private Rivera and his comrades. Private Rivera immediately responded by firing with deadly accuracy until his weapon jammed. Without hesitating, he threw his rifle down and began to engage the enemy with his pistol and grenades. At one point, Private Rivera fearlessly crawled from his emplacement to engage an infiltrating enemy soldier in fierce hand-to-hand combat. With only the sound of footsteps and obscure shadows to guide his aim, Private Rivera held his position against tremendous odds, inflicting numerous casualties on the enemy until he found himself without ammunition of any kind except one grenade. Displaying a peerless fighting spirit and an utterly selfless devotion to duty, Private Rivera pulled the pin from his last grenade and calmly waited for the enemy to reach his position. As enemy troops leaped inside his bunker, Private Rivera activated the grenade with the full knowledge that it meant his almost certain death. When the debris from the explosion had cleared, friendly forces recovered a severely wounded Private Rivera and discovered the bodies of four dead or dying enemy soldiers surrounding him. Private Rivera's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Vera, Miguel Armando
AKA: Miguel Armando Vera Rodriguez
Unit: Co F, 2nd Bn, 38th Inf Regt, 2d Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Automatic Rifleman
Rank (highest achieved): Private
Date of Birth: 3 May 1932
Place of Birth: Puerto Rico

Entered Service at: Puerto Rico
Date of Action: 21 September 1952
Place of Action: Chorwon, Korea
Presented: to his nephew Jose Ramon Rodriguez
Date of Death: 21 September 1952
Place of Death: Chorwon, Korea
Cemetery: Utuado Municipal Cemetery, Utuado, Puerto Rico, Utuado, PR
Notes: family plans to reinter him in Arlington National Cemetery. Photo gives full name.
Citation: Private Miguel A. Vera distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as an automatic rifleman with Company F, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2d Infantry Division in Chorwon, Korea, on September 21, 1952. That morning, despite suffering from wounds inflicted in a previous battle, Private Vera voluntarily left the aid station to join his comrades in an attack against well-fortified enemy positions on a hill of great importance. When the assaulting elements had moved within twenty yards of the enemy positions, they were suddenly trapped by a heavy volume of mortar, artillery and small arms fire. The company prepared to make a limited withdrawal, but Private Vera volunteered to remain behind to provide covering fire. As his companions moved to safety, Private Vera remained steadfast in his position, directing accurate fire against the hostile positions despite the intense volume of fire which the enemy was concentrating upon him. Later in the morning, when the friendly force returned, they discovered Private Vera in the same position, facing the enemy. Private Vera's noble intrepidity and self-sacrifice saved many of his comrades' lives. Private Vera's extraordinary heroism and selflessness at the cost of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Weinstein, Jack
Unit: 1st Plt, Co G, 2nd Bn, 21st Inf Regt, 24th Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Acting Platoon Leader
Rank (highest achieved): Sergeant
Date of Birth: 18 October 1928
Place of Birth: Cheyenne County, KS
Entered Service at: Lamar, MO
Date of Action: 19 October 1951

Place of Action: vicinity of Kumson, Korea
Presented: to his widow Nancy Weinstein
Date of Death: 20 April 2006
Place of Death: Saint Francis, KS
Cemetery: Cheyenne Valley Cemetery (Row 5), Wheeler, KS
Citation: Sergeant Jack Weinstein distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while leading 1st Platoon, Company G, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division in Kumsong, Korea on October 19, 1951. That afternoon, thirty enemy troops counterattacked Sergeant Weinstein's platoon. Most of the platoon's members had been wounded in the previous action and withdrew under the heavy fire. Sergeant Weinstein, however, remained in his position and continued to fight off the onrushing enemy, killing at least six with his M-1 rifle before running out of ammunition. Although under extremely heavy enemy fire, Sergeant Weinstein refused to withdraw and continued fighting by throwing enemy hand grenades found lying near his position. He again halted the enemy's progress and inflicted numerous casualties. Alone and unaided, he held the ground which his platoon had fought tenaciously to take and held out against overwhelming odds until another platoon was able to relieve him and drive back the enemy. Sergeant Weinstein's leg had been broken by an enemy grenade and old wounds suffered in previous battles had reopened, but he refused to withdraw and successfully bought time for his wounded comrades to reach friendly lines. Sergeant Weinstein's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

VIETNAM WAR

Alvarado, Leonard L.
Unit: Co D, 2d Bn, 12th Cav, 1st Cav Div (Airmobile)
Branch: US Army
Served as: Rifleman
Rank (highest achieved): Specialist Four
Date of Birth: 13 February 1947

Place of Birth: Bakersfield, CA
Entered Service at: Bakersfield, CA
Date of Action: 12 August 1969
Place of Action: Phuoc Long Province, Vietnam
Presented: to his daughter Lenora M. Alvarado
Date of Death: 12 August 1969
Place of Death: Phuoc Long Province, Vietnam
Cemetery: Greenlawn Memorial Park (Holy Cross Lakeside SPC 3, Lot D, Block 64), Bakersfield, CA
Citation: Specialist Four Leonard L. Alvarado distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a Rifleman with Company D, 2d Battalion, 12th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) during combat operations against an armed enemy in Phuoc Long Province, Republic of Vietnam on August 12, 1969. On that day, as Specialist Four Alvarado and a small reaction force moved through dense jungle en route to a beleaguered friendly platoon, Specialist Four Alvarado detected enemy movement and opened fire. Despite his quick reaction, Specialist Four Alvarado and his comrades were soon pinned down by the hostile force that blocked the path to the trapped platoon. Specialist Four Alvarado quickly moved forward through the hostile machinegun fire in order to engage the enemy troops. Suddenly, an enemy grenade exploded nearby, wounding and momentarily stunning him. Retaliating immediately, he killed the grenadier just as another enemy barrage wounded him again. Specialist Four Alvarado crawled forward through the fusillade to pull several comrades back within the hastily-formed perimeter. Realizing his element needed to break away from the hostile force, Specialist Four Alvarado began maneuvering forward alone. Though repeatedly thrown to the ground by exploding satchel charges, he continued advancing and firing, silencing several emplacements, including one enemy machinegun position. From his dangerous forward position, he persistently laid suppressive fire on the hostile forces, and after the enemy troops had broken contact, his comrades discovered that he had succumbed to his wounds. Specialist Four Alvarado's extraordinary heroism and selflessness at the cost of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Conde-Falcon, Felix M.
Unit: Co D, 1st Bn, 505th Inf Regt, 3d Bde, 82d Airborne Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Acting Platoon Leader
Rank (highest achieved): Staff Sergeant (Sergeant First Class)
Date of Birth: 24 February 1938
Place of Birth: Juncos, Puerto Rico

Entered Service at: Chicago, IL
Date of Action: 4 April 1969
Place of Action: vicinity of Ap Tan Hoa, Vietnam
Presented: to his son Richard Conde
Date of Death: 4 April 1969
Place of Death: vicinity of Ap Tan Hoa, Vietnam
Cemetery: Rogers Cemetery, Rogers, TX
Citation: Staff Sergeant Felix M. Conde-Falcon distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as an acting Platoon Leader in Company D, 1st Battalion, 505th Infantry Regiment, 3d Brigade, 82d Airborne Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Ap Tan Hoa, Republic of Vietnam on April 4, 1969. While entering a heavily wooded section on the route of advance, Staff Sergeant Conde-Falcon and his company encountered an extensive enemy bunker complex, later identified as a battalion command post. Following tactical artillery and air strikes on the heavily-secured enemy position, Staff Sergeant Conde-Falcon's platoon was selected to assault and clear the bunker fortifications. Moving out ahead of his platoon, Staff Sergeant Conde-Falcon charged the first bunker, heaving grenades as he went. As the hostile fire increased, he crawled to the blind side of an entrenchment position, jumped to the roof, and tossed a grenade into the bunker aperture. Without hesitating, he proceeded to two additional bunkers, both of which he destroyed in the same manner as the first. Rejoining his platoon, Staff Sergeant Conde-Falcon advanced about one hundred meters through the trees before coming under intense hostile fire. Selecting three men to accompany him, he maneuvered toward the enemy's flank position. Carrying a machinegun, he single-handedly assaulted the nearest fortification, killing the enemy inside before running out of ammunition. After returning to the three men with his empty weapon and taking up an M-16 rifle, he concentrated on the next bunker. Within ten meters of his goal, Staff Sergeant Conde-Falcon was shot by an unseen assailant and soon died of his wounds. Staff Sergeant Conde-Falcon's extraordinary heroism and selflessness at the cost of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Copas, Ardie Ray
Unit: Co C, 1st Bn (Mechanized), 5th Inf Regt, 25th Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Machinegunner
Rank (highest achieved): Specialist Four (Sergeant)
Date of Birth: 29 August 1950

Place of Birth: Fort Pierce, FL
Entered Service at: Fort Pierce, FL
Date of Action: 12 May 1970
Place of Action: near Ph Romeas Hek, Cambodia
Presented: to his daughter Shyrell Jean Copas
Date of Death: 12 May 1970
Place of Death: near Ph Romeas Hek, Cambodia
Cemetery: Hillcrest Memorial Gardens (Garden of Peace, Lot 124, Space 4), Fort Pierce, FL
Citation: Specialist Four Ardie R. Copas distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a Machinegunner in Company C, 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 5th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy near Ph Romeas Hek, Cambodia on May 12, 1970. That morning, Specialist Four Copas's company was suddenly attacked by a large hostile force firing recoilless rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and automatic weapons. As Specialist Four Copas began returning fire, his armored car was struck by an enemy recoilless round, knocking him to the ground and injuring four American Soldiers beside the vehicle. Ignoring his own wounds, Specialist Four Copas quickly remounted the burning vehicle and commenced firing his machinegun at the belligerents. Braving the hostile fire directed at him and the possible detonation of the mortar rounds inside the track, Specialist Four Copas maintained a heavy volume of suppressive fire on the foe while the wounded Americans were safely evacuated. Undaunted, Specialist Four Copas continued to place devastating volleys of fire upon the adversary until he was mortally wounded when another enemy round hit his vehicle. Specialist Four Copas's daring action resulted in the safe evacuation of his comrades. Specialist Four Copas's extraordinary heroism and selflessness at the cost of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Duran, Jesus S.
Unit: Co E, 2d Bn, 5th Cav Regt, 1st Cav Div (Airmobile)
Branch: US Army
Served as: acting M-60 Machine Gunner
Rank (highest achieved): Specialist Four (Sergeant)
Date of Birth: 26 July 1948

Place of Birth: Juarez, Mexico
Entered Service at: California
Date of Action: 10 April 1969
Place of Action: Republic of Vietnam
Presented: to his daughter Tina Duran-Ruvalcaba
Date of Death: 17 February 1977
Place of Death: Riverside, CA
Cemetery: Olivewood Memorial (North Lawn, Division 1, Grave 64, Space 3), Riverside, CA (Family may move him to Riverside National Cemetery).
Citation: Specialist Four Jesus S. Duran distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as an acting M-60 machinegunner in Company E, 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) during combat operations against an armed enemy in the Republic of Vietnam on April 10, 1969. That afternoon, the reconnaissance platoon was moving into an elaborate enemy bunker complex when the lead elements began taking concentrated ambush fire from every side. The command post was in imminent danger of being overrun. With an M-60 machinegun blazing from his hip, Specialist Four Duran rushed forward and assumed a defensive position near the command post. As hostile forces stormed forward, Specialist Four Duran stood tall in a cloud of dust raised by the impacting rounds and bursting grenades directed towards him and thwarted the enemy with devastating streams of machinegun fire. Learning that two seriously wounded troopers lay helplessly pinned down under harassing fire, Specialist Four Duran assaulted the suppressive enemy positions, firing deadly bursts on the run. Mounting a log, he fired directly into the enemy's foxholes, eliminating four and cutting down several others as they fled. Specialist Four Duran then continued to pour effective fire on the disorganized and fleeing enemy. Specialist Four Duran's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



Garcia, Candelario
War: Vietnam War
Unit: Co B, 1st Bn, 2d Inf Regt, 1st Bde, 1st Inf Div
Branch: US Army
Served as: Team Leader
Rank (highest achieved): Sergeant
Date of Birth: 26 February 1944

Place of Birth: Corsicana, TX

Entered Service at: TBD

Date of Action: 8 December 1968

Place of Action: near Lai Khe, Vietnam

Presented: to Command Sergeant Major Michael Grinston

Date of Death: 10 January 2013

Place of Death: TBD

Cemetery: Dallas/Fort Worth National Cemetery (Site 17A-57), Dallas, TX

Citation: Sergeant Candelario Garcia distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as an acting Team Leader for Company B, 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Lai Khe, Republic of Vietnam on December 8, 1968. On that day, while conducting reconnaissance, Sergeant Garcia and his platoon discovered communication wire and other signs of an enemy base camp leading into a densely vegetated area. As the men advanced, they came under intense fire. Several men were hit and trapped in the open. Ignoring a hail of hostile bullets, Sergeant Garcia crawled to within ten meters of a machinegun bunker, leaped to his feet and ran directly at the fortification, firing his rifle as he charged. Sergeant Garcia jammed two hand grenades into the gun port and then placed the muzzle of his weapon inside, killing all four occupants. Continuing to expose himself to intense enemy fire, Sergeant Garcia raced fifteen meters to another bunker and killed its three defenders with hand grenades and rifle fire. After again braving the enemies' barrage in order to rescue two casualties, he joined his company in an assault which overran the remaining enemy positions. Sergeant Garcia's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army. ★



The veterans from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War were honored at a ceremony at the Pentagon, today, one day after receiving the nation's highest award for valor in a White House ceremony.
 Photo Credit: www.army.mil

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, March 19, 2014[Edited]) ~ The newest Medal of Honor recipients ~ 24 veterans who received the honor decades after their extraordinary heroism in three wars ~ have been inducted into the Pentagon Hall of Heroes.

The veterans from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War were honored at a ceremony at the Pentagon, today, one day after receiving the nation's highest award for valor in a White House ceremony.

"We are here this morning to celebrate the heroism of 24 selfless individuals ~ 24 Soldiers whose acts of gallantry in battle merit our highest recognition," said Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel at the event in the Pentagon auditorium.

"We are also here to correct an injustice of history ~ to help right 24 wrongs that should have never occurred," he said. More than a decade ago, Congress mandated a review of Distinguished Service Cross awards to ensure that heroism wasn't overlooked due to prejudice or discrimination.

During that review, the 24 Soldiers ~ who are Hispanic, Jewish, and African-American ~ were identified as deserving the medal. Three of the recipients are living: Santiago Erevia, Melvin Morris, and Jose Rodela. They fought in the Vietnam War.

"This induction serves as the largest single induction of Medal of Honor honorees since World War II," said Secretary of the Army John McHugh. "Twenty-four amazing Soldiers who will finally take their rightful place in our Hall of Heroes."

Each of their stories alone is "truly breathtaking," said McHugh. "But taken together, they really form an incredible volume of history ~ one that details the service, the sacrifice, and most of all, the courage of the American Soldier," he said.

The nation is great because of the acts of these men who sacrificed so much for their country, said Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno. "It's an honor for me to stand here today wearing this uniform, representing all Soldiers past and present in honoring our comrades," he said. "In the faces of our recipients and their relatives, we see the faces of 24 heroes," he said.

At the event, each of the 24 Medal of Honor citations was read as the recipient or their representative stood reverently on stage. The recipient or representative ~ spouse, child, or other relative ~ was then presented with an encased Medal of Honor flag.

The Hall of Heroes is a special room in the Pentagon that contains the name of each Medal of Honor recipient. ★

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

January is membership renewal time. Article III Section II of the By-Laws specifies, "All dues shall be due and payable on the first day of January."

If you aren't sure you have renewed, please contact us at mohhsus@gmail.com. Memberships are as follows:

\$20 individual

\$50 organization

(not required for Medal of Honor recipients)

Thank you for your continued support!

PLEASE MAIL RENEWALS TO:

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Also, don't forget when shopping on line to access your merchant via GiveBackAmerica.com <http://www.givebackamerica.com/?product=medal-of-honor-historical-society-of-the-us> (new link) That way the MOHHSUS will receive a commission on your purchase. ★

A Special Thank You

Editors Notes:

This special edition could not have happened without a Herculean effort on the part of several individuals. Our special thanks and appreciation especially to

Laura Jowdy, CMOHS

Don Morfe

Ray Johnston

Most of the photos herein come from the special page the army created in recognition of the awards to these 24 men. Most can be found on www.army.mil. The photo of Specialist Copas is courtesy of the CMOHS. The photo of Private Rivera is courtesy of researchers in Puerto Rico.

The presentation information and citations come from the transcript of the presentations on the White House webpage. A question mark next to the information means it is not completely confirmed. ★



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To provide for the research, preservation, and documentation of the history of the individuals who have been awarded the Medal of Honor.

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