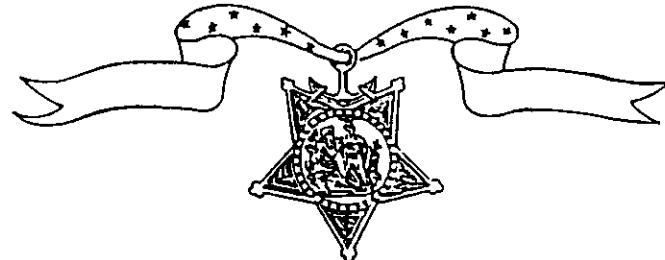
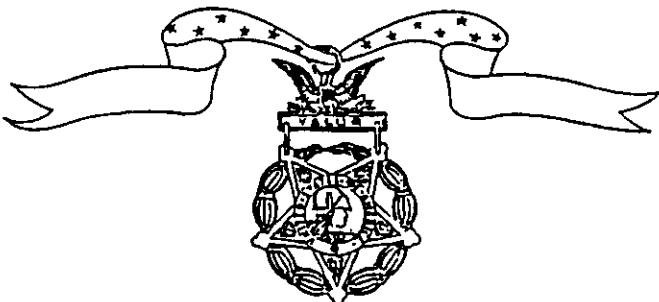


"A NATION REVEALS ITSELF NOT ONLY BY THE MEN IT PRODUCES BUT ALSO BY THE MEN IT HONORS, THE MEN IT REMEMBERS."

President John F. Kennedy
26 October 1963



**THE MEDAL OF HONOR
"BLESSING or BURDEN"**

The Medal of Honor is America's highest award for military heroism. Teddy Roosevelt lobbied for one but never received it, and General George Patton said "I'd sell my immortal soul for that Medal." Since World War I, of 930 men who earned it, 527 died for it.

During one presentation of the Medal of Honor during World War II President Harry Truman stated, "I would rather have the blue band of the Medal of Honor around my neck than to be President." Then, as he placed America's highest award around the neck of a REAL American hero, he conferred both a great honor and a heavy responsibility.

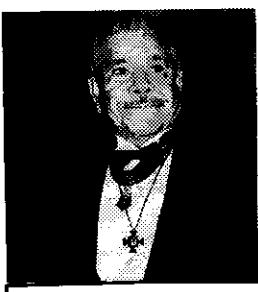
Navy corpsman Don Ballard, who received the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions in Vietnam has said "It's harder to wear the medal than to earn it." Imagine taking a young soldier who, in a moment of utmost terror and devastation demonstrated an act of immense valor and intrepidity, then sending him from that war zone to our Nation's Capitol where he is saluted by generals and praised by the President. His life is suddenly and irrevocably changed, his future no longer his own, his lot in life the preservation of a unique heritage shared with men like Sergeant York, Jimmy Doolittle, General Douglas MacArthur, Audie Murphy, and Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. Though none of the men who humbly wear the small 5-pointed star that hangs from the Medal's blue ribbon would ever admit it, over the course of a lifetime it can come to "weigh a ton".

The men who have received the Medal of Honor uniquely represent a cross-section of our Nation as a whole. They include a 14 year old Civil War drummer boy, a former slave, the son of a United States President, a former pro football player, and even troubled teens who had been told "join the military or go to jail". They hailed



Don Ballard visits with a disabled D-Day veteran on the 4th of July.

from mid-west farm families, urban barrios, blue-collar steel cities, and New York "high society". They come from all races, some born in the United States and others born on foreign soil. World War II hero Silvestre Herrera was surprised to learn on the day he received

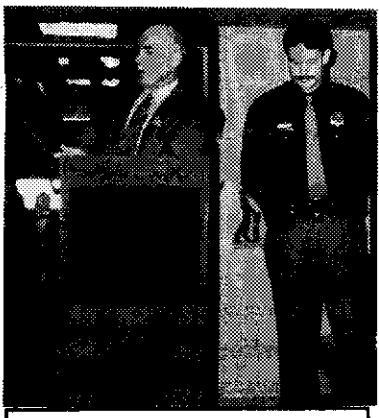


SILVESTRE HERRERA

his draft notice, that he wasn't even an American citizen. The man he had thought for 24 years was his father finally told him the truth, "You were brought across the border from Mexico after your parents died when you were 18 months old, and I've raised you as my own son ever since." Determined to serve his adopted Country, Silvestre studied to become a U.S. citizen while fighting in Europe in the action that would not only bring him the Medal of Honor, but Mexico's highest award for valor.

Some of these heroes went on to become household names, movie stars, or successful businessmen. Others settled into quiet, simple lifestyles in their home-towns. Still others have died in poverty and obscurity...forgotten by the Nation they gave so much to preserve. But all of them lived humbly, awed by the awesome responsibility they carried in being recognized as an American Hero. Seldom, if indeed ever, has a recipient of this award used his Medal for personal gain or profit. Rather, the Medal becomes for them a symbol of the valor and sacrifice of their fellow soldiers who did not receive the Medal, but never-the-less served and often died, to preserve freedom. Canadian-born Vietnam hero Pete Lemon recently told a group of 7th grade students, "Whenever you see the Medal, you see the millions of people out there who have given their service and sacrificed for your freedom."

In the jargon of our Nation's Capitol, awarding of the Medal of Honor has almost become an "unfunded mandate". When the President places that blue band around a young soldier's neck, he also confers on him the responsibility to uphold the standards and dignity of all who have received it....he becomes a living symbol of all 40 million Americans who have served the cause of freedom in uniform. Though that hero's celebrity-status soon vanishes, the personal responsibility of the Medal recipient becomes a life-time commitment. For the rest of his life he receives letters requesting photos and autographs, is asked to speak in schools and veterans' groups, and much more....usually without honorarium and often at his own expense. Recently 77 year old World War II hero Desmond Doss, with only 48 hours advance notice, traveled 1500 miles from his home in Georgia to speak in 3 elementary schools when the previously scheduled Medal of Honor speaker fell ill and couldn't attend. But that's not unusual for the man President Truman told upon presentation of the Medal, "I consider this a greater honor than being President." Desmond NEVER turns down an opportunity to speak to American youth about patriotism, service, and responsibility.



Pete Lemon presents an award to a wounded sheriff's deputy in Colorado



Desmond Doss poses with a young man shortly after the youth sang our National Anthem at a patriotic dinner.

In 1965 the United States Congress revised previous legislation regarding Medal of Honor recipients to provide each with a monthly \$100 stipend. Desmond Doss used much of this, as well as his other income, to help establish and fund the Civilian Defense Rescue Service in Walker County, Georgia. In April, 1966 this group worked around the clock in a dark, wet, gas-filled cavern to save seven boy scouts and their leader who had become lost. Desmond himself spent more consecutive hours in that cave, working harder, than anyone else.

Today the 170 living recipients of the Medal of Honor receive an increased \$400 per month stipend. From this they write hundreds of letters to children, veterans, military cadets, and others; often including personal photos and copies of their award citation. They seldom turn down a chance to speak in schools, even when much travel or personal expense is involved. When invited to patriotic activities by civic or veterans' groups that offer to cover the costs of travel and accommodations, there are always incidental costs that they must pay themselves. But like the true heroes that they are, these men accept the burden of being a National Symbol with humility, willing to make the personal, familial, and financial sacrifices the legacy of the Medal of Honor demands.

But the Medal not only demands much of the man who wears it, his role in our Nation causes the weight of the award to fall also upon his wife and his children. Calls for public appearances frequently

take him away from home, forcing him to divide his time between his Nation and his family. When his children are grown and he looks to spend more time with his life-partner, he must decide between spending time away from her or paying more money "out-of-pocket" to take her with him on the road. The women who share life with a Medal of Honor recipient are special, enduring much and sacrificing often.

So much does the Medal become a family responsibility that the widows of deceased heroes continue the burden of preserving the legacy of these heroes. When Pearl Harbor recipient Donald Ross died in 1992, his wife Helen's work began in earnest. She continues to answer daily mail from children and adults around America who want to know more about her late husband's heroism. She writes extensively on the Medal of Honor, including a history of Washington State Medal recipients. She gives regularly of her time to speak to schools, civic and veteran's groups, and others about the heritage of America. This June she will travel to Galveston, Texas to christen the U.S.S. Ross in honor of her heroic husband. The legacy and all the work continues long after her husband's death. Likewise the costs and expenses continue, as well as the normal day-to-day costs of living. But the \$400 stipend that allowed her husband to continue his patriotic service, ended the day he died. Still, with the dedication and fortitude exemplified by Donald Ross during his lifetime, at great personal sacrifice, Helen Ross continues to "do her duty".



Bill Crawford with local Cub Scouts



Bill Crawford poses with a 10 year old boy and his family after presenting the youth with an award for civic service.

The Medal of Honor is a National Treasure, a monument not unlike the Iwo Jima memorial and others in Washington, D.C. and throughout our Nation that stand in testimony to the courage and fortitude of the American Spirit. Imagine for a moment, that our monuments could speak. What stories we could hear if the Statue of Liberty could talk to us, how inspired as Americans we would be if the faces on Mount Rushmore could relate their life stories. That is what makes the Medal of Honor unlike most other monuments to our heritage. Today the Medal has 170 voices to personally share stories of sacrifice and valor, 170 role-models to inspire future generations to continue the traditions that make America great. We must, as a Nation, do everything we can to capture this moment while we still have the opportunity. Of those 170 voices, 107 are over age 65. The day will come when, like the Statue of Liberty and Mount Rushmore, there will be no voice for this American symbol...only memories. One of our greatest American symbols is endangered, soon to be extinct. Let us act, and act NOW to preserve what we can.



(Left) Two months after the bombing in Oklahoma City, Medal of Honor winners, Jack Lumm, center with Medals, Fred J. Goss, Charlie Paddock and his two children in crowd to honor the脖eir mothers, Werner's Day early morning Board Higher Medal recipients, John Pinto, charmed the group with a recitation of Congressman Fred Neilsen's staff, Right Jack Montgomery and Maxima "Patsie" Dean, both World War II heroes, visit with a reporter outside a restaurant. Right, the first ever in history to receive all of the nation's top four awards in a single year, died last year.

MEDAL OF HONOR STATISTICS

<u>WAR</u>	<u>TOTAL AWARDED</u>	<u>POSTHUMOUS AWARDS</u>	<u>LIVE RECIPIENTS</u>	<u>ALIVE TODAY</u>
WORLD WAR I	119	32	87	0
WORLD WAR II	440	249	191	74*
KOREA	131	94	37	25*
VIETNAM	238	150	88	71*
SOMALIA	2	2	0	0
TOTALS	930	527	403	170*

*As of 15 Feb 1997... Sadly these numbers decrease monthly.

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