



A Brief History- The Medal of Honor

The first formal system for rewarding acts of individual gallantry by the nation's fighting men was established by General George Washington on August 7, 1782. Designed to recognize "any singularly meritorious action," the award consisted of a purple cloth heart. Records show that only three persons received the award: Sergeant Elijah Churchill, Sergeant William Brown, and Sergeant Daniel Bissel Jr.

The Badge of Military Merit, as it was called, fell into oblivion until 1932, when General Douglas MacArthur, then Army Chief of Staff, pressed for its revival. Officially reinstated on February 22, 1932, the now familiar Purple Heart was at first an Army award, given to those who had been wounded in World War I or who possessed a Meritorious Service Citation Certificate. In 1943, the order was amended to include personnel of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. Coverage was eventually extended to include all services and "any civilian national" wounded while serving with the Armed Forces.

Although the Badge of Military Merit fell into disuse after the Revolutionary War, the idea of a decoration for individual gallantry remained through the early 1800s. In 1847, after the outbreak of the Mexican-American War, a "certificate of merit" was established for any soldier who distinguished himself in action. No medal went with the honor. After the Mexican-American War, the award was discontinued, which meant there was no military award with which to recognize the nation's fighting men.

Early in the Civil War, a medal for individual valor was proposed to General-in-Chief of the Army Winfield Scott. But Scott felt medals smacked of European affectation and killed the idea.

The medal found support in the Navy, however, where it was felt recognition of courage in strife was needed. Public Resolution 82, containing a provision for a Navy medal of valor, was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on December 21, 1861. The medal was "to be bestowed upon such petty officers, seamen, landsmen, and Marines as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry and other seamanlike qualities during the present war."

Shortly after this, a resolution similar in wording was introduced on behalf of the Army. Signed into law July 12, 1862, the measure provided for awarding a medal of honor "to such noncommissioned officers and privates as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry in action, and other soldierlike qualities, during the present insurrection."

Although it was created for the Civil War, Congress made the Medal of Honor a permanent decoration in 1863.

Almost 3,400 men and one woman have received the award for heroic actions in the nation's battles since that time.

* Quoted from "Armed Forces Decorations and Awards," a publication of the American Forces Information Service. Copies of the pamphlet are available upon request (in print format only), via the "DefenseLINK Comment/Question Form" in the "Questions" section.



Wreaths Across America

As part of the annual wreath-laying events at over 500 participating locations around the Nation, Wreaths Across America produces the following information to Teach about our common history - of the service and the sacrifices made to preserve our freedoms.

Each year, donated wreaths are delivered to national veterans cemeteries around the Country, where thousands of volunteers take a quiet moment to show their gratitude and appreciation during the holiday season.

We invite you to participate in a Wreaths Across America ceremony in a community near you. Help us Remember, Honor, and Teach - by thanking a veteran. For more information visit: www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org

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REMEMBER
HONOR
TEACH



THE ARLINGTON WREATH PROJECT

The tradition of laying wreaths to honor our veterans during the holiday season began in 1992, when Morrill Worcester of Worcester Wreath Company (Harrington, Maine) was stuck with a number of extra wreaths at the close of the holiday season.

Remembering a boyhood trip to the Nation's Capital, and the sacred grounds of Arlington National Cemetery, he donated 5,000 wreaths to be placed at the headstones of an older section of the cemetery.

What began as one man's gesture, has now grown into a national movement - when in 2006 Wreaths Across America was formed as a non-profit. For more information visit:

www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org

Remembering Our Heroes



Gold Star Mothers

Shortly after World War I the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. was formed in the United States to provide support for mothers who lost sons or daughters in the war.

The name came from the custom of families of servicemen and women hanging a banner called a "Service Flag" in the window of their homes. Living servicemen were represented by a blue star, and those who lost their lives were represented by a gold star.

Today, membership in the Gold Star Mothers is open to any American woman whose child has died in the line of duty in the United States Armed Forces.

Just as when it was founded, the Gold Star Mothers organization continues to concentrate on providing support to its members, doing volunteer work in support of veterans, and fostering a sense of patriotism and respect for members of the Armed Forces.

Gold Star Mother's Day is observed in the United States each year on the last Sunday in September. For more information, visit:

www.GoldStarMoms.com

AMERICA'S GREATEST HEROES

Each wreath honors all servicemen and women for their self-less sacrifice—and that of their families who are without loved ones during the holidays.



YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

In 1971, while the Vietnam War was still being fought, Mary Hoff, the wife of a service member missing in action and member of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, recognized the need for a symbol of U.S. POW/MIAs, some of whom had been held in captivity for as many as seven years.

The flag is black, and bears in the center in black and white, the emblem of the League. The emblem was designed by Newt Heisley, and features a white disk bearing a black silhouette the bust of a man (Jeffrey Heisley), watch tower with a guard on patrol, and a strand of barbed wire; above the disk are the white letters POW and MIA framing a white 5-pointed star; below the disk is a black and white wreath above the white motto:

YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN



That is the message that Wreaths Across America would share with all veterans. From one generation to another, we will NEVER FORGET that the freedoms we enjoy, came at such a great cost.



CALL TO ACTION

Don't miss an opportunity to thank a veteran. Whether it is veterans Day, Memorial Day, or the Holidays—every day servicemen and women put themselves in harm's way to do their jobs and preserve our freedoms. Take a moment amid the hustle and bustle of this holiday season—to get involved and show your appreciation.

"No one should pass an American in uniform without saying, "Thank you, we are grateful". Always mindful that they are prepared to risk all of their dreams so that all of us can reach ours."

-former Secretary of Defense William Cohen