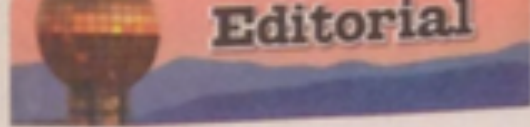


KNOXVILLE, TN MEDAL OF HONOR



Medal of Honor recipients' valor, sacrifice inspire

By [unclear] 9/10/2014

We welcome to Knoxville this week an assembly of remarkable men. They have risked their lives, sacrificed their limbs, killed their enemies — so that their comrades could survive, their units win battles, their country prevail in war. They are recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award.

The Congressional Medal of Honor Society is holding its annual convention here, beginning today and ending Saturday. Hosting their reunion is a singular privilege.

There is little glory in war and few authentic heroes in life, but these otherwise ordinary Americans, through a combination of circumstance, training and character, have performed extraordinary feats of bravery.

East Tennessee has contributed to their number. The exploits of Fentress County's Cpl. Alvin C. York — leading seven others into murderous fire to kill more than a score of German soldiers and capture 132 others during World War I — have been glorified by Hollywood. Others are less well known but equally deserving, including Army Sgt. Troy McGill of Knoxville, who fought to his death on Los Negros Island in World War II after leaving 105 Japanese dead at his position, and Lenoir City native Sgt. Mitchell W. Stout, who saved his fellow soldiers in Vietnam by shielding them from a live grenade with his body.

Kingston native George Lewis Gillespie Jr., a U.S. Army engineer during the Civil War who received his award for bravery at the Battle of Cold Harbor and later became a general and acting Secretary of War, redesigned the Army's version of the Medal of Honor in 1904.

Recipients are a small and exclusive band of brothers — and one sister. Dr. Mary E. Walker received the medal for her service as a surgeon during the Civil War. Of the millions who have served in the U.S. military, only 3,490 have been awarded the Medal of Honor, according to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society. Seventy-eight are still alive, and more than 50 are expected to come to Knoxville this week.

Living recipients include Cpl. Hershel Woodrow Williams, a Marine who during four hours of solo assaults on two jima used flamethrowers and demolition charges to destroy Japanese positions; Army Cpl. Ronald E. Rosser, who, armed only with a carbine and a grenade, charged an enemy-held hill in Korea three times, killed at least 13 enemy soldiers and, though wounded himself, helped wounded comrades to safety; and Marine 1st Lt. Wesley L. Fox, who, though wounded, fought and directed troops against a superior enemy force in Vietnam.

Williams, Rosser and Fox will be guests at a town hall forum at 10 a.m. Friday at the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, one of several events open to the public scheduled for the convention.

Recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor embody the highest ideal of American military service. Their devotion to duty and their fellow warriors move us. Their valor leaves us awestruck. Their selflessness and sacrifice inspire us. A grateful Knoxville welcomes these heroes whose deeds have lifted up our nation.

With thanks to the Knoxville News Sentinel for the photo.