

# MEDAL OF HONOR

*Presented to airmen of the US Air Force  
and its predecessor organizations*

**This collection provides the citations for each of the 60 USAF airmen who have received the Medal of Honor. It also includes links to AIR FORCE Magazine articles about these individuals or the events in which they took part. They are arranged here in alphabetical order.**



---

**AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION**

# MEDAL OF HONOR

## ***Presented to airmen of the US Air Force and its predecessor organizations***

The MOH is the highest and most prestigious US military medal. It is awarded by the President of the United States in the name of Congress, and for that reason it is often referred to as the Congressional Medal of Honor. (Congress awards its own medals of honor, the Congressional Gold Medal and Congressional Silver Medal—the nation’s highest awards that do not involve combat).

The Medal of Honor—whether the Air Force, Army, or Navy version—by law is only awarded for military action involving armed conflict. Specifically, the MOH may be awarded to members of the US Armed Forces who distinguish themselves conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their lives above and beyond the call of duty under any of the following circumstances:

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.
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 Air Force and its predecessor organizations awarded the Army MOH until April 14, 1965, when the Secretary of the Air Force approved the design of an Air Force MOH.

According to USAF, the first US Air Service airman to receive an MOH was Capt. Edward V. Rickenbacker for action on Sept. 25, 1918. (However, the confusion of demobilization derailed the paperwork, preventing its immediate approval; the President presented the award on Nov. 6, 1930.) The second US Air Service airman to be recommended for the MOH was Lt. Frank Luke, for action on Sept. 29, 1918; his was a posthumous award in 1919, so some sources list Luke as the first airman recipient.

Maj. Bernard F. Fisher was the first airman to receive the Air Force MOH, presented Jan. 19, 1967, for action in Vietnam on March 10, 1966.

As of May 17, 2013, 60 airmen have received the MOH:

World War I	4
World War II	38
Korean War	4
Vietnam War	14

## USAF MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

<b>Baker, Lt. Col. Addison E.</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Lawley, 1st Lt. William R.</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Bennett, Capt. Steve</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>	<b>Levitow, A1C John L.</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>
<b>Bleckley, 2nd Lt. Erwin R.</b>	<b>World War I</b>	<b>Lindsey, Capt. Darrell</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Bong, Maj. Richard Ira</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Loring, Maj. Charles</b>	<b>Korean War</b>
<b>Carswell, Maj. Horace S. "Stump"</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Luke, Lt. Frank</b>	<b>World War I</b>
<b>Castle, Col. Fred</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Mathies, Sgt. Archibald</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Cheli, Maj. Ralph</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Mathis, Lt. Jack</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Craw, Col. Demas "Nick"</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>McGuire, Maj. Thomas</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Davis, Maj. George A.</b>	<b>Korean War</b>	<b>Metzger, 2nd Lt. William</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Day, Col. George E. "Bud"</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>	<b>Michael, Lt. Edward</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Dethlefsen, Capt. Merlyn</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>	<b>Morgan, 1st Lt. John C.</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Doolittle, Brig. Gen. Jimmy</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Pease, Capt. Harl</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Erwin, SSgt. Henry "Red"</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Pitsenbarger, A1C William H.</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>
<b>Etchberger, CMSgt. Richard L.</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>	<b>Pucket, 1st Lt. Donald</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Femoyer, 2nd Lt. Robert</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Rickenbacker, Capt. Eddie</b>	<b>World War I</b>
<b>Fisher, Maj. Bernard</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>	<b>Sarnoski, 2nd Lt. Joseph</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Fleming, Lt. James P.</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>	<b>Sebille, Maj. Louis</b>	<b>Korean War</b>
<b>Goettler, Lt. Harold E.</b>	<b>World War I</b>	<b>Shomo, Capt. William A.</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Gott, 1st Lt. Donald</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Sijan, Capt. Lance</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>
<b>Hamilton, Maj. Pierpont Morgan</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Smith, Sgt. Maynard H.</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Howard, Maj. James H.</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Thorsness, Maj. Leo K.</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>
<b>Hughes, 2nd Lt. Lloyd H.</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Truemper, 2nd Lt. Walter E.</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Jackson, Col. Joe</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>	<b>Vance, Col. Leon</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Jerstad, Maj. John</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Vosler, TSgt. Forrest L.</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Johnson, Col. Leon W.</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Walker, Brig. Gen. Kenneth</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Jones, Lt. Col. William A. III</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>	<b>Walmsley, Capt. John S.</b>	<b>Korean War</b>
<b>Kane, Col. John R. "Killer"</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Wilbanks, Capt. Hilliard</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>
<b>Kearby, Lt. Col. Neel</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Wilkins, 2nd Lt. Raymond</b>	<b>World War II</b>
<b>Kingsley, 2nd Lt. David</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Young, Capt. Gerald O.</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>
<b>Knight, 2nd Lt. Raymond L.</b>	<b>World War II</b>	<b>Zeamer, Capt. Jay</b>	<b>World War II</b>

## Lt. Col. Addison E. Baker

Unit: 93rd Heavy Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-24/pilot

Place of action: Ploesti Raid, Rumania

Date of action: Aug. 1, 1943

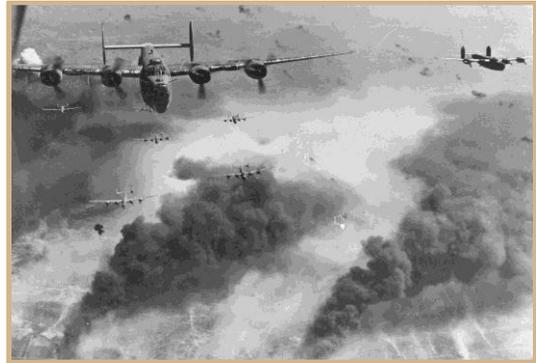
Born: Jan. 1, 1907, Chicago, Ill.

Entered service at: Akron, Ohio



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy on 1 August 1943. On this date he led his command, the 93d Heavy Bombardment Group, on a daring low-level attack against enemy oil refineries and installations at Ploesti, Rumania. Approaching the target, his aircraft was hit by a large caliber antiaircraft shell, seriously damaged and set on fire. Ignoring the fact he was flying over terrain suitable for safe landing, he refused to jeopardize the mission by breaking up the lead formation and continued unswervingly to lead his group to the target upon which he dropped his bombs with devastating effect. Only then did he leave formation, but his valiant attempts to gain sufficient altitude for the crew to escape by parachute were unavailing and his aircraft crashed in flames after his successful efforts to avoid other planes in formation. By extraordinary flying skill, gallant leadership and intrepidity, Lt. Col. Baker rendered outstanding, distinguished, and valorous service to our Nation.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Into the Mouth of Hell](#)

[Tidal Wave](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Capt. Steven L. Bennett

Unit: 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron

Aircraft/position: OV-10/pilot

Place of action: Quang Tri, Republic of Vietnam

Date of action: June 29, 1972

Born: April 22, 1946, Palestine, Tex.

Entered service at: Lafayette, La.



### Citation

Capt. Bennett was the pilot of a light aircraft flying an artillery adjustment mission along a heavily defended segment of route structure. A large concentration of enemy troops was massing for an attack on a friendly unit. Capt. Bennett requested tactical air support but was advised that none was available. He also requested artillery support but this too was denied due to the close proximity of friendly troops to the target. Capt. Bennett was determined to aid the endangered unit and elected to strafe the hostile positions. After 4 such passes, the enemy force began to retreat. Capt. Bennett continued the attack, but, as he completed his fifth strafing pass, his aircraft was struck by a surface-to-air missile, which severely damaged the left engine and the left main landing gear. As fire spread in the left engine, Capt. Bennett realized that recovery at a friendly airfield was impossible. He instructed his observer to prepare for an ejection, but was informed by the observer that his parachute had been shredded by the force of the impacting missile. Although Capt. Bennett had a good parachute, he knew that if he ejected, the observer would have no chance of survival. With complete disregard for his own life, Capt. Bennett elected to ditch the aircraft into the Gulf of Tonkin, even though he realized that a pilot of this type aircraft had never survived a ditching. The ensuing impact upon the water caused the aircraft to cartwheel and severely damaged the front cockpit, making escape for Capt. Bennett impossible. The observer successfully made his way out of the aircraft and was rescued. Capt. Bennett's unparalleled concern for his companion, extraordinary heroism and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself and the U.S. Air Force.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: A Gift of Life](#)

[Impossible Odds in SAM-7 Alley](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## 2nd Lt. Erwin R. Bleckley

Unit: 50th Aero Squadron

Aircraft/position: DH-4/observer/gunner

Place of action: Near Binarville, France

Date of action: Oct. 6, 1918

Born: Wichita, Kans.

Entered service at: Wichita, Kans.



### Citation

2d Lt. Bleckley, with his pilot, 1st Lt. Harold E. Goettler, Air Service, left the airdrome late in the afternoon on their second trip to drop supplies to a battalion of the 77th Division, which had been cut off by the enemy in the Argonne Forest. Having been subjected on the first trip to violent fire from the enemy, they attempted on the second trip to come still lower in order to get the packages even more precisely on the designated spot. In the course of his mission the plane was brought down by enemy rifle and machinegun fire from the ground, resulting in fatal wounds to 2d Lt. Bleckley, who died before he could be taken to a hospital. In attempting and performing this mission 2d Lt. Bleckley showed the highest possible contempt of personal danger, devotion to duty, courage, and valor.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Valley of the Shadow](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Maj. Richard I. Bong

Unit: 49th Fighter Group

Aircraft/position: P-38/pilot

Place of action: Over Borneo and Leyte

Date of action: Oct. 10, 1944 to Nov. 15, 1944

Born: Sept. 24, 1920, Poplar, Wis.

Entered service at: Poplar, Wis.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty in the Southwest Pacific area from 10 October to 15 November 1944. Though assigned to duty as gunnery instructor and neither required nor expected to perform combat duty, Maj. Bong voluntarily and at his own urgent request engaged in repeated combat missions, including unusually hazardous sorties over Balikpapan, Borneo, and in the Leyte area of the Philippines. His aggressiveness and daring resulted in his shooting down 8 enemy airplanes during this period.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: Top Gun](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## Maj. Horace Seaver Carswell Jr.

Unit: 308th Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-24/bomber

Place of action: Over South China Sea

Date of action: Oct. 26, 1944

Born: July 18, 1916, Fort Worth, Tex.

Entered service at: San Angelo, Tex.



### Citation

He piloted a B-24 bomber in a one-plane strike against a Japanese convoy in the South China Sea on the night of 26 October 1944. Taking the enemy force of 12 ships escorted by at least 2 destroyers by surprise, he made 1 bombing run at 600 feet, scoring a near miss on 1 warship and escaping without drawing fire. He circled, and fully realizing that the convoy was thoroughly alerted and would meet his next attack with a barrage of anti-aircraft fire, began a second low-level run which culminated in 2 direct hits on a large tanker. A hail of steel from Japanese guns, riddled the bomber, knocking out 2 engines, damaging a third, crippling the hydraulic system, puncturing 1 gasoline tank, ripping uncounted holes in the aircraft, and wounding the copilot; but by magnificent display of flying skill, Maj. Carswell controlled the plane's plunge toward the sea and carefully forced it into a halting climb in the direction of the China shore. On reaching land, where it would have been possible to abandon the staggering bomber, one of the crew discovered that his parachute had been ripped by flak and rendered useless; the pilot, hoping to cross mountainous terrain and reach a base, continued onward until the third engine failed. He ordered the crew to bail out while he struggled to maintain altitude, and, refusing to save himself, chose to remain with his comrade and attempt a crash landing. He died when the airplane struck a mountainside and burned. With consummate gallantry and intrepidity, Maj. Carswell gave his life in a supreme effort to save all members of his crew. His sacrifice, far beyond that required of him, was in keeping with the traditional bravery of America's war heroes.



*Also see Air Force Magazine articles*

[Valor: China Bomber](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Brig. Gen. Frederick W. Castle

Unit: 4th Bomber Wing

Aircraft/position: B-17/pilot

Place of action: Germany

Date of action: Dec. 24, 1944

Born: Oct. 14, 1908, Manila, Philippines

Entered service at: Mountain Lake, N.J.



### Citation

He was air commander and leader of more than 2,000 heavy bombers in a strike against German airfields on 24 December 1944. En route to the target, the failure of one engine forced him to relinquish his place at the head of the formation. In order not to endanger friendly troops on the ground below, he refused to jettison his bombs to gain speed maneuverability. His lagging, unescorted aircraft became the target of numerous enemy fighters which ripped the left wing with cannon shells, set the oxygen system afire, and wounded two members of the crew. Repeated attacks started fires in two engines, leaving the Flying Fortress in imminent danger of exploding. Realizing the hopelessness of the situation, the bail-out order was given. Without regard for his personal safety he gallantly remained alone at the controls to afford all other crewmembers an opportunity to escape. Still another attack exploded gasoline tanks in the right wing, and the bomber plunged earthward, carrying Gen. Castle to his death. His intrepidity and willing sacrifice of his life to save members of the crew were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: The Quiet Hero](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Maj. Ralph Cheli

Unit: 405th Bombardment Squadron

Aircraft/position: B-25/pilot

Place of action: Near Wewak, New Guinea

Date of action: Aug. 18, 1943

Born: October 1919, San Francisco, Calif.

Entered service at: Brooklyn, N.Y.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy. While Maj. Cheli was leading his squadron in a dive to attack the heavily defended Dagua Airdrome, intercepting enemy aircraft centered their fire on his plane, causing it to burst into flames while still 2 miles from the objective. His speed would have enabled him to gain necessary altitude to parachute to safety, but this action would have resulted in his formation becoming disorganized and exposed to the enemy. Although a crash was inevitable, he courageously elected to continue leading the attack in his blazing plane. From a minimum altitude, the squadron made a devastating bombing and strafing attack on the target. The mission completed, Maj. Cheli instructed his wingman to lead the formation and crashed into the sea.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: Triumph and Tragedy](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## Col. Demas T. Crow

Unit: XII Ground Air Support Command

Position: Commander

Place of action: Near Port Lyautey, French Morocco

Date of action: Nov. 8, 1942

Born: April 9, 1900, Traverse City, Mich.

Entered service at: Michigan



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty. On 8 November 1942, near Port Lyautey, French Morocco, Col. Crow volunteered to accompany the leading wave of assault boats to the shore and pass through the enemy lines to locate the French commander with a view to suspending hostilities. This request was first refused as being too dangerous but upon the officer's insistence that he was qualified to undertake and accomplish the mission he was allowed to go. Encountering heavy fire while in the landing boat and unable to dock in the river because of shell fire from shore batteries, Col. Crow, accompanied by 1 officer and 1 soldier, succeeded in landing on the beach at Mehdia Plage under constant low-level strafing from 3 enemy planes. Riding in a bantam truck toward French headquarters, progress of the party was hindered by fire from our own naval guns. Nearing Port Lyautey, Col. Crow was instantly killed by a sustained burst of machinegun fire at pointblank range from a concealed position near the road.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: A Desperate Venture](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## Maj. George Andrew Davis Jr.

Unit: 334th Fighter Squadron, 4th Fighter Group

Aircraft/position: F-86/pilot

Place of action: Near Sinuiju-Yalu River area, Korea

Date of action: Feb. 10, 1952

Born: December 1920, Dublin, Tex.

Entered service at: Lubbock, Tex.



### Citation

Maj. Davis distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. While leading a flight of 4 F-86 Saberjets on a combat aerial patrol mission near the Manchurian border, Maj. Davis' element leader ran out of oxygen and was forced to retire from the flight with his wingman accompanying him. Maj. Davis and the remaining F-86's continued the mission and sighted a formation of approximately 12 enemy MIG-15 aircraft speeding southward toward an area where friendly fighter-bombers were conducting low level operations against the Communist lines of communications. With selfless disregard for the numerical superiority of the enemy, Maj. Davis positioned his 2 aircraft, then dove at the MIG formation. While speeding through the formation from the rear he singled out a MIG-15 and destroyed it with a concentrated burst of fire. Although he was now under continuous fire from the enemy fighters to his rear, Maj. Davis sustained his attack. He fired at another MIG-15 which, bursting into smoke and flames, went into a vertical dive. Rather than maintain his superior speed and evade the enemy fire being concentrated on him, he elected to reduce his speed and sought out still a third MIG-15. During this latest attack his aircraft sustained a direct hit, went out of control, then crashed into a mountain 30 miles south of the Yalu River. Maj. Davis' bold attack completely disrupted the enemy formation, permitting the friendly fighter-bombers to successfully complete their interdiction mission. Maj. Davis, by his indomitable fighting spirit, heroic aggressiveness, and superb courage in engaging the enemy against formidable odds exemplified valor at its highest.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: MiG Hunter](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Col. George E. Day

Unit: Misty FACs, Det. 1, 416th Tactical Fighter Squadron

Aircraft/position: F-100/Forward Air Controller pilot

Place of action: North Vietnam

Date of action: Aug. 26, 1967

Born: Feb. 24, 1925, Sioux City, Iowa

Entered service at: Sioux City, Iowa



### Citation

On 26 August 1967, Col. Day was forced to eject from his aircraft over North Vietnam when it was hit by ground fire. His right arm was broken in 3 places, and his left knee was badly sprained. He was immediately captured by hostile forces and taken to a prison camp where he was interrogated and severely tortured. After causing the guards to relax their vigilance, Col. Day escaped into the jungle and began the trek toward South Vietnam. Despite injuries inflicted by fragments of a bomb or rocket, he continued southward surviving only on a few berries and uncooked frogs. He successfully evaded enemy patrols and reached the Ben Hai River, where he encountered U.S. artillery barrages. With the aid of a bamboo log float, Col. Day swam across the river and entered the demilitarized zone. Due to delirium, he lost his sense of direction and wandered aimlessly for several days. After several unsuccessful attempts to signal U.S. aircraft, he was ambushed and recaptured by the Viet Cong, sustaining gunshot wounds to his left hand and thigh. He was returned to the prison from which he had escaped and later was moved to Hanoi after giving his captors false information to questions put before him. Physically, Col. Day was totally debilitated and unable to perform even the simplest task for himself. Despite his many injuries, he continued to offer maximum resistance. His personal bravery in the face of deadly enemy pressure was significant in saving the lives of fellow aviators who were still flying against the enemy. Col. Day's conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Air Force and reflect great credit upon himself and the U.S. Armed Forces.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: The Long Road to Freedom](#)

[The Strength of Bud Day](#)

[A Day in the Life of the Misty FACs](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Capt. Merlyn Hans Dethlefsen

Unit: 355th Tactical Fighter Wing

Aircraft/position: F-105/pilot

Place of action: Over North Vietnam

Date of action: March 10, 1967

Born: June 29, 1934, Greenville, Iowa

Entered service at: Royal, Iowa



### Citation

Maj. Dethlefsen was 1 of a flight of F-105 aircraft engaged in a fire suppression mission designed to destroy a key anti-aircraft defensive complex containing surface-to-air missiles (SAM), an exceptionally heavy concentration of anti-aircraft artillery, and other automatic weapons. The defensive network was situated to dominate the approach and provide protection to an important North Vietnam industrial center that was scheduled to be attacked by fighter bombers immediately after the strike by Maj. Dethlefsen's flight. In the initial attack on the defensive complex the lead aircraft was crippled, and Maj. Dethlefsen's aircraft was extensively damaged by the intense enemy fire. Realizing that the success of the impending fighter bomber attack on the center now depended on his ability to effectively suppress the defensive fire, Maj. Dethlefsen ignored the enemy's overwhelming firepower and the damage to his aircraft and pressed his attack. Despite a continuing hail of anti-aircraft fire, deadly surface-to-air missiles, and counterattacks by MIG interceptors, Maj. Dethlefsen flew repeated close range strikes to silence the enemy defensive positions with bombs and cannon fire. His action in rendering ineffective the defensive SAM and anti-aircraft artillery sites enabled the ensuing fighter bombers to strike successfully the important industrial target without loss or damage to their aircraft, thereby appreciably reducing the enemy's ability to provide essential war material. Maj. Dethlefsen's consummate skill and selfless dedication to this significant mission were in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Air Force and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: The Practice of Professionalism](#)

[Calculated Courage at Thai Nguyen](#)

[Take It Down! The Wild Weasels in Vietnam](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Brig. Gen. James H. Doolittle

Unit: Tokyo Raiders

Aircraft/position: B-25/pilot

Place of action: Over Japan

Date of action: April 18, 1942

Born: Dec. 14, 1896, Alameda, Calif.

Entered service at: Berkeley, Calif.



### Citation

For conspicuous leadership above the call of duty, involving personal valor and intrepidity at an extreme hazard to life. With the apparent certainty of being forced to land in enemy territory or to perish at sea, Gen. Doolittle personally led a squadron of Army bombers, manned by volunteer crews, in a highly destructive raid on the Japanese mainland.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: First Over Tokyo](#)

[Doolittle's Raid](#)

[An American Hero](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## SSgt. Henry E. "Red" Erwin

Unit: 29th Bombardment Group  
Aircraft/position: B-29/radio operator  
Place of action: Koriyama, Japan  
Date of action: April 12, 1945  
Born: May 8, 1921, Adamsville, Ala.  
Entered service at: Bessemer, Ala.



### Citation

He was the radio operator of a B-29 airplane leading a group formation to attack Koriyama, Japan. He was charged with the additional duty of dropping phosphoresce smoke bombs to aid in assembling the group when the launching point was reached. Upon entering the assembly area, aircraft fire and enemy fighter opposition was encountered. Among the phosphoresce bombs launched by S/Sgt. Erwin, 1 proved faulty, exploding in the launching chute, and shot back into the interior of the aircraft, striking him in the face. The burning phosphoresce obliterated his nose and completely blinded him. Smoke filled the plane, obscuring the vision of the pilot. S/Sgt. Erwin realized that the aircraft and crew would be lost if the burning bomb remained in the plane. Without regard for his own safety, he picked it up and feeling his way, instinctively, crawled around the gun turret and headed for the copilot's window. He found the navigator's table obstructing his passage. Grasping the burning bomb between his forearm and body, he unleashed the spring lock and raised the table. Struggling through the narrow passage he stumbled forward into the smoke-filled pilot's compartment. Groping with his burning hands, he located the window and threw the bomb out. Completely aflame, he fell back upon the floor. The smoke cleared, the pilot, at 300 feet, pulled the plane out of its dive. S/Sgt. Erwin's gallantry and heroism above and beyond the call of duty saved the lives of his comrades.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Red Erwin's Personal Purgatory](#)

[A Brave Man at the Right Time](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## CMSgt. Richard L. Etchberger

Unit: Det. 1, 1043rd Radar Evaluation Squadron

Position: Radar operator, crew chief

Place of action: Phou Pha Thi, Laos

Date of action: March 11, 1968

Born: March 5, 1933, Reading, Pa.

Entered service at: Hamburg, Pa.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Chief Etchberger and his team of technicians were manning a top secret defensive position at Lima Site 85 when the base was overrun by an enemy ground force. Receiving sustained and withering heavy artillery attacks directly upon his unit's position, Chief Etchberger's entire crew lay dead or severely wounded. Despite having received little or no combat training, Chief Etchberger single-handedly held off the enemy with an M-16, while simultaneously directing air strikes into the area and calling for air rescue. Because of his fierce defense and heroic and selfless actions, he was able to deny the enemy access to his position and save the lives of his remaining crew. With the arrival of the rescue aircraft, Chief Etchberger, without hesitation, repeatedly and deliberately risked his own life, exposing himself to heavy enemy fire in order to place three surviving wounded comrades into rescue slings hanging from the hovering helicopter waiting to airlift them to safety. With his remaining crew safely aboard, Chief Etchberger finally climbed into an evacuation sling himself, only to be fatally wounded by enemy ground fire as he was being raised into the aircraft. Chief Etchberger's bravery and determination in the face of persistent enemy fire and overwhelming odds are in keeping with the highest standards of performance and traditions of military service. Chief Etchberger's gallantry, self-sacrifice, and profound concern for his fellow men at risk of his life, above and beyond the call of duty, reflect the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Etchberger, Medal of Honor](#)

[The Fall of Lima Site 85](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## 2nd Lt. Robert E. Femoyer

Unit: 447th Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-17/navigator

Place of action: Over Merseburg, Germany

Date of action: Nov. 2, 1944

Born: Oct. 31, 1921, Huntington, W. Va.

Entered service at: Jacksonville, Fla.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty near Merseburg, Germany, on 2 November 1944. While on a mission, the bomber, of which 2d Lt. Femoyer was the navigator, was struck by 3 enemy antiaircraft shells. The plane suffered serious damage and 2d Lt. Femoyer was severely wounded in the side and back by shell fragments which penetrated his body. In spite of extreme pain and great loss of blood he refused an offered injection of morphine. He was determined to keep his mental faculties clear in order that he might direct his plane out of danger and so save his comrades. Not being able to arise from the floor, he asked to be propped up in order to enable him to see his charts and instruments. He successfully directed the navigation of his lone bomber for 2 1/2 hours so well it avoided enemy flak and returned to the field without further damage. Only when the plane had arrived in the safe area over the English Channel did he feel that he had accomplished his objective; then, and only then, he permitted an injection of a sedative. He died shortly after being removed from the plane. The heroism and self-sacrifice of 2d Lt. Femoyer are in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Army.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: 'I Am the Captain of My Soul'](#)

[Twenty Missions in Hell](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Maj. Bernard Francis Fisher

Unit: 1st Air Commandos

Aircraft/position: A-1E/pilot

Place of action: Bien Hoa and Pleiku, Vietnam

Date of action: March 10, 1966

Born: Jan. 11, 1927, San Bernardino, Calif.

Entered service at: Kuna, Idaho



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. On that date, the special forces camp at A Shau was under attack by 2,000 North Vietnamese Army regulars. Hostile troops had positioned themselves between the airstrip and the camp. Other hostile troops had surrounded the camp and were continuously raking it with automatic weapons fire from the surrounding hills. The tops of the 1,500-foot hills were obscured by an 800 foot ceiling, limiting aircraft maneuverability and forcing pilots to operate within range of hostile gun positions, which often were able to fire down on the attacking aircraft. During the battle, Maj. Fisher observed a fellow airman crash land on the battle-torn airstrip. In the belief that the downed pilot was seriously injured and in imminent danger of capture, Maj. Fisher announced his intention to land on the airstrip to effect a rescue. Although aware of the extreme danger and likely failure of such an attempt, he elected to continue. Directing his own air cover, he landed his aircraft and taxied almost the full length of the runway, which was littered with battle debris and parts of an exploded aircraft. While effecting a successful rescue of the downed pilot, heavy ground fire was observed, with 19 bullets striking his aircraft. In the face of the withering ground fire, he applied power and gained enough speed to lift-off at the overrun of the airstrip. Maj. Fisher's profound concern for his fellow airman, and at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in the highest traditions of the U.S. Air Force and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: The Valley of Death](#)

[Into the Valley of Fire](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## 1st Lt. James P. Fleming

Unit: 20th Special Operations Squadron

Aircraft/position: UH-1F/pilot

Place of action: Near Duc Co, Republic of Vietnam

Date of action: Nov. 26, 1968

Born: March 12, 1943, Sedalia, Mo.

Entered service at: Pullman, Wash.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Capt. Fleming (then 1st Lt.) distinguished himself as the Aircraft Commander of a UH-1F transport Helicopter. Capt. Fleming went to the aid of a 6-man special forces long range reconnaissance patrol that was in danger of being overrun by a large, heavily armed hostile force. Despite the knowledge that 1 helicopter had been downed by intense hostile fire, Capt. Fleming descended, and balanced his helicopter on a river bank with the tail boom hanging over open water. The patrol could not penetrate to the landing site and he was forced to withdraw. Dangerously low on fuel, Capt. Fleming repeated his original landing maneuver. Disregarding his own safety, he remained in this exposed position. Hostile fire crashed through his windscreen as the patrol boarded his helicopter. Capt. Fleming made a successful takeoff through a barrage of hostile fire and recovered safely at a forward base. Capt. Fleming's profound concern for his fellowmen, and at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Air Force and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Bank Shot](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## 1st Lt. Harold Ernest Goettler

Unit: 50th Aero Squadron

Aircraft/position: DH-4/pilot

Place of action: Near Binarville, France

Date of action: Oct. 6, 1918

Born: July 21, 1890, Chicago, Ill.

Entered service at: Chicago, Ill.



### Citation

1st. Lt. Goettler, with his observer, 2d Lt. Erwin R. Bleckley, 130th Field Artillery, left the airdrome late in the afternoon on their second trip to drop supplies to a battalion of the 77th Division which had been cut off by the enemy in the Argonne Forest. Having been subjected on the first trip to violent fire from the enemy, they attempted on the second trip to come still lower in order to get the packages even more precisely on the designated spot. In the course of this mission the plane was brought down by enemy rifle and machinegun fire from the ground, resulting in the instant death of 1st. Lt. Goettler. In attempting and performing this mission 1st. Lt. Goettler showed the highest possible contempt of personal danger, devotion to duty, courage and valor.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Valley of the Shadow](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## 1st Lt. Donald Joseph Gott

Unit: 729th Bombardment Squadron

Aircraft/position: B-17/pilot

Place of action: Saarbrucken, Germany

Date of action: Nov. 9, 1944

Born: June 3, 1923, Arnett, Okla.

Entered service at: Arnett, Okla.



### Citation

On a bombing run upon the marshaling yards at Saarbrucken a B-17 aircraft piloted by 1st. Lt. Gott was seriously damaged by antiaircraft fire. Three of the aircraft's engines were damaged beyond control and on fire; dangerous flames from the No. 4 engine were leaping back as far as the tail assembly. Flares in the cockpit were ignited and a fire raged therein, which was further increased by free-flowing fluid from damaged hydraulic lines. The interphone system was rendered useless. In addition to these serious mechanical difficulties the engineer was wounded in the leg and the radio operator's arm was severed below the elbow. Suffering from intense pain, despite the application of a tourniquet, the radio operator fell unconscious. Faced with the imminent explosion of his aircraft, and death to his entire crew, mere seconds before bombs away on the target, 1st. Lt. Gott and his copilot conferred. Something had to be done immediately to save the life of the wounded radio operator. The lack of a static line and the thought that his unconscious body striking the ground in unknown territory would not bring immediate medical attention forced a quick decision. 1st. Lt. Gott and his copilot decided to fly the flaming aircraft to friendly territory and then attempt to crash land. Bombs were released on the target and the crippled aircraft proceeded alone to Allied-controlled territory. When that had been reached, 1st. Lt. Gott had the copilot personally inform all crewmembers to bail out. The copilot chose to remain with 1st. Lt. Gott in order to assist in landing the bomber. With only one normally functioning engine, and with the danger of explosion much greater, the aircraft banked into an open field, and when it was at an altitude of 100 feet it exploded, crashed, exploded again and then disintegrated. All 3 crewmembers were instantly killed. 1st. Lt. Gott's loyalty to his crew, his determination to accomplish the task set forth to him, and his deed of knowingly performing what may have been his last service to his country was an example of valor at its highest.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: "Valor at its Highest"](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Maj. Pierpont M. Hamilton

Unit: Operation Torch Task Force

Position: Intelligence officer

Place of action: Near Port Lyautey, French Morocco

Date of action: Nov. 8, 1942

Born: Aug. 3, 1898, Tuxedo Park, N.Y.

Entered service at: New York, N.Y.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty. On 8 November 1942, near Port Lyautey, French Morocco, Lt. Col. Hamilton volunteered to accompany Col. Demas Craw on a dangerous mission to the French commander, designed to bring about a cessation of hostilities. Driven away from the mouth of the Sebou River by heavy shelling from all sides, the landing boat was finally beached at Mehdia Plage despite continuous machinegun fire from 3 low-flying hostile planes. Driven in a light truck toward French headquarters, this courageous mission encountered intermittent firing, and as it neared Port Lyautey a heavy burst of machinegun fire was delivered upon the truck from pointblank range, killing Col. Craw instantly. Although captured immediately, after this incident, Lt. Col. Hamilton completed the mission.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: A Desperate Venture](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Lt. Col. James H. Howard

Unit: 354th Fighter Group

Aircraft/position: P-51/pilot

Place of action: Over Oschersleben, Germany

Date of action: Jan. 11, 1944

Born: April 8, 1913, Canton, China

Entered service at: St. Louis, Mo.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy near Oschersleben, Germany, on 11 January 1944. On that day Col. Howard was the leader of a group of P-51 aircraft providing support for a heavy bomber formation on a long-range mission deep in enemy territory. As Col. Howard's group met the bombers in the target area the bomber force was attacked by numerous enemy fighters. Col. Howard, with his group, and at once engaged the enemy and himself destroyed a German ME. 110. As a result of this attack Col. Howard lost contact with his group, and at once returned to the level of the bomber formation. He then saw that the bombers were being heavily attacked by enemy airplanes and that no other friendly fighters were at hand. While Col. Howard could have waited to attempt to assemble his group before engaging the enemy, he chose instead to attack single-handed a formation of more than 30 German airplanes. With utter disregard for his own safety he immediately pressed home determined attacks for some 30 minutes, during which time he destroyed 3 enemy airplanes and probably destroyed and damaged others. Toward the end of this engagement 3 of his guns went out of action and his fuel supply was becoming dangerously low. Despite these handicaps and the almost insuperable odds against him, Col. Howard continued his aggressive action in an attempt to protect the bombers from the numerous fighters. His skill, courage, and intrepidity on this occasion set an example of heroism which will be an inspiration to the U.S. Armed Forces.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: One-Man Air Force](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## 2nd Lt. Lloyd H. Hughes

Unit: 564th Bombardment Squadron

Aircraft/position: B-24/pilot

Place of action: Ploesti Raid, Rumania

Date of action: Aug. 1, 1943

Born: July 12, 1921, Alexandria, La.

Entered service at: San Antonio, Tex.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry in action and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. On August 1943, 2d Lt. Hughes served in the capacity of pilot of a heavy bombardment aircraft participating in a long and hazardous minimum-altitude attack against the Axis oil refineries of Ploesti, Rumania, launched from the northern shores of Africa. Flying in the last formation to attack the target, he arrived in the target area after previous flights had thoroughly alerted the enemy defenses. Approaching the target through intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire and dense balloon barrages at dangerously low altitude, his plane received several direct hits from both large and small caliber anti-aircraft guns which seriously damaged his aircraft, causing sheets of escaping gasoline to stream from the bomb bay and from the left wing. This damage was inflicted at a time prior to reaching the target when 2d Lt. Hughes could have made a forced landing in any of the grain fields readily available at that time. The target area was blazing with burning oil tanks and damaged refinery installations from which flames leaped high above the bombing level of the formation. With full knowledge of the consequences of entering this blazing inferno when his airplane was profusely leaking gasoline in two separate locations, 2d Lt. Hughes, motivated only by his high conception of duty which called for the destruction of his assigned target at any cost, did not elect to make a forced landing or turn back from the attack. Instead, rather than jeopardize the formation and the success of the attack, he unhesitatingly entered the blazing area and dropped his bomb load with great precision. After successfully bombing the objective, his aircraft emerged from the conflagration with the left wing aflame. Only then did he attempt a forced landing, but because of the advanced stage of the fire enveloping his aircraft the plane crashed and was consumed. By 2d Lt. Hughes' heroic decision to complete his mission regardless of the consequences in utter disregard of his own life, and by his gallant and valorous execution of this decision, he has rendered a service to our country in the defeat of our enemies which will everlastingly be outstanding in the annals of our Nation's history.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Into the Mouth of Hell](#)

[Tidal Wave](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Lt. Col. Joe M. Jackson

Unit: 311th Air Commando Squadron

Aircraft/position: C-123/pilot

Place of action: Kham Duc, Republic of Vietnam

Date of action: May 12, 1968

Born: March 14, 1923, Newman, Ga.

Entered service at: Newman, Ga.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Lt. Col. Jackson distinguished himself as pilot of a C-123 aircraft. Lt. Col. Jackson volunteered to attempt the rescue of a 3-man USAF Combat Control Team from the special forces camp at Kham Duc. Hostile forces had overrun the forward outpost and established gun positions on the airstrip. They were raking the camp with small arms, mortars, light and heavy automatic weapons, and recoilless rifle fire. The camp was engulfed in flames and ammunition dumps were continuously exploding and littering the runway with debris. In addition, 8 aircraft had been destroyed by the intense enemy fire and 1 aircraft remained on the runway reducing its usable length to only 2,200 feet. To further complicate the landing, the weather was deteriorating rapidly, thereby permitting only 1 air strike prior to his landing. Although fully aware of the extreme danger and likely failure of such an attempt. Lt. Col. Jackson elected to land his aircraft and attempt to rescue. Displaying superb airmanship and extraordinary heroism, he landed his aircraft near the point where the combat control team was reported to be hiding. While on the ground, his aircraft was the target of intense hostile fire. A rocket landed in front of the nose of the aircraft but failed to explode. Once the combat control team was aboard, Lt. Col. Jackson succeeded in getting airborne despite the hostile fire directed across the runway in front of his aircraft. Lt. Col. Jackson's profound concern for his fellowmen, at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Air Force and reflect great credit upon himself, and the Armed Forces of his country.



*Image courtesy Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum*

*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Deliverance at Kham Duc](#)

[Rescue at Kham Duc](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Maj. John L. Jerstad

Unit: 93rd Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-24/pilot

Place of action: Ploesti Raid, Rumania

Date of action: Aug. 1, 1943

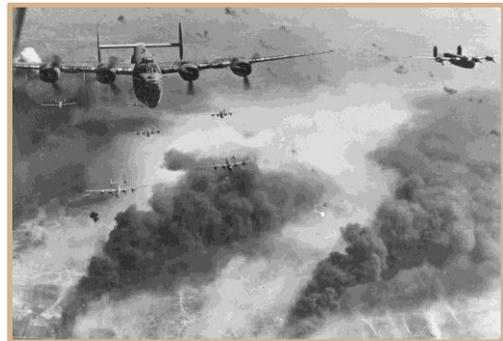
Born: Feb. 12, 1918, Racine, Wis.

Entered service at: Racine, Wis.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty. On 1 August 1943, he served as pilot of the lead aircraft in his group in a daring low-level attack against enemy oil refineries and installations at Ploesti, Rumania. Although he had completed more than his share of missions and was no longer connected with this group, so high was his conception of duty that he volunteered to lead the formation in the correct belief that his participation would contribute materially to success in this attack. Maj. Jerstad led the formation into attack with full realization of the extreme hazards involved and despite withering fire from heavy and light anti-aircraft guns. Three miles from the target his airplane was hit, badly damaged, and set on fire. Ignoring the fact that he was flying over a field suitable for a forced landing, he kept on the course. After the bombs of his aircraft were released on the target, the fire in his ship became so intense as to make further progress impossible and he crashed into the target area. By his voluntary acceptance of a mission he knew was extremely hazardous, and his assumption of an intrepid course of action at the risk of life over and above the call of duty, Maj. Jerstad set an example of heroism which will be an inspiration to the U.S. Armed Forces.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Into the Mouth of Hell](#)

[Tidal Wave](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Col. Leon W. Johnson

Unit: 44th Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-24/pilot

Place of action: Ploesti Raid, Rumania

Date of action: Aug. 1, 1943

Born: Sept. 13, 1904, Columbia, Mo.

Entered service at: Moline, Kans.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry in action and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty on 1 August 1943. Col. Johnson, as commanding officer of a heavy bombardment group, led the formation of the aircraft of his organization constituting the fourth element of the mass low-level bombing attack of the 9th U.S. Air Force against the vitally important enemy target of the Ploesti oil refineries. While proceeding to the target on this 2,400-mile flight, his element became separated from the leading elements of the mass formation in maintaining the formation of the unit while avoiding dangerous cumulous cloud conditions encountered over mountainous territory. Though temporarily lost, he reestablished contact with the third element and continued on the mission with this reduced force to the prearranged point of attack, where it was discovered that the target assigned to Col. Johnson's group had been attacked and damaged by a preceding element. Though having lost the element of surprise upon which the safety and success of such a daring form of mission in heavy bombardment aircraft so strongly depended, Col. Johnson elected to carry out his planned low-level attack despite the thoroughly alerted defenses, the destructive anti-aircraft fire, enemy fighter airplanes, the imminent danger of exploding delayed action bombs from the previous element, of oil fires and explosions, and of intense smoke obscuring the target. By his gallant courage, brilliant leadership, and superior flying skill, Col. Johnson so led his formation as to destroy totally the important refining plants and installations which were the object of his mission. Col. Johnson's personal contribution to the success of this historic raid, and the conspicuous gallantry in action, and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty demonstrated by him on this occasion constitute such deeds of valor and distinguished service as have during our Nation's history formed the finest traditions of our Armed Forces.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: Into the Mouth of Hell](#)

[Tidal Wave](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## Lt. Col. William A. Jones III

Unit: 602nd Special Operations Squadron

Aircraft/position: A-1H/pilot

Place of action: Near Dong Hoi, North Vietnam

Date of action: Sept. 1, 1968

Born: May 31, 1922, Norfolk, Va.

Entered service at: Charlottesville, Va.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Col. Jones distinguished himself as the pilot of an A-1H Skyraider aircraft near Dong Hoi, North Vietnam. On that day, as the on-scene commander in the attempted rescue of a downed U.S. pilot, Col. Jones' aircraft was repeatedly hit by heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire. On one of his low passes, Col. Jones felt an explosion beneath his aircraft and his cockpit rapidly filled with smoke. With complete disregard of the possibility that his aircraft might still be burning, he unhesitatingly continued his search for the downed pilot. On this pass, he sighted the survivor and a multiple-barrel gun position firing at him from near the top of a karst formation. He could not attack the gun position on that pass for fear he would endanger the downed pilot. Leaving himself exposed to the gun position, Col. Jones attacked the position with cannon and rocket fire on 2 successive passes. On his second pass, the aircraft was hit with multiple rounds of automatic weapons fire. One round impacted the Yankee Extraction System rocket mounted directly behind the headrest, igniting the rocket. His aircraft was observed to burst into flames in the center fuselage section, with flames engulfing the cockpit area. He pulled the extraction handle, jettisoning the canopy. The influx of fresh air made the fire burn with greater intensity for a few moments, but since the rocket motor had already burned, the extraction system did not pull Col. Jones from the aircraft. Despite searing pains from severe burns sustained on his arms, hands, neck, shoulders, and face, Col. Jones pulled his aircraft into a climb and attempted to transmit the location of the downed pilot and the enemy gun position to the other aircraft in the area. His calls were blocked by other aircraft transmissions repeatedly directing him to bail out and within seconds his transmitters were disabled and he could receive only on 1 channel. Completely disregarding his injuries, he elected to fly his crippled aircraft back to his base and pass on essential information for the rescue rather than bail out. Col. Jones successfully landed his heavily damaged aircraft and passed the information to a debriefing officer while on the operating table. As a result of his heroic actions and complete disregard for his personal safety, the downed pilot was rescued later in the day. Col. Jones' profound concern for his fellow man at the risk of his life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Air Force and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: A Triumph of Will](#)

[Determination of a Sandy](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Col. John R. Kane

Unit: 98th Bombardment Group

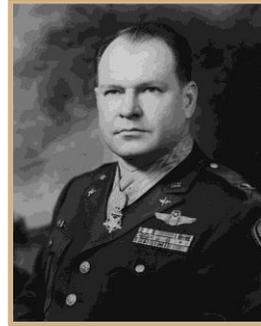
Aircraft/position: B-24/pilot

Place of action: Ploesti Raid, Rumania

Date of action: Aug. 1, 1943

Born: January 1907, McGregor, Tex.

Entered service at: Shreveport, La.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry in action and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty on 1 August 1943. On this date he led the third element of heavy bombardment aircraft in a mass low-level bombing attack against the vitally important enemy target of the Ploesti oil refineries. En route to the target, which necessitated a round-trip flight of over 2,400 miles, Col. Kane's element became separated from the leading portion of the massed formation in avoiding dense and dangerous cumulous cloud conditions over mountainous terrain. Rather than turn back from such a vital mission he elected to proceed to his target. Upon arrival at the target area it was discovered that another group had apparently missed its target and had previously attacked and damaged the target assigned to Col. Kane's element. Despite the thoroughly warned defenses, the intensive anti-aircraft fire, enemy fighter airplanes, extreme hazards on a low-level attack of exploding delayed action bombs from the previous element, of oil fires and explosions and dense smoke over the target area, Col. Kane elected to lead his formation into the attack. By his gallant courage, brilliant leadership, and superior flying skill, he and the formation under his command successfully attacked this vast refinery so essential to our enemies' war effort. Through his conspicuous gallantry in this most hazardous action against the enemy, and by his intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty, Col. Kane personally contributed vitally to the success of this daring mission and thereby rendered most distinguished service in the furtherance of the defeat of our enemies.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: Into the Mouth of Hell](#)

[Tidal Wave](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## Lt. Col. Neel E. Kearby

Unit: 348th Fighter Group

Aircraft/position: P-47/pilot

Place of action: Near Wewak, New Guinea

Date of action: Oct. 11, 1943

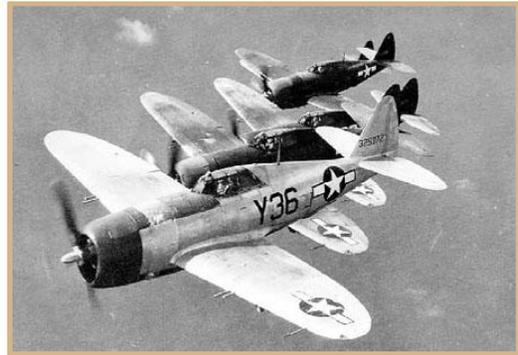
Born: June 1911, Wichita Falls, Tex.

Entered service at: Dallas, Tex.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy, Col. Kearby volunteered to lead a flight of 4 fighters to reconnoiter the strongly defended enemy base at Wewak. Having observed enemy installations and reinforcements at 4 airfields, and secured important tactical information, he saw an enemy fighter below him, made a diving attack and shot it down in flames. The small formation then sighted approximately 12 enemy bombers accompanied by 36 fighters. Although his mission had been completed, his fuel was running low, and the numerical odds were 12 to 1, he gave the signal to attack. Diving into the midst of the enemy airplanes he shot down 3 in quick succession. Observing 1 of his comrades with 2 enemy fighters in pursuit, he destroyed both enemy aircraft. The enemy broke off in large numbers to make a multiple attack on his airplane but despite his peril he made one more pass before seeking cloud protection. Coming into the clear, he called his flight together and led them to a friendly base. Col. Kearby brought down 6 enemy aircraft in this action, undertaken with superb daring after his mission was completed.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles  
[Valor: Giant in a Jug](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## 2nd Lt. David R. Kingsley

Unit: 97th Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-17/bombardier

Place of action: Ploesti Raid, Rumania

Date of action: June 23, 1944

Born: June 1918, Portland, Ore.

Entered service at: Portland, Ore.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty, 23 June 1944 near Ploesti, Rumania, while flying as bombardier of a B-17 type aircraft. On the bomb run 2d Lt. Kingsley's aircraft was severely damaged by intense flak and forced to drop out of formation but the pilot proceeded over the target and 2d Lt. Kingsley successfully dropped his bombs, causing severe damage to vital installations. The damaged aircraft, forced to lose altitude and to lag behind the formation, was aggressively attacked by 3 ME-109 aircraft, causing more damage to the aircraft and severely wounding the tail gunner in the upper arm. The radio operator and engineer notified 2d Lt. Kingsley that the tail gunner had been wounded and that assistance was needed to check the bleeding. 2d Lt. Kingsley made his way back to the radio room, skillfully applied first aid to the wound, and succeeded in checking the bleeding. The tail gunner's parachute harness and heavy clothes were removed and he was covered with blankets, making him as comfortable as possible. Eight ME-109 aircraft again aggressively attacked 2d Lt. Kingsley's aircraft and the ball turret gunner was wounded by 20mm. shell fragments. He went forward to the radio room to have 2d Lt. Kingsley administer first aid. A few minutes later when the pilot gave the order to prepare to bail out, 2d Lt. Kingsley immediately began to assist the wounded gunners in putting on their parachute harness. In the confusion the tail gunner's harness, believed to have been damaged, could not be located in the bundle of blankets and flying clothes which had been removed from the wounded men. With utter disregard for his own means of escape, 2d Lt. Kingsley unhesitatingly removed his parachute harness and adjusted it to the wounded tail gunner. Due to the extensive damage caused by the accurate and concentrated 20-mm. fire by the enemy aircraft the pilot gave the order to bail out, as it appeared that the aircraft would disintegrate at any moment. 2d Lt. Kingsley aided the wounded men in bailing out and when last seen by the crewmembers he was standing on the bomb bay catwalk. The aircraft continued to fly on automatic pilot for a short distance, then crashed and burned. His body was later found in the wreckage. 2d Lt. Kingsley by his gallant heroic action was directly responsible for saving the life of the wounded gunner.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: A Rather Special Award](#)

[The Forgotten Fifteenth](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## 1st Lt. Raymond L. Knight

Unit: 350th Fighter Group

Aircraft/position: P-47/pilot

Place of action: In Northern Po Valley, Italy

Date of action: April 24-25, 1945

Born: June 1922, Timpson, Tex.

Entered service at: Houston, Tex.



### Citation

He piloted a fighter-bomber aircraft in a series of low-level strafing missions, destroying 14 grounded enemy aircraft and leading attacks which wrecked 10 others during a critical period of the Allied drive in northern Italy. On the morning of 24 April, he volunteered to lead 2 other aircraft against the strongly defended enemy airdrome at Ghedi. Ordering his fellow pilots to remain aloft, he skimmed the ground through a deadly curtain of anti-aircraft fire to reconnoiter the field, locating 8 German aircraft hidden beneath heavy camouflage. He rejoined his flight, briefed them by radio, and then led them with consummate skill through the hail of enemy fire in a low-level attack, destroying 5 aircraft, while his flight accounted for 2 others. Returning to his base, he volunteered to lead 3 other aircraft in reconnaissance of Bergamo airfield, an enemy base near Ghedi and 1 known to be equally well defended. Again ordering his flight to remain out of range of anti-aircraft fire, 1st Lt. Knight flew through an exceptionally intense barrage, which heavily damaged his Thunderbolt, to observe the field at minimum altitude. He discovered a squadron of enemy aircraft under heavy camouflage and led his flight to the assault. Returning alone after this strafing, he made 10 deliberate passes against the field despite being hit by anti-aircraft fire twice more, destroying 6 fully loaded enemy twin-engine aircraft and 2 fighters. His skillfully led attack enabled his flight to destroy 4 other twin-engine aircraft and a fighter plane. He then returned to his base in his seriously damaged plane. Early the next morning, when he again attacked Bergamo, he sighted an enemy plane on the runway. Again he led 3 other American pilots in a blistering low-level sweep through vicious anti-aircraft fire that damaged his plane so severely that it was virtually non-flyable. Three of the few remaining enemy twin-engine aircraft at that base were destroyed. Realizing the critical need for aircraft in his unit, he declined to parachute to safety over friendly territory and unhesitatingly attempted to return his shattered plane to his home field. With great skill and strength, he flew homeward until caught by treacherous air conditions in the Appennines Mountains, where he crashed and was killed. The gallant action of 1st Lt. Knight eliminated the German aircraft which were poised to wreak havoc on Allied forces pressing to establish the first firm bridgehead across the Po River; his fearless daring and voluntary self-sacrifice averted possible heavy casualties among ground forces and the resultant slowing on the German drive culminated in the collapse of enemy resistance in Italy.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: The Path of Duty](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## 1st Lt. William R. Lawley Jr.

Unit: 364th Bombardment Squadron

Aircraft/position: B-17/pilot

Place of action: Over Europe

Date of action: Feb. 20, 1944

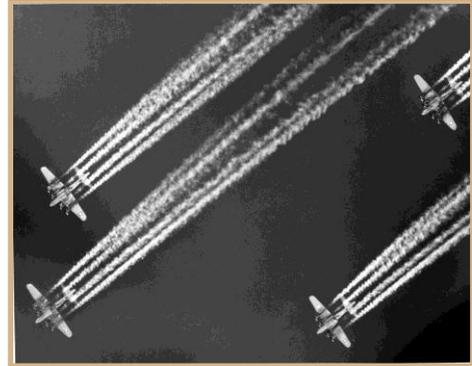
Born: Aug. 23, 1920, Leeds, Ala.

Entered service at: Birmingham, Ala.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty, 20 February 1944, while serving as pilot of a B-17 aircraft on a heavy bombardment mission over enemy-occupied continental Europe. Coming off the target he was attacked by approximately 20 enemy fighters, shot out of formation, and his plane severely crippled. Eight crewmembers were wounded, the copilot was killed by a 20-mm. shell. One engine was on fire, the controls shot away, and 1st Lt. Lawley seriously and painfully wounded about the face. Forcing the copilot's body off the controls, he brought the plane out of a steep dive, flying with his left hand only. Blood covered the instruments and windshield and visibility was impossible. With a full bomb load the plane was difficult to maneuver and bombs could not be released because the racks were frozen. After the order to bail out had been given, 1 of the waist gunners informed the pilot that 2 crewmembers were so severely wounded that it would be impossible for them to bail out. With the fire in the engine spreading, the danger of an explosion was imminent. Because of the helpless condition of his wounded crewmembers 1st Lt. Lawley elected to remain with the ship and bring them to safety if it was humanly possible, giving the other crewmembers the option of bailing out. Enemy fighters again attacked but by using masterful evasive action he managed to lose them. One engine again caught on fire and was extinguished by skillful flying. 1st Lt. Lawley remained at his post, refusing first aid until he collapsed from sheer exhaustion caused by loss of blood, shock, and the energy he had expended in keeping control of his plane. He was revived by the bombardier and again took over the controls. Coming over the English coast 1 engine ran out of gasoline and had to be feathered. Another engine started to burn and continued to do so until a successful crash landing was made on a small fighter base. Through his heroism and exceptional flying skill, 1st Lt. Lawley rendered outstanding distinguished and valorous service to our Nation.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: One Turning and One Burning](#)

[Forceful "Argument"](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## A1C John L. Levitow

Unit: 3rd Special Operations Squadron

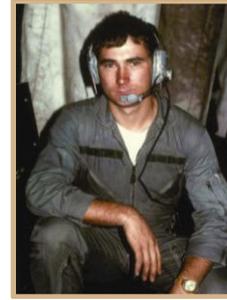
Aircraft/position: AC-47/loadmaster

Place of action: Long Binh Army post, Republic of Vietnam

Date of action: Feb. 24, 1969

Born: Nov. 1, 1945, Hartford, Conn.

Entered service at: New Haven, Conn.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Sgt. Levitow (then A1c.), U.S. Air Force, distinguished himself by exceptional heroism while assigned as a loadmaster aboard an AC-47 aircraft flying a night mission in support of Long Binh Army post. Sgt. Levitow's aircraft was struck by a hostile mortar round. The resulting explosion ripped a hole 2 feet in diameter through the wing and fragments made over 3,500 holes in the fuselage. All occupants of the cargo compartment were wounded and helplessly slammed against the floor and fuselage. The explosion tore an activated flare from the grasp of a crewmember who had been launching flares to provide illumination for Army ground troops engaged in combat. Sgt. Levitow, though stunned by the concussion of the blast and suffering from over 40 fragment wounds in the back and legs, staggered to his feet and turned to assist the man nearest to him who had been knocked down and was bleeding heavily. As he was moving his wounded comrade forward and away from the opened cargo compartment door, he saw the smoking flare ahead of him in the aisle. Realizing the danger involved and completely disregarding his own wounds, Sgt. Levitow started toward the burning flare. The aircraft was partially out of control and the flare was rolling wildly from side to side. Sgt. Levitow struggled forward despite the loss of blood from his many wounds and the partial loss of feeling in his right leg. Unable to grasp the rolling flare with his hands, he threw himself bodily upon the burning flare. Hugging the deadly device to his body, he dragged himself back to the rear of the aircraft and hurled the flare through the open cargo door. At that instant the flare separated and ignited in the air, but clear of the aircraft. Sgt. Levitow, by his selfless and heroic actions, saved the aircraft and its entire crew from certain death and destruction. Sgt. Levitow's gallantry, his profound concern for his fellowmen, at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Air Force and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: The Saving of Spooky 71](#)

[20 Seconds Over Long Binh](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Capt. Darrell R. Lindsey

Unit: 394th Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-26/pilot

Place of action: L'Isle Adam railroad bridge

Date of action: Aug. 9, 1944

Born: Dec. 30, 1919, Jefferson, Iowa

Entered service at: Storm Lake, Iowa



### Citation

On 9 August 1944, Capt. Lindsey led a formation of 30 B-26 medium bombers in a hazardous mission to destroy the strategic enemy held L'Isle Adam railroad bridge over the Seine in occupied France. With most of the bridges over the Seine destroyed, the heavily fortified L'Isle Adam bridge was of inestimable value to the enemy in moving troops, supplies, and equipment to Paris. Capt. Lindsey was fully aware of the fierce resistance that would be encountered. Shortly after reaching enemy territory the formation was buffeted with heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire. By skillful evasive action, Capt. Lindsey was able to elude much of the enemy flak, but just before entering the bombing run his B-26 was peppered with holes. During the bombing run the enemy fire was even more intense, and Capt. Lindsey's right engine received a direct hit and burst into flames. Despite the fact that his ship was hurled out of formation by the violence of the concussion, Capt. Lindsey brilliantly maneuvered back into the lead position without disrupting the flight. Fully aware that the gasoline tanks might explode at any moment, Capt. Lindsey gallantly elected to continue the perilous bombing run. With fire streaming from his right engine and his right wing half enveloped in flames, he led his formation over the target upon which the bombs were dropped with telling effect. Immediately after the objective was attacked, Capt. Lindsey gave the order for the crew to parachute from the doomed aircraft. With magnificent coolness and superb pilotage, and without regard for his own life, he held the swiftly descending airplane in a steady glide until the members of the crew could jump to safety. With the right wing completely enveloped in flames and an explosion of the gasoline tank imminent, Capt. Lindsey still remained unperturbed. The last man to leave the stricken plane was the bombardier, who offered to lower the wheels so that Capt. Lindsey might escape from the nose. Realizing that this might throw the aircraft into an uncontrollable spin and jeopardize the bombardier's chances to escape, Capt. Lindsey refused the offer. Immediately after the bombardier had bailed out, and before Capt. Lindsey was able to follow, the right gasoline tank exploded. The aircraft sheathed in fire, went into a steep dive and was seen to explode as it crashed. All who are living today from this plane owe their lives to the fact that Capt. Lindsey remained cool and showed supreme courage in this emergency.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: The Bridge at L'Isle Adam](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Maj. Charles J. Loring Jr.

Unit: 8th Fighter-Bomber Wing

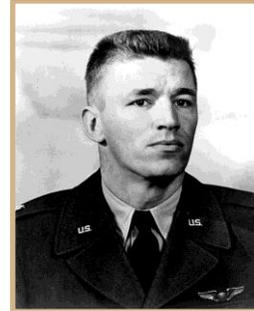
Aircraft/position: F-80/pilot

Place of action: Near Sniper Ridge, North Korea

Date of action: Nov. 22, 1952

Born: Oct. 2, 1918, Portland, Maine

Entered service at: Portland, Maine



### Citation

Maj. Loring distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. While leading a flight of 4 F-80 type aircraft on a close support mission, Maj. Loring was briefed by a controller to dive-bomb enemy gun positions which were harassing friendly ground troops. After verifying the location of the target, Maj. Loring rolled into his dive bomb run. Throughout the run, extremely accurate ground fire was directed on his aircraft. Disregarding the accuracy and intensity of the ground fire, Maj. Loring aggressively continued to press the attack until his aircraft was hit. At approximately 4,000 feet, he deliberately altered his course and aimed his diving aircraft at active gun emplacements concentrated on a ridge northwest of the briefed target, turned his aircraft 45 degrees to the left, pulled up in a deliberate, controlled maneuver, and elected to sacrifice his life by diving his aircraft directly into the midst of the enemy emplacements. His selfless and heroic action completely destroyed the enemy gun emplacement and eliminated a dangerous threat to United Nations ground forces. Maj. Loring's noble spirit, superlative courage, and conspicuous self-sacrifice in inflicting maximum damage on the enemy exemplified valor of the highest degree and his actions were in keeping with the finest traditions of the U.S. Air Force.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Sacrifice at Sniper Ridge](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## 2nd Lt. Frank Luke Jr.

Unit: 27th Aero Squadron, 1st Pursuit Group

Aircraft/position: Spad XIII/pilot

Place of action: Near Murvaux, France

Date of action: Sept. 29, 1918

Born: May 19, 1897, Phoenix, Ariz.

Entered service at: Phoenix, Ariz.



### Citation

After having previously destroyed a number of enemy aircraft within 17 days he voluntarily started on a patrol after German observation balloons. Though pursued by 8 German planes which were protecting the enemy balloon line, he unhesitatingly attacked and shot down in flames 3 German balloons, being himself under heavy fire from ground batteries and the hostile planes. Severely wounded, he descended to within 50 meters of the ground, and flying at this low altitude near the town of Murvaux opened fire upon enemy troops, killing 6 and wounding as many more. Forced to make a landing and surrounded on all sides by the enemy, who called upon him to surrender, he drew his automatic pistol and defended himself gallantly until he fell dead from a wound in the chest.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: A Man for his Time](#)

[The Legend of Frank Luke](#)

[When Sausages Blazed in the Sky](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Sgt. Archibald Mathies

Unit: 351st Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-17/engineer

Place of action: Over Europe

Date of action: Feb. 20, 1944

Born: June 3, 1918, Scotland (naturalized US citizen)

Entered service at: Pittsburgh, Pa.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy in connection with a bombing mission over enemy-occupied Europe on 20 February 1944. The aircraft on which Sgt. Mathies was serving as engineer and ball turret gunner was attacked by a squadron of enemy fighters with the result that the copilot was killed outright, the pilot wounded and rendered unconscious, the radio operator wounded and the plane severely damaged. Nevertheless, Sgt. Mathies and other members of the crew managed to right the plane and fly it back to their home station, where they contacted the control tower and reported the situation. Sgt. Mathies and the navigator volunteered to attempt to land the plane. Other members of the crew were ordered to jump, leaving Sgt. Mathies and the navigator aboard. After observing the distressed aircraft from another plane, Sgt. Mathies' commanding officer decided the damaged plane could not be landed by the inexperienced crew and ordered them to abandon it and parachute to safety. Demonstrating unsurpassed courage and heroism, Sgt. Mathies and the navigator replied that the pilot was still alive but could not be moved and they would not desert him. They were then told to attempt a landing. After two unsuccessful efforts, the plane crashed into an open field in a third attempt to land. Sgt. Mathies, the navigator, and the wounded pilot were killed.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: A Point of Honor](#)

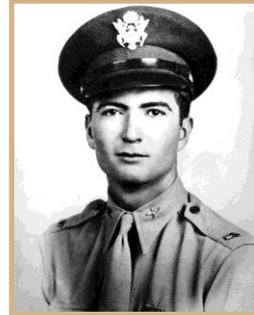
---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

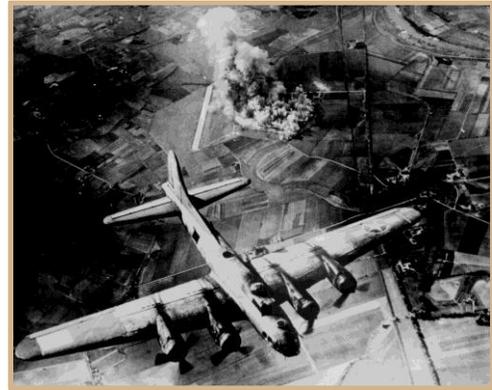
## 1st Lt. Jack W. Mathis

Unit: 303rd Bombardment Group  
Aircraft/position: B-17/bombardier  
Place of action: Over Vegesack, Germany  
Date of action: March 18, 1943  
Born: Sept. 25, 1921, San Angelo, Tex.  
Entered service at: San Angelo, Tex.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy over Vegesack, Germany, on 18 March 1943. 1st Lt. Mathis, as leading bombardier of his squadron, flying through intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire, was just starting his bomb run, upon which the entire squadron depended for accurate bombing, when he was hit by the enemy anti-aircraft fire. His right arm was shattered above the elbow, a large wound was torn in his side and abdomen, and he was knocked from his bomb sight to the rear of the bombardier's compartment. Realizing that the success of the mission depended upon him, 1st Lt. Mathis, by sheer determination and willpower, though mortally wounded, dragged himself back to his sights, released his bombs, then died at his post of duty. As the result of this action the airplanes of his bombardment squadron placed their bombs directly upon the assigned target for a perfect attack against the enemy. 1st Lt. Mathis' undaunted bravery has been a great inspiration to the officers and men of his unit.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: A Tale of Two Texans](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Maj. Thomas B. McGuire Jr.

Unit: 475th Fighter Group

Aircraft/position: P-38/pilot

Place of action: Over Luzon, Philippine Islands

Date of action: Dec. 25-26, 1944

Born: August 1920, Ridgewood, N.J.

Entered service at: Sebring, Fla.



### Citation

He fought with conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity over Luzon, Philippine Islands. Voluntarily, he led a squadron of 15 P-38's as top cover for heavy bombers striking Mabalacat Airdrome, where his formation was attacked by 20 aggressive Japanese fighters. In the ensuing action he repeatedly flew to the aid of embattled comrades, driving off enemy assaults while himself under attack and at times outnumbered 3 to 1, and even after his guns jammed, continuing the fight by forcing a hostile plane into his wingman's line of fire. Before he started back to his base he had shot down 3 Zeros. The next day he again volunteered to lead escort fighters on a mission to strongly defended Clark Field. During the resultant engagement he again exposed himself to attacks so that he might rescue a crippled bomber. In rapid succession he shot down 1 aircraft, parried the attack of 4 enemy fighters, 1 of which he shot down, single-handedly engaged 3 more Japanese, destroying 1, and then shot down still another, his 38th victory in aerial combat. On 7 January 1945, while leading a voluntary fighter sweep over Los Negros Island, he risked an extremely hazardous maneuver at low altitude in an attempt to save a fellow flyer from attack, crashed, and was reported missing in action. With gallant initiative, deep and unselfish concern for the safety of others, and heroic determination to destroy the enemy at all costs, Maj. McGuire set an inspiring example in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Number Two, With Honor](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## 2nd Lt. William E. Metzger Jr.

Unit: 452nd Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-17/copilot

Place of action: Saarbrucken, Germany

Date of action: Nov. 9, 1944

Born: Feb. 9, 1922, Lima, Ohio

Entered service at: Lima, Ohio



### Citation

On a bombing run upon the marshaling yards at Saarbrucken, Germany, on 9 November 1944, a B17 aircraft on which 2d Lt. Metzger was serving as copilot was seriously damaged by antiaircraft fire. Three of the aircraft's engines were damaged beyond control and on fire; dangerous flames from the No. 4 engine were leaping back as far as the tail assembly. Flares in the cockpit were ignited and a fire roared therein which was further increased by free-flowing fluid from damaged hydraulic lines. The interphone system was rendered useless. In addition to these serious mechanical difficulties the engineer was wounded in the leg and the radio operator's arm was severed below the elbow. Suffering from intense pain, despite the application of a tourniquet, the radio operator fell unconscious. Faced with the imminent explosion of his aircraft and death to his entire crew, mere seconds before bombs away on the target, 2d Lt. Metzger and his pilot conferred. Something had to be done immediately to save the life of the wounded radio operator. The lack of a static line and the thought that his unconscious body striking the ground in unknown territory would not bring immediate medical attention forced a quick decision. 2d Lt. Metzger and his pilot decided to fly the flaming aircraft to friendly territory and then attempt to crash land. Bombs were released on the target and the crippled aircraft proceeded along to Allied-controlled territory. When that had been reached 2d Lt. Metzger personally informed all crewmembers to bail out upon the suggestion of the pilot. 2d Lt. Metzger chose to remain with the pilot for the crash landing in order to assist him in this emergency. With only 1 normally functioning engine and with the danger of explosion much greater, the aircraft banked into an open field, and when it was at an altitude of 100 feet it exploded, crashed, exploded again, and then disintegrated. All 3 crewmembers were instantly killed. 2d Lt. Metzger's loyalty to his crew, his determination to accomplish the task set forth to him, and his deed of knowingly performing what may have been his last service to his country was an example of valor at its highest.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: "Valor at its Highest"](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## 1st Lt. Edward S. Michael

Unit: 305th Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-17/pilot

Place of action: Over Germany

Date of action: April 11, 1944

Born: May 2, 1918, Chicago, Ill.

Entered service at: Chicago, Ill.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as pilot of a B-17 aircraft on a heavy-bombardment mission to Germany, 11 April 1944. The group in which 1st Lt. Michael was flying was attacked by a swarm of fighters. His plane was singled out and the fighters pressed their attacks home recklessly, completely disregarding the Allied fighter escort and their own intense flak. His plane was riddled from nose to tail with exploding cannon shells and knocked out of formation, with a large number of fighters following it down, blasting it with cannon fire as it descended. A cannon shell exploded in the cockpit, wounded the copilot, wrecked the instruments, and blew out the side window. 1st Lt. Michael was seriously and painfully wounded in the right thigh. Hydraulic fluid filmed over the windshield making visibility impossible, and smoke filled the cockpit. The controls failed to respond and 3,000 feet were lost before he succeeded in leveling off. The radio operator informed him that the whole bomb bay was in flames as a result of the explosion of 3 cannon shells, which had ignited the incendiaries. With a full load of incendiaries in the bomb bay and a considerable gas load in the tanks, the danger of fire enveloping the plane and the tanks exploding seemed imminent. When the emergency release lever failed to function, 1st Lt. Michael at once gave the order to bail out and 7 of the crew left the plane. Seeing the bombardier firing the navigator's gun at the enemy planes, 1st Lt. Michael ordered him to bail out as the plane was liable to explode any minute. When the bombardier looked for his parachute he found that it had been riddled with 20mm. fragments and was useless. 1st Lt. Michael, seeing the ruined parachute, realized that if the plane was abandoned the bombardier would perish and decided that the only chance would be a crash landing. Completely disregarding his own painful and profusely bleeding wounds, but thinking only of the safety of the remaining crewmembers, he gallantly evaded the enemy, using violent evasive action despite the battered condition of his plane. After the plane had been under sustained enemy attack for fully 45 minutes, 1st Lt. Michael finally lost the persistent fighters in a cloud bank. Upon emerging, an accurate barrage of flak caused him to come down to treetop level where flak towers poured a continuous rain of fire on the plane. He continued into France, realizing that at any moment a crash landing might have to be attempted, but trying to get as far as possible to increase the escape possibilities if a safe landing could be achieved. 1st Lt. Michael flew the plane until he became exhausted from the loss of blood, which had formed on the floor in pools, and he lost consciousness. The copilot succeeded in reaching England and sighted an RAF field near the coast. 1st Lt. Michael finally regained consciousness and insisted upon taking over the controls to land the plane. The undercarriage was useless; the bomb bay doors were jammed open; the hydraulic system and altimeter were shot out. In addition, there was no airspeed indicator, the ball turret was jammed with the guns pointing downward, and the flaps would not respond. Despite these apparently insurmountable obstacles, he landed the plane without mishap.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Gauntlet of Fire](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## 2nd Lt. John C. Morgan

Unit: 92nd Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-17/copilot

Place of action: Over Europe

Date of action: July 28, 1943

Born: Aug. 24, 1914, Vernon, Tex.

Entered service at: London, England



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty, while participating on a bombing mission over enemy-occupied continental Europe, 28 July 1943. Prior to reaching the German coast on the way to the target, the B17 airplane in which 2d Lt. Morgan was serving as copilot was attacked by a large force of enemy fighters, during which the oxygen system to the tail, waist, and radio gun positions was knocked out. A frontal attack placed a cannon shell through the windshield, totally shattering it, and the pilot's skull was split open by a .303 caliber shell, leaving him in a crazed condition. The pilot fell over the steering wheel, tightly clamping his arms around it. 2d Lt. Morgan at once grasped the controls from his side and, by sheer strength, pulled the airplane back into formation despite the frantic struggles of the semiconscious pilot. The interphone had been destroyed, rendering it impossible to call for help. At this time the top turret gunner fell to the floor and down through the hatch with his arm shot off at the shoulder and a gaping wound in his side. The waist, tail, and radio gunners had lost consciousness from lack of oxygen and, hearing no fire from their guns, the copilot believed they had bailed out. The wounded pilot still offered desperate resistance in his crazed attempts to fly the airplane. There remained the prospect of flying to and over the target and back to a friendly base wholly unassisted. In the face of this desperate situation, 2d Lt. Officer Morgan made his decision to continue the flight and protect any members of the crew who might still be in the ship and for 2 hours he flew in formation with one hand at the controls and the other holding off the struggling pilot before the navigator entered the steering compartment and relieved the situation. The miraculous and heroic performance of 2d Lt. Morgan on this occasion resulted in the successful completion of a vital bombing mission and the safe return of his airplane and crew.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: Crisis in the Cockpit](#)

[The Real Twelve O'Clock High](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## Capt. Harl Pease Jr.

Unit: 19th Bombardment Group

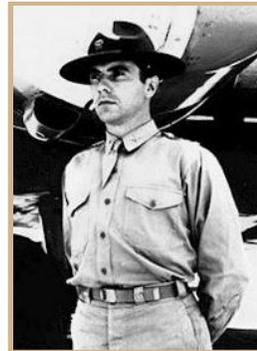
Aircraft/position: B-17/pilot

Place of action: Near Rabaul, New Britain

Date of action: Aug. 6-7, 1942

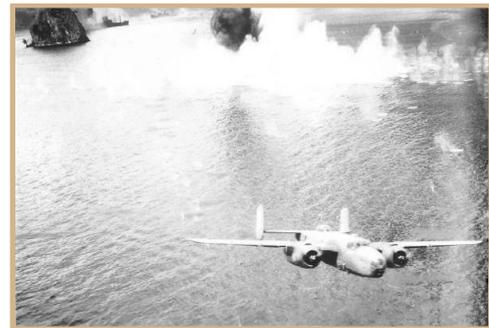
Born: April 1917, Plymouth, N.H.

Entered service at: Plymouth, N.H.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy on 6-7 August 1942. When 1 engine of the bombardment airplane of which he was pilot failed during a bombing mission over New Guinea, Capt. Pease was forced to return to a base in Australia. Knowing that all available airplanes of his group were to participate the next day in an attack on an enemy-held airdrome near Rabaul, New Britain, although he was not scheduled to take part in this mission, Capt. Pease selected the most serviceable airplane at this base and prepared it for combat, knowing that it had been found and declared unserviceable for combat missions. With the members of his combat crew, who volunteered to accompany him, he rejoined his squadron at Port Moresby, New Guinea, at 1 a.m. on 7 August, after having flown almost continuously since early the preceding morning. With only 3 hours' rest, he took off with his squadron for the attack. Throughout the long flight to Rabaul, New Britain, he managed by skillful flying of his unserviceable airplane to maintain his position in the group. When the formation was intercepted by about 30 enemy fighter airplanes before reaching the target, Capt. Pease, on the wing which bore the brunt of the hostile attack, by gallant action and the accurate shooting by his crew, succeeded in destroying several Zeros before dropping his bombs on the hostile base as planned, this in spite of continuous enemy attacks. The fight with the enemy pursuit lasted 25 minutes until the group dived into cloud cover. After leaving the target, Capt. Pease's aircraft fell behind the balance of the group due to unknown difficulties as a result of the combat, and was unable to reach this cover before the enemy pursuit succeeded in igniting 1 of his bomb bay tanks. He was seen to drop the flaming tank. It is believed that Capt. Pease's airplane and crew were subsequently shot down in flames, as they did not return to their base. In voluntarily performing this mission Capt. Pease contributed materially to the success of the group, and displayed high devotion to duty, valor, and complete contempt for personal danger. His undaunted bravery has been a great inspiration to the officers and men of his unit.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Rabaul on a Wing and a Prayer](#)

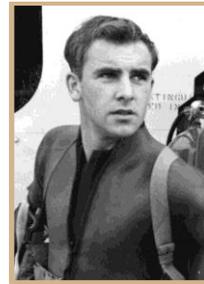
---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## A1C William H. Pitsenbarger

Unit: 38th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron  
Aircraft/position: HH-43/pararescue jumper  
Place of action: Near Cam My, Republic of Vietnam  
Date of action: April 11, 1966  
Born: July 8, 1944, Piqua, Ohio  
Entered service at: Piqua, Ohio



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Airman First Class Pitsenbarger distinguished himself by extreme valor on 11 April 1966 near Cam My, Republic of Vietnam, while assigned as a Pararescue Crew Member, Detachment 6, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron. On that date, Airman Pitsenbarger was aboard a rescue helicopter responding to a call for evacuation of casualties incurred in an ongoing firefight between elements of the United States Army's 1st Infantry Division and a sizeable enemy force approximately 35 miles east of Saigon. With complete disregard for personal safety, Airman Pitsenbarger volunteered to ride a hoist more than one hundred feet through the jungle, to the ground. On the ground, he organized and coordinated rescue efforts, cared for the wounded, prepared casualties for evacuation, and insured that the recovery operation continued in a smooth and orderly fashion. Through his personal efforts, the evacuation of the wounded was greatly expedited. As each of the nine casualties evacuated that day was recovered, Airman Pitsenbarger refused evacuation in order to get more wounded soldiers to safety. After several pick-ups, one of the two rescue helicopters involved in the evacuation was struck by heavy enemy ground fire and was forced to leave the scene for an emergency landing. Airman Pitsenbarger stayed behind on the ground to perform medical duties. Shortly thereafter, the area came under sniper and mortar fire. During a subsequent attempt to evacuate the site, American forces came under heavy assault by a large Viet Cong force. When the enemy launched the assault, the evacuation was called off and Airman Pitsenbarger took up arms with the besieged infantrymen. He courageously resisted the enemy, braving intense gunfire to gather and distribute vital ammunition to American defenders. As the battle raged on, he repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire to care for the wounded, pull them out of the line of fire, and return fire whenever he could, during which time he was wounded three times. Despite his wounds, he valiantly fought on, simultaneously treating as many wounded as possible. In the vicious fighting that followed, the American forces suffered 80 percent casualties as their perimeter was breached, and Airman Pitsenbarger was fatally wounded. Airman Pitsenbarger exposed himself to almost certain death by staying on the ground, and perished while saving the lives of wounded infantrymen. His bravery and determination exemplify the highest professional standards and traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Air Force.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: "That Others May Live"](#)

[Pitsenbarger, Medal of Honor](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## 1st Lt. Donald D. Pucket

Unit: 98th Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-24/pilot

Place of action: Ploesti Raid, Rumania

Date of action: July 9, 1944

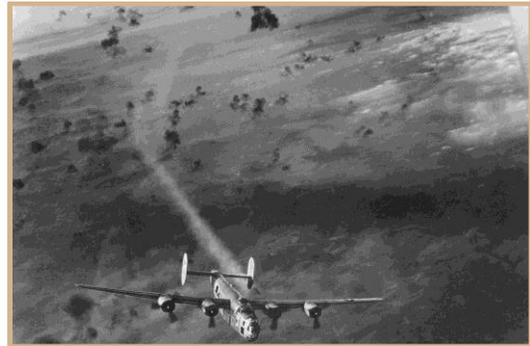
Born: December 1915, Longmont, Colo.

Entered service at: Boulder, Colo.



### Citation

He took part in a highly effective attack against vital oil installation in Ploesti, Rumania, on 9 July 1944. Just after "bombs away," the plane received heavy and direct hits from antiaircraft fire. One crewmember was instantly killed and 6 others severely wounded. The airplane was badly damaged, 2 were knocked out, the control cables cut, the oxygen system on fire, and the bomb bay flooded with gas and hydraulic fluid. Regaining control of his crippled plane, 1st Lt. Pucket turned its direction over to the copilot. He calmed the crew, administered first aid, and surveyed the damage. Finding the bomb bay doors jammed, he used the hand crank to open them to allow the gas to escape. He jettisoned all guns and equipment but the plane continued to lose altitude rapidly. Realizing that it would be impossible to reach friendly territory he ordered the crew to abandon ship. Three of the crew, uncontrollable from fright or shock, would not leave. 1st Lt. Pucket urged the others to jump. Ignoring their entreaties to follow, he refused to abandon the 3 hysterical men and was last seen fighting to regain control of the plane. A few moments later the flaming bomber crashed on a mountainside. 1st Lt. Pucket, unhesitatingly and with supreme sacrifice, gave his life in his courageous attempt to save the lives of 3 others.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Of Tradition and Valor](#)

[The Forgotten Fifteenth](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## 1st Lt. Edward V. Rickenbacker

Unit: 94th Aero Squadron

Aircraft/position: Spad/pilot

Place of action: Near Billy, France

Date of action: Sept. 25, 1918

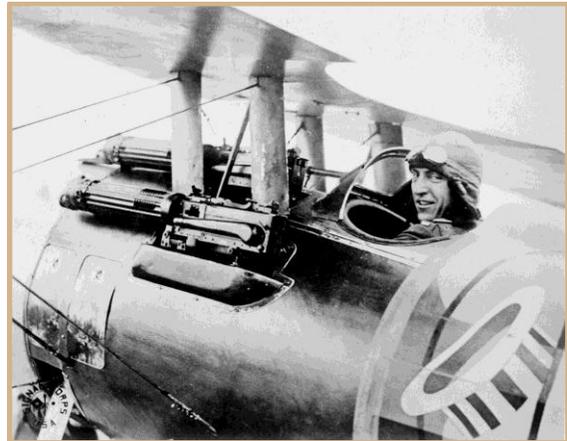
Born: Oct. 8, 1890, Columbus, Ohio

Entered service at: Columbus, Ohio



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy near Billy, France, 25 September 1918. While on a voluntary patrol over the lines, 1st Lt. Rickenbacker attacked 7 enemy planes (5 type Fokker, protecting two type Halberstadt). Disregarding the odds against him, he dived on them and shot down one of the Fokkers out of control. He then attacked one of the Halberstadts and sent it down also.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: Courage, Heroism, Valor](#)

[Rickenbacker](#)

[Rickenbacker—America's Ace of Aces](#)

[Over There](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## 2nd Lt. Joseph R. Sarnoski

Unit: 43rd Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-17/bombardier

Place of action: Over Buka Area, Solomon Islands

Date of action: June 16, 1943

Born: Jan. 30, 1915, Simpson, Pa.

Entered service at: Simpson, Pa.



*Commissioned, May 1943*

### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty. On 16 June 1943, 2d Lt. Sarnoski volunteered as bombardier of a crew on an important photographic mapping mission covering the heavily defended Buka area, Solomon Islands. When the mission was nearly completed, about 20 enemy fighters intercepted. At the nose guns, 2d Lt. Sarnoski fought off the first attackers, making it possible for the pilot to finish the plotted course. When a coordinated frontal attack by the enemy extensively damaged his bomber, and seriously injured 5 of the crew, 2d Lt. Sarnoski, though wounded, continued firing and shot down 2 enemy planes. A 20-millimeter shell which burst in the nose of the bomber knocked him into the catwalk under the cockpit. With indomitable fighting spirit, he crawled back to his post and kept on firing until he collapsed on his guns. 2d Lt. Sarnoski by resolute defense of his aircraft at the price of his life, made possible the completion of a vitally important mission.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Battle Over Bougainville](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Maj. Louis J. Seville

Unit: 67th Fighter-Bomber Squadron

Aircraft/position: F-51/pilot

Place of action: Near Hanchang, Korea

Date of action: Aug. 5, 1950

Born: November 1915, Harbor Beach, Mich.

Entered service at: Chicago, Ill.



### Citation

Maj. Seville distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. During an attack on a camouflaged area containing a concentration of enemy troops, artillery, and armored vehicles, Maj. Seville's F-51 aircraft was severely damaged by antiaircraft fire. Although fully cognizant of the short period he could remain airborne, he deliberately ignored the possibility of survival by abandoning the aircraft or by crash landing, and continued his attack against the enemy forces threatening the security of friendly ground troops. In his determination to inflict maximum damage upon the enemy, Maj. Seville again exposed himself to the intense fire of enemy gun batteries and dived on the target to his death. The superior leadership, daring, and selfless devotion to duty which he displayed in the execution of an extremely dangerous mission were an inspiration to both his subordinates and superiors and reflect the highest credit upon himself, the U.S. Air Force, and the armed forces of the United Nations.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Epitaph for a Valiant Airman](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Maj. William A. Shomo

Unit: 82nd Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron

Aircraft/position: P-51/pilot

Place of action: Over Luzon, Philippine Islands

Date of action: Jan. 11, 1945

Born: May 30, 1918, Jeannette, Pa.

Entered service at: Westmoreland County, Pa.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Maj. Shomo was lead pilot of a flight of 2 fighter planes charged with an armed photographic and strafing mission against the Aparri and Laoag airdromes. While en route to the objective, he observed an enemy twin engine bomber, protected by 12 fighters, flying about 2,500 feet above him and in the opposite direction. Although the odds were 13 to 2, Maj. Shomo immediately ordered an attack. Accompanied by his wingman he closed on the enemy formation in a climbing turn and scored hits on the leading plane of the third element, which exploded in midair. Maj. Shomo then attacked the second element from the left side of the formation and shot another fighter down in flames. When the enemy formed for Counterattack, Maj. Shomo moved to the other side of the formation and hit a third fighter which exploded and fell. Diving below the bomber he put a burst into its underside and it crashed and burned. Pulling up from this pass he encountered a fifth plane firing head on and destroyed it. He next dived upon the first element and shot down the lead plane; then diving to 300 feet in pursuit of another fighter he caught it with his initial burst and it crashed in flames. During this action his wingman had shot down 3 planes, while the 3 remaining enemy fighters had fled into a cloudbank and escaped. Maj. Shomo's extraordinary gallantry and intrepidity in attacking such a far superior force and destroying 7 enemy aircraft in one action is unparalleled in the southwest Pacific area.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Instant Ace](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Capt. Lance P. Sijan

Unit: 4th Allied POW Wing

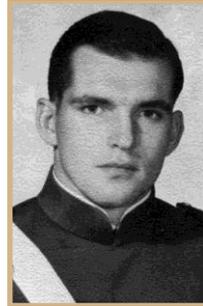
Aircraft/position: F-4C/pilot

Place of action: North Vietnam

Date of action: Nov. 9, 1967

Born: April 13, 1942, Milwaukee, Wis.

Entered service at: Milwaukee, Wis.



### Citation

While on a flight over North Vietnam, Capt. Sijan ejected from his disabled aircraft and successfully evaded capture for more than 6 weeks. During this time, he was seriously injured and suffered from shock and extreme weight loss due to lack of food. After being captured by North Vietnamese soldiers, Capt. Sijan was taken to a holding point for subsequent transfer to a prisoner of war camp. In his emaciated and crippled condition, he overpowered 1 of his guards and crawled into the jungle, only to be recaptured after several hours. He was then transferred to another prison camp where he was kept in solitary confinement and interrogated at length. During interrogation, he was severely tortured; however, he did not divulge any information to his captors. Capt. Sijan lapsed into delirium and was placed in the care of another prisoner. During his intermittent periods of consciousness until his death, he never complained of his physical condition and, on several occasions, spoke of future escape attempts. Capt. Sijan's extraordinary heroism and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty at the cost of his life are in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Air Force and reflect great credit upon himself and the U.S. Armed Forces.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Lance Sijan's Incredible Journey](#)

[The Courage of Lance Sijan](#)

[Honor Bound](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Sgt. Maynard H. "Snuffy" Smith

Unit: 423rd Bombardment Squadron

Aircraft/position: B-17/ball-turret gunner

Place of action: Over Europe

Date of action: May 1, 1943

Born: May 19, 1911, Cairo Mich.

Entered service at: Cairo, Mich.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action above and beyond the call of duty. The aircraft of which Sgt. Smith was a gunner was subjected to intense enemy antiaircraft fire and determined fighter airplane attacks while returning from a mission over enemy-occupied continental Europe on 1 May 1943. The airplane was hit several times by antiaircraft fire and cannon shells of the fighter airplanes, 2 of the crew were seriously wounded, the aircraft's oxygen system shot out, and several vital control cables severed when intense fires were ignited simultaneously in the radio compartment and waist sections. The situation became so acute that 3 of the crew bailed out into the comparative safety of the sea. Sgt. Smith, then on his first combat mission, elected to fight the fire by himself, administered first aid to the wounded tail gunner, manned the waist guns, and fought the intense flames alternately. The escaping oxygen fanned the fire to such intense heat that the ammunition in the radio compartment began to explode, the radio, gun mount, and camera were melted, and the compartment completely gutted. Sgt. Smith threw the exploding ammunition overboard, fought the fire until all the firefighting aids were exhausted, manned the workable guns until the enemy fighters were driven away, further administered first aid to his wounded comrade, and then by wrapping himself in protecting cloth, completely extinguished the fire by hand. This soldier's gallantry in action, undaunted bravery, and loyalty to his aircraft and fellow crewmembers, without regard for his own personal safety, is an inspiration to the U.S. Armed Forces.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: First of the Few](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Maj. Leo K. Thorsness

Unit: 357th Tactical Fighter Squadron

Aircraft/position: F-105G/pilot

Place of action: Over North Vietnam

Date of action: April 19, 1967

Born: Feb. 14, 1932, Walnut Grove, Minn.

Entered service at: Walnut Grove, Minn.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. As pilot of an F-105 aircraft, Lt. Col. Thorsness was on a surface-to-air missile suppression mission over North Vietnam. Lt. Col. Thorsness and his wingman attacked and silenced a surface-to-air missile site with air-to-ground missiles, and then destroyed a second surface-to-air missile site with bombs. In tile attack on the second missile site, Lt. Col. Thorsness' wingman was shot down by intensive antiaircraft fire, and the 2 crewmembers abandoned their aircraft. Lt. Col. Thorsness circled the descending parachutes to keep the crewmembers in sight and relay their position to the Search and Rescue Center. During this maneuver, a MIG-17 was sighted in the area. Lt. Col. Thorsness immediately initiated an attack and destroyed the MIG. Because his aircraft was low on fuel, he was forced to depart the area in search of a tanker. Upon being advised that 2 helicopters were orbiting over the downed crew's position and that there were hostile MIGs in the area posing a serious threat to the helicopters, Lt. Col. Thorsness, despite his low fuel condition, decided to return alone through a hostile environment of surface-to-air missile and antiaircraft defenses to the downed crew's position. As he approached the area, he spotted 4 MIG-17 aircraft and immediately initiated an attack on the MIGs, damaging 1 and driving the others away from the rescue scene. When it became apparent that an aircraft in the area was critically low on fuel and the crew would have to abandon the aircraft unless they could reach a tanker, Lt. Col. Thorsness, although critically short on fuel himself, helped to avert further possible loss of life and a friendly aircraft by recovering at a forward operating base, thus allowing the aircraft in emergency fuel condition to refuel safely. Lt. Col. Thorsness' extraordinary heroism, self-sacrifice, and personal bravery involving conspicuous risk of life were in the highest traditions of the military service, and have reflected great credit upon himself and the U.S. Air Force.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Wild, Wild Weasel](#)

[Full Day](#)

[Take It Down! The Wild Weasels in Vietnam](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## 2nd Lt. Walter E. Truemper

Unit: 351st Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-17/navigator

Place of action: Over Europe

Date of action: Feb. 20, 1944

Born: Oct. 31, 1918, Aurora, Ill.

Entered service at: Aurora, Ill.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy in connection with a bombing mission over enemy-occupied Europe on 20 February 1944. The aircraft on which 2d Lt. Truemper was serving as navigator was attacked by a squadron of enemy fighters with the result that the copilot was killed outright, the pilot wounded and rendered unconscious, the radio operator wounded and the plane severely damaged. Nevertheless, 2d Lt. Truemper and other members of the crew managed to right the plane and fly it back to their home station, where they contacted the control tower and reported the situation. 2d Lt. Truemper and the engineer volunteered to attempt to land the plane. Other members of the crew were ordered to jump, leaving 2d Lt. Truemper and the engineer aboard. After observing the distressed aircraft from another plane, 2d Lt. Truemper's commanding officer decided the damaged plane could not be landed by the inexperienced crew and ordered them to abandon it and parachute to safety. Demonstrating unsurpassed courage and heroism, 2d Lt. Truemper and the engineer replied that the pilot was still alive but could not be moved and that they would not desert him. They were then told to attempt a landing. After 2 unsuccessful efforts their plane crashed into an open field in a third attempt to land. 2d Lt. Truemper, the engineer, and the wounded pilot were killed.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: A Point of Honor](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Lt. Col. Leon R. Vance Jr.

Unit: 489th Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-24/pilot

Place of action: Over Wimereaux, France

Date of action: June 5, 1944

Born: Aug. 11, 1916, Enid, Okla.

Entered service at: Garden City, N.Y.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty on 5 June 1944, when he led a Heavy Bombardment Group, in an attack against defended enemy coastal positions in the vicinity of Wimereaux, France. Approaching the target, his aircraft was hit repeatedly by anti-aircraft fire which seriously crippled the ship, killed the pilot, and wounded several members of the crew, including Lt. Col. Vance, whose right foot was practically severed. In spite of his injury, and with 3 engines lost to the flak, he led his formation over the target, bombing it successfully. After applying a tourniquet to his leg with the aid of the radar operator, Lt. Col. Vance, realizing that the ship was approaching a stall altitude with the 1 remaining engine failing, struggled to a semi-upright position beside the copilot and took over control of the ship. Cutting the power and feathering the last engine he put the aircraft in glide sufficiently steep to maintain his airspeed. Gradually losing altitude, he at last reached the English coast, whereupon he ordered all members of the crew to bail out as he knew they would all safely make land. But he received a message over the interphone system which led him to believe 1 of the crewmembers was unable to jump due to injuries; so he made the decision to ditch the ship in the channel, thereby giving this man a chance for life. To add further to the danger of ditching the ship in his crippled condition, there was a 500-pound bomb hung up in the bomb bay. Unable to climb into the seat vacated by the copilot, since his foot, hanging on to his leg by a few tendons, had become lodged behind the copilot's seat, he nevertheless made a successful ditching while lying on the floor using only aileron and elevators for control and the side window of the cockpit for visual reference. On coming to rest in the water the aircraft commenced to sink rapidly with Lt. Col. Vance pinned in the cockpit by the upper turret which had crashed in during the landing. As it was settling beneath the waves an explosion occurred which threw Lt. Col. Vance clear of the wreckage. After clinging to a piece of floating wreckage until he could muster enough strength to inflate his life vest he began searching for the crewmember whom he believed to be aboard. Failing to find anyone he began swimming and was found approximately 50 minutes later by an Air-Sea Rescue craft. By his extraordinary flying skill and gallant leadership, despite his grave injury, Lt. Col. Vance led his formation to a successful bombing of the assigned target and returned the crew to a point where they could bail out with safety. His gallant and valorous decision to ditch the aircraft in order to give the crewmember he believed to be aboard a chance for life exemplifies the highest traditions of the U.S. Armed Forces.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: The Iron Hand of Fate](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## TSgt. Forrest T. Vosler

Unit: 303rd Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-17/radio operator-gunner

Place of action: Over Bremen, Germany

Date of action: Dec. 20, 1943

Born: July 29, 1923, Lyndonville, N.Y.

Entered service at: Rochester, N.Y.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry in action against the enemy above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a radio operator-air gunner on a heavy bombardment aircraft in a mission over Bremen, Germany, on 20 December 1943. After bombing the target, the aircraft in which T/Sgt. Vosler was serving was severely damaged by anti-aircraft fire, forced out of formation, and immediately subjected to repeated vicious attacks by enemy fighters. Early in the engagement a 20-mm. cannon shell exploded in the radio compartment, painfully wounding T/Sgt. Vosler in the legs and thighs. At about the same time a direct hit on the tail of the ship seriously wounded the tail gunner and rendered the tail guns inoperative. Realizing the great need for firepower in protecting the vulnerable tail of the ship, T/Sgt. Vosler, with grim determination, kept up a steady stream of deadly fire. Shortly thereafter another 20-mm. enemy shell exploded, wounding T/Sgt. Vosler in the chest and about the face. Pieces of metal lodged in both eyes, impairing his vision to such an extent that he could only distinguish blurred shapes. Displaying remarkable tenacity and courage, he kept firing his guns and declined to take first-aid treatment. The radio equipment had been rendered inoperative during the battle, and when the pilot announced that he would have to ditch, although unable to see and working entirely by touch, T/Sgt. Vosler finally got the set operating and sent out distress signals despite several lapses into unconsciousness. When the ship ditched, T/Sgt. Vosler managed to get out on the wing by himself and hold the wounded tail gunner from slipping off until the other crewmembers could help them into the dinghy. T/Sgt. Vosler's actions on this occasion were an inspiration to all serving with him. The extraordinary courage, coolness, and skill he displayed in the face of great odds, when handicapped by injuries that would have incapacitated the average crewmember, were outstanding.



Also see *AIR FORCE Magazine* articles

[Valor: The Right Touch](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)

## Brig. Gen. Kenneth N. Walker

Unit: V Bomber Command

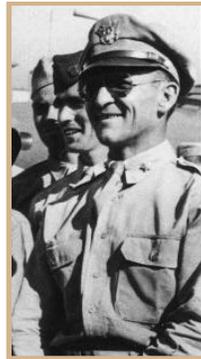
Aircraft/position: B-17/pilot

Place of action: Rabaul, New Britain

Date of action: Jan. 5, 1943

Born: July 1898, Cerrillos, N. M.

Entered service at: Colorado



### Citation

For conspicuous leadership above and beyond the call of duty involving personal valor and intrepidity at an extreme hazard to life. As commander of the 5th Bomber Command during the period from 5 September 1942, to 5 January 1943, Brig. Gen. Walker repeatedly accompanied his units on bombing missions deep into enemy-held territory. From the lessons personally gained under combat conditions, he developed a highly efficient technique for bombing when opposed by enemy fighter airplanes and by antiaircraft fire. On 5 January 1943, in the face of extremely heavy antiaircraft fire and determined opposition by enemy fighters, he led an effective daylight bombing attack against shipping in the harbor at Rabaul, New Britain, which resulted in direct hits on 9 enemy vessels. During this action his airplane was disabled and forced down by the attack of an overwhelming number of enemy fighters.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Courage and Conviction](#)

[The Pioneer Plan for Air War](#)

[The Prescient Planners of AWPD-1](#)

[The Tactical School](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Capt. John S. Walmsley Jr.

Unit: 8th Bombardment Squadron

Aircraft/position: B-26/pilot

Place of action: Near Yangdok, Korea

Date of action: Sept. 14, 1951

Born: Jan. 7, 1920, Baltimore, Md.

Entered service at: Baltimore, Md.



### Citation

Capt. Walmsley, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. While flying a B-26 aircraft on a night combat mission with the objective of developing new tactics, Capt. Walmsley sighted an enemy supply train which had been assigned top priority as a target of opportunity. He immediately attacked, producing a strike which disabled the train, and, when his ammunition was expended, radioed for friendly aircraft in the area to complete destruction of the target. Employing the searchlight mounted on his aircraft, he guided another B-26 aircraft to the target area, meanwhile constantly exposing himself to enemy fire. Directing an incoming B-26 pilot, he twice boldly aligned himself with the target, his searchlight illuminating the area, in a determined effort to give the attacking aircraft full visibility. As the friendly aircraft prepared for the attack, Capt. Walmsley descended into the valley in a low level run over the target with searchlight blazing, selflessly exposing himself to vicious enemy antiaircraft fire. In his determination to inflict maximum damage on the enemy, he refused to employ evasive tactics and valiantly pressed forward straight through an intense barrage, thus insuring complete destruction of the enemy's vitally needed war cargo. While he courageously pressed his attack Capt. Walmsley's plane was hit and crashed into the surrounding mountains, exploding upon impact. His heroic initiative and daring aggressiveness in completing this important mission in the face of overwhelming opposition and at the risk of his life, reflects the highest credit upon himself and the U.S. Air Force.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Experiment at Yangdok](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Capt. Hilliard A. Wilbanks

Unit: 21st Air Support Squadron

Aircraft/position: O-1E/forward air controller/pilot

Place of action: Near Dalat, Republic of Vietnam

Date of action: Feb. 24, 1967

Born: July 26, 1933, Cornelia, Ga.

Entered service at: Atlanta, Ga.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. As a forward air controller Capt. Wilbanks was pilot of an unarmed, light aircraft flying visual reconnaissance ahead of a South Vietnam Army Ranger Battalion. His intensive search revealed a well-concealed and numerically superior hostile force poised to ambush the advancing rangers. The Viet Cong, realizing that Capt. Wilbanks' discovery had compromised their position and ability to launch a surprise attack, immediately fired on the small aircraft with all available firepower. The enemy then began advancing against the exposed forward elements of the ranger force which were pinned down by devastating fire. Capt. Wilbanks recognized that close support aircraft could not arrive in time to enable the rangers to withstand the advancing enemy, onslaught. With full knowledge of the limitations of his unarmed, unarmored, light reconnaissance aircraft, and the great danger imposed by the enemy's vast firepower, he unhesitatingly assumed a covering, close support role. Flying through a hail of withering fire at treetop level, Capt. Wilbanks passed directly over the advancing enemy and inflicted many casualties by firing his rifle out of the side window of his aircraft. Despite increasingly intense anti-aircraft fire, Capt. Wilbanks continued to completely disregard his own safety and made repeated low passes over the enemy to divert their fire away from the rangers. His daring tactics successfully interrupted the enemy advance, allowing the rangers to withdraw to safety from their perilous position. During his final courageous attack to protect the withdrawing forces, Capt. Wilbanks was mortally wounded and his bullet-riddled aircraft crashed between the opposing forces. Capt. Wilbanks' magnificent action saved numerous friendly personnel from certain injury or death. His unparalleled concern for his fellow man and his extraordinary heroism were in the highest traditions of the military service, and have reflected great credit upon himself and the U.S. Air Force.



*"FAC Tea Party"/Stewart Wavell-Smith (Air Force Art Collection Image)*

*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: The Tiger and the Hummingbird](#)

[Bird Dog's Last Battle](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Maj. Raymond H. Wilkins

Unit: 3rd Bombardment Group

Aircraft/position: B-25/pilot

Place of action: Near Rabaul, New Britain

Date of action: Nov. 2, 1943

Born: Sept. 28, 1917, Portsmouth, Va.

Entered service at: Portsmouth, Va.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy near Rabaul, New Britain, on 2 November 1943. Leading his squadron in an attack on shipping in Simpson Harbor, during which intense antiaircraft fire was expected, Maj. Wilkins briefed his squadron so that his airplane would be in the position of greatest risk. His squadron was the last of 3 in the group to enter the target area. Smoke from bombs dropped by preceding aircraft necessitated a last-second revision of tactics on his part, which still enabled his squadron to strike vital shipping targets, but forced it to approach through concentrated fire, and increased the danger of Maj. Wilkins' left flank position. His airplane was hit almost immediately, the right wing damaged, and control rendered extremely difficult. Although he could have withdrawn, he held fast and led his squadron into the attack. He strafed a group of small harbor vessels, and then, at low level, attacked an enemy destroyer. His 1,000 pound bomb struck squarely amidships, causing the vessel to explode. Although antiaircraft fire from this vessel had seriously damaged his left vertical stabilizer, he refused to deviate from the course. From below-masthead height he attacked a transport of some 9,000 tons, scoring a hit which engulfed the ship in flames. Bombs expended, he began to withdraw his squadron. A heavy cruiser barred the path. Unhesitatingly, to neutralize the cruiser's guns and attract its fire, he went in for a strafing run. His damaged stabilizer was completely shot off. To avoid swerving into his wing planes he had to turn so as to expose the belly and full wing surfaces of his plane to the enemy fire; it caught and crumpled his left wing. Now past control, the bomber crashed into the sea. In the fierce engagement Maj. Wilkins destroyed 2 enemy vessels, and his heroic self-sacrifice made possible the safe withdrawal of the remaining planes of his squadron.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Raid on Rabaul](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Capt. Gerald O. Young

Unit: 37th Air Rescue and Recovery Squadron

Aircraft/position: HH-3E/pilot

Place of action: Khe Sanh, Vietnam

Date of action: Nov. 9, 1967

Born: May 9, 1930, Chicago, Ill.

Entered service at: Colorado Springs, Colo.



### Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Capt. Young distinguished himself while serving as a helicopter rescue crew commander. Capt. Young was flying escort for another helicopter attempting the night rescue of an Army ground reconnaissance team in imminent danger of death or capture. Previous attempts had resulted in the loss of 2 helicopters to hostile ground fire. The endangered team was positioned on the side of a steep slope which required unusual airmanship on the part of Capt. Young to effect pickup. Heavy automatic weapons fire from the surrounding enemy severely damaged 1 rescue helicopter, but it was able to extract 3 of the team. The commander of this aircraft recommended to Capt. Young that further rescue attempts be abandoned because it was not possible to suppress the concentrated fire from enemy automatic weapons. With full knowledge of the danger involved, and the fact that supporting helicopter gunships were low on fuel and ordnance, Capt. Young hovered under intense fire until the remaining survivors were aboard. As he maneuvered the aircraft for takeoff, the enemy appeared at point-blank range and raked the aircraft with automatic weapons fire. The aircraft crashed, inverted, and burst into flames. Capt. Young escaped through a window of the burning aircraft. Disregarding serious burns, Capt. Young aided one of the wounded men and attempted to lead the hostile forces away from his position. Later, despite intense pain from his burns, he declined to accept rescue because he had observed hostile forces setting up automatic weapons positions to entrap any rescue aircraft. For more than 17 hours he evaded the enemy until rescue aircraft could be brought into the area. Through his extraordinary heroism, aggressiveness, and concern for his fellow man, Capt. Young reflected the highest credit upon himself, the U.S. Air Force, and the Armed Forces of his country.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: A Hillside Near Khe Sanh](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*

## Maj. Jay Zeamer Jr.

Unit: 43rd Bombardment Group

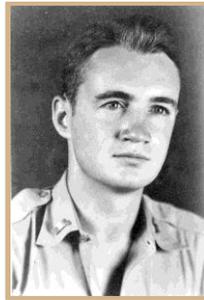
Aircraft/position: B-17/pilot

Place of action: Over Buka area, Solomon Islands

Date of action: June 16, 1943

Born: July 25, 1918, Carlisle, Pa.

Entered service at: Machias, Maine



### Citation

On 16 June 1943, Maj. Zeamer (then Capt.) volunteered as pilot of a bomber on an important photographic mapping mission covering the formidably defended area in the vicinity of Buka, Solomon Islands. While photographing the Buka airdrome, his crew observed about 20 enemy fighters on the field, many of them taking off. Despite the certainty of a dangerous attack by this strong force, Maj. Zeamer proceeded with his mapping run, even after the enemy attack began. In the ensuing engagement, Maj. Zeamer sustained gunshot wounds in both arms and legs, 1 leg being broken. Despite his injuries, he maneuvered the damaged plane so skillfully that his gunners were able to fight off the enemy during a running fight which lasted 40 minutes. The crew destroyed at least 5 hostile planes, of which Maj. Zeamer himself shot down 1. Although weak from loss of blood, he refused medical aid until the enemy had broken combat. He then turned over the controls, but continued to exercise command despite lapses into unconsciousness, and directed the flight to a base 580 miles away. In this voluntary action, Maj. Zeamer, with superb skill, resolution, and courage, accomplished a mission of great value.



*Also see AIR FORCE Magazine articles*

[Valor: Battle Over Bougainville](#)

---

### AIR FORCE MAGAZINE'S HEROES COLLECTION

*(Note: Citations have not been edited for style, grammar, or potential factual errors.)*