

Illinois National Guard Medal of Honor Recipients from Civil War to World War II

Written by PFC Jami Pritchard
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SPRINGFIELD, IL (03/24/2011)(readMedia)-- In 2007, March 25 was recognized as National Medal of Honor day. Every year since then it has been the official day that honors the servicemembers of the U.S. military who's actions of valor inspired generations and the nation.

While the day was made official only three years ago, the legacy of the Medal of Honor and the servicemembers who were awarded it span more than 150 years of Illinois history.

President Abraham Lincoln, a veteran of the Illinois Militia, signed a bill issuing the highest military decoration on July 12, 1862. He called it the Medal of Honor. The medal stands as a symbol of the bravery and selflessness individuals display in combat.

There are many aspects that link today's military to the military that existed during the Revolutionary War. The characteristics that remain in the Army today are the core values loyalty, duty, respect, selfless-service, honor, integrity and personal courage.

According to military regulation the Medal of Honor is awarded by the President in the name of Congress to a person in the U.S. military who distinguishes himself or herself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States. Military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a

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belligerent party.

The deed performed must have been one of personal bravery or self-sacrifice so conspicuous as to clearly distinguish the individual above his comrades and must have involved risk of life.

There are many examples in Illinois like 1st Sgt. Johannes S. Anderson of Finland, who entered service from Chicago, assigned the Illinois National Guard's Company B, 132nd Infantry, 33rd Division, and was awarded the Medal of Honor for actions at Consenvoye, France during World War I.

His citation reads "While his company was being held up by intense artillery and machinegun fire, First Sergeant. Anderson, without aid, voluntarily left the company and worked his way to the rear of the (machinegun) nest that was offering the most stubborn resistance. His advance was made through an open area and under constant hostile fire, but the mission was successfully accomplished, and he not only silenced the gun and captured it, but also brought back with him 23 prisoners."

Anderson was one of many heroes that served in the Illinois National Guard or Militia who received the medal for valor in the battlefield. His medal among many other artifacts can be seen at the Illinois State Military Museum in Springfield.

The Army regulation recognizes the incontestable proof of the performance of the service will be exacted and each recommendation for the award of this decoration will be considered on the standard of extraordinary merit.

All of the men who received the Medal of Honor have done just that. The Medal of Honor is presented to those who make a major sacrifice and some who make the ultimate sacrifice. Those who were killed in action were awarded the medal posthumously.

As President George W. Bush said regarding the Medal of Honor, "Citations are also written in the most simple of language, needing no embellishment or techniques of rhetoric. They record places and names and events that describe themselves. The medal itself bears only one word

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and needs only one, valor."

Illinois has produced many Medal of Honor recipients beginning with the Civil War.