



# AN ISSUE OF THE DAY

## On Behalf of a Grateful Nation



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**I LOVE WATCHING A PARADE;** especially a military parade. One of my favorite parts is eyeing the reviewing stand with Officers and Staff NCO's in their dress uniforms adorned with medals and ribbons. There are a host of medals and ribbons that are awarded for many different achievements:

### General Service Medals:

The **National Defense Service Medal** is a service medal of the United States Armed Forces established by **President Dwight D. Eisenhower** in 1953.

The National Defense Service Medal (NDSM) is awarded to anyone who served or serves on active duty in the United States military during **the Korean War** (June 27, 1950- July 27, 1954); **Vietnam War** (January 1, 1961- August 14, 1974); **Persian Gulf War** (August 2, 1990- November 30, 1995) and **Global War on Terrorism** (September 11, 2001- Present day).

Currently, the National Defense Service Medal is the oldest service medal in use by the United States Armed Forces. I went through boot camp in 1967 and was therefore eligible to wear the National Defense Service Medal; however, we affectionately called this award the Fire Watch Badge. I'm not sure of why the medal earned such a distinction, but my guess would be that except for constantly drilling, getting your butt chewed out and qualifying on the firing range, the only other thing that we did of significance during our Boot Camp experience was to stand fire watch at least one night.

### Campaign Medals:

The **Vietnam Service Medal** is a military award of the United States Armed Forces established on 8 July 1965 by order of **President Lyndon B. Johnson**. The medal is awarded to recognize service during the Vietnam War by all members of the United

States Armed Forces provided they meet the award requirements.

### Personal Decorations:

The **Medal of Honor** is the United States of America's highest and most prestigious personal military decoration that may be awarded to recognize U.S. military service members who distinguished themselves by acts of valor. The medal is normally awarded by the President of the United States in the name of the U.S. Congress.

The Medal of Honor is the oldest continuously issued combat decoration of the United States armed forces.



The **Medal of Honor** was created as a Navy version in 1861 named the "**Medal of Valor**" and an Army version of the medal named the "Medal of Honor" was established in 1862 to give recognition to men who distinguished themselves "conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity" in combat with an enemy of the United States. Because the medal is presented "in the name of Congress", it is often referred to as the "**Congressional Medal of Honor**". The President normally presents the Medal of Honor at a formal ceremony in Washington, D.C. which is intended to represent the gratitude of the American people, with posthumous presentations made to the primary next of kin.

The **Bronze Star Medal**, unofficially the Bronze Star, is a United States decoration awarded to members of the United States Armed Forces for heroic achievement,

heroic service, meritorious achievement, or meritorious service in a combat zone.

My first encounter with a Bronze Star recipient was in Vietnam; his name was Arnold and he was a skinny red-headed Midwesterner. And when we were not in the bush he was the partyingest little dude that you ever saw. When his tour was up and just before his chopper flight to Da Nang I went to his hooch to say our goodbyes and offer well wishes.



As we sat and chatted he gleefully showed me his orders and said, *“Look Hatch, my ticket back to the world; and look at this Brother...”* and what he showed me was a Medal of Honor citation. So I said, *“Arnold, how did you get this?”* and he laughed and said, *“... 'cause I'm a hero, man.”* And I replied, *“Arnold, when you get back to The World you can tell everybody that, but now... this is Hatch that you're talking to...now give it up.”* So he proceeded to tell me the story.

The **Tet Offensive of 1968** was becoming a clean-up operation; **Huế** was being reclaimed block by block; building by building. As dusk approached, Arnold's platoon was ordered to clear out a 4-story hospital and set-in for the night. Following orders, the platoon set about and cleared out the first three floors without incident. Now a note: when you're on a major operation you always carry extra ammo, grenades and bandoleers of M-60 machine gun ammo. That said, you take every opportunity to unload some of that ammo.

Now having successfully cleared three of the four floors the squad leader decided with darkness approaching they would set-in and settle down on the third floor and rid themselves of some of the M-60 ammo; so he decided to have the machine-gunner shoot up the ceiling before setting in.

The next morning, the squad leader ordered clearing up to the 4th floor and to their amazement they found a Viet Cong machine gun nest with the team chained to the weapon...dead from the machine gun fire from the previous evening. I don't know what the after-action report read but it resulted in a Bronze Star citation.



The **Purple Heart** is a United States military decoration awarded in the name of the President to those wounded or killed while serving, on or after April 5, 1917, with the U.S. military. With its forerunner, the **Badge of Military Merit**, which took the form of a heart made of purple cloth, the Purple Heart is the oldest military award still given to U.S. military members.

When a member of the United States Armed Forces enlists, they take an oath to *“... support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic...”* When a service member is issued a decoration, especially a personal decoration, it is an affirmation of honoring that oath. The ceremony should be a moment of gratitude from a grateful nation and not one of congratulatory achievement.



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