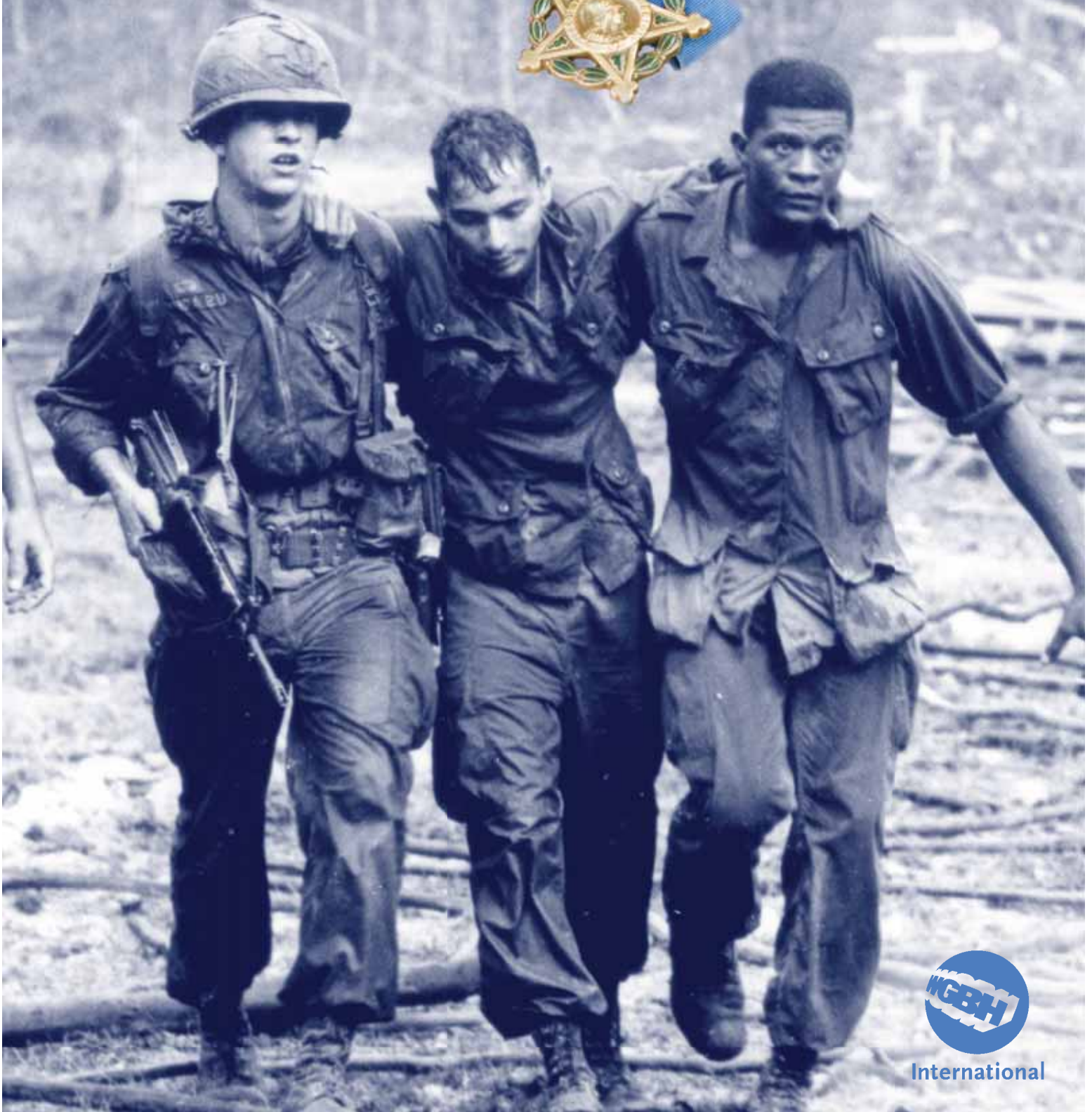


MEDAL of HONOR

1 x 60



International

MEDAL of HONOR

1 x 60

CONTACT

Tom Koch, Director
WGBH International
One Guest Street
Boston, Ma 02135 USA

TEL 617-300-3893
FAX 617-779-7900

tom_koch@wgbh.org
wgbhinternational.org

In *Medal of Honor*, powerful stories of those who have received the highest American military honor beg fundamental questions about the nature of the human spirit and what it means to have the courage of a hero. What makes a person face almost certain death in order to save the lives of others? And is every person, if put into the same situation, capable of such virtues? Can we all be heroes?

The film traces the history of the Medal of Honor in reverse, beginning with a profile of the first soldier to receive a Medal of Honor in the Iraq war, back to its creation during the Civil War. Among those profiled in the film are a Holocaust survivor who single-handedly defended a hill from an advancing enemy force in the Korean War; an injured Navy SEAL who saved the lives of two comrades by swimming for two hours to bring them to safety; and a Marine at Iwo Jima who alone silenced seven Japanese bunkers with a flamethrower to clear a path for his demoralized company.

Medal of Honor reveals the story of how the medal was introduced during the Civil War to boost morale and to attract soldiers to re-enlist and not desert. In 1863, a soldier named William Harvey Carney dropped his rifle and picked up the US flag when the flag bearer in his company was shot. He was wounded in the battle but never dropped the flag. For his valor, Carney became the first African American to receive the Medal of Honor.

To date, only 3,473 Medals of Honor have been awarded. Has it become a medal one has to die to receive? Since Vietnam, just seven have been awarded, all posthumously—two for service in Somalia, one for service in Afghanistan and four for service in Iraq. Three of those were for falling on a hand grenade. Indeed, the classic reason cited for receiving a Medal of Honor is falling on a grenade to save the life of fellow soldiers.

Only one Medal of Honor has ever been awarded to a woman: Mary Edwards Walker, a Civil War doctor captured and imprisoned as a spy by the Confederates. Her medal was revoked post war, when the medal criteria were tightened: it could only be awarded to active duty soldiers in battle. Walker, however, refused to give it back. No Medals of Honor were awarded to African Americans or Asian Americans who served in the two world wars. In the 1990s, however, the military, after being pressured by Congress, began reviewing its records and eventually awarded Medals of Honor to eight African Americans and 22 Asian Americans. In 2001, it began reviewing battle records of Jewish veterans.

While all the Medal of Honor recipients interviewed in *Medal of Honor* respect the sacrifice and dedication to duty the Medal of Honor represents, not all of them respect the wars in which they were earned. Charles Liteky is one of only five Army chaplains to receive a Medal of Honor, which he did for risking his life to save others in a horrific battle in Vietnam. He is also the only person to return the medal. After years of anguish about his involvement in Vietnam, in 1986 he left his medal at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., as a protest against US military action against impoverished nations.

Medal of Honor explores the extraordinary, almost inconceivable acts of heroism for which the medal has been awarded, through intimate accounts of fear and the realities of surviving war, movingly told by the living recipients themselves.

0909005

CREDITS

Executive Producer: Ken Burns

Executive Producers for WETA: Dalton Delan and David S. Thompson

Producer, Director, Cinematographer: Roger Sherman

A co-production of Florentine Films/Sherman Pictures, WETA Washington, D.C., and The Washington Post

Photo Credit: Roger Sherman, Florentine Films



International