



JOHN ESSEBAGGER, JR.

ARMY — KOREA

"I walked my post in a military manner."

That is the quote by the senior picture of John Essebagger, Jr., in the 1946 Holland High School yearbook. A member of Company A, 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, Essebagger was a reservist who had been recalled into the Army in Sept. 1950 and arrived in Korea early in 1951. On Apr. 25, 1951, then Corporal Essebagger sacrificed his life in a heroic one-man stand on a Korean battlefield and posthumously received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The 22 year-old soldier walked into murderous gunfire to stall an attack by Communist troops, which allowed his buddies to withdraw in safety. Essebagger was credited with single-handedly inflicting heavy losses on the enemy and disrupting their advance before he fell near Popsudong, Korea, April 5, 1951. His company commander said the young hero accounted for an estimated 14 enemies killed and an untold number of wounded. His Medal of Honor citation concludes:

"His valorous conduct and devotion to duty reflected lasting glory upon himself and was in keeping with the noblest traditions of the infantry and the U.S. Army"

Essebagger, who grew up at 326 W 3rd Street, attended Washington Elementary School, Holland East Junior, and Holland High School, is buried in Pilgrim Home Cemetery.

*Want to learn more
about the Congressional
Medal of Honor and its
recipients?*

There are many great resources available to learn more about the Medal of Honor recipients. If interested, these sites are a good place to start.

The Congressional Medal of Honor Society's website:

<http://www.cmoahs.org/>

and The Medal of Honor Foundation's website:

<http://www.themedalofhonor.com/>

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LEST WE FORGET...

HOLLAND'S CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

The Medal of Honor is the most prestigious military decoration that can be awarded to U.S. military personnel who have distinguished themselves by acts of valor. Generally, the Medal of Honor is presented by the President of the United States, on behalf of Congress.

The Medal of Honor began in the U.S. Navy in 1861, originally named as the Medal of Valor. In 1862 the Army established the Medal of Honor, and the Air Force in 1965—18 years after it was established as a separate military branch from the Army.

Holland Michigan has been home to four Medal of Honor recipients; one of only two cities in the country in which this is the case.



PAUL RONALD LAMBERS

ARMY — VIETNAM

Staff Sgt. Paul Ronald Lambers, of Holland MI received the Congressional Medal of Honor Nov. 24, 1969 from President Richard Nixon, as his mother Jeanette looked on.

Lambers was a member of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division in Tay Ninh province when the unit was attacked on Aug. 20, 1968 by a Viet Cong battalion. He took over when the platoon leader was seriously wounded.

During the Viet Cong onslaught, Sgt. Lambers left his covered position and secured the platoon radio, directing the defense from the command post. When the radio became inoperable, he crossed the fire-swept position to the recoilless rifle. As the 5 hour battle raged on, he repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire. He redistributed ammunition and cared for wounded comrades, moving them to sheltered positions. His Medal of Honor citation reads:

"Lambers' superb leadership, professional skill and magnificent courage saved the lives of his comrades, resulted in the virtual annihilation of a vastly superior enemy force and was largely instrumental in thwarting an enemy offensive against Tay Ninh City."

A 1960 Holland Christian High School graduate, Lambers graduated from Calvin College in 1965. He attended the University of Michigan before entering service in May 1967. He went to Vietnam five months later. On Dec. 1, 1970, Lambers was swept by high waves from the south breakwater at Holland Harbor. His body was never recovered.



MATT URBAN

ARMY — WWII

On July 19, 1980, almost 36 years after Lt. Col. Matt Urban had rejoined his troops at Normandy, President Jimmy Carter awarded the Col. With the Congressional Medal of Honor. At the time of the Medal of Honor presentation, Captain Matt Urban became America's most decorated WWII soldier, with 29 other combat medals for military service and medals of valor from France and Belgium.

Seven times wounded, Urban spent 20 months in front-line action in six major battle campaigns across Europe. After hearing of his units losses in Normandy, Urban voluntarily checked himself out of the hospital after sustaining leg injuries, and hitchhiked back to his company, taking command on July 15th. On August 2nd and 15th, Urban was again wounded, but refused evacuation. On September 2nd, he led the charge to establish a crossing-point on the Meusse River, near Heer Belgium. After being wounded above the neck, the 24 year-old again refused to be evacuated until his battalion had secured the point. His Medal of Honor citation read:

"Captain Urban's personal leadership, limitless bravery, and repeated extraordinary exposure to enemy fire served as an inspiration to his entire battalion"

Urban arrived in Holland in 1971 as a city recreation director. In 1989 he retired, and remained in Holland until his death in March 1995. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.



GORDON DOUGLAS YNTEMA

ARMY — VIETNAM

A Holland High School graduate, Gordon Yntema attended Washington Elementary, and E.E. Fell Junior High whilst a child. Sgt. Gordon Douglas fell Jan. 18, 1968 while engaged in a desperate fight with the Viet Cong at Thong Binh, Vietnam. For his heroic actions and courageous stand, Sgt. Yntema was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Hopelessly outnumbered but fighting valiantly, Yntema was ordered to withdraw from battle. After refusing to leave his comrades, he carried a wounded Vietnamese commander and a fatally wounded American Special Forces advisor to a small gully 50 feet away from enemy fire, in order to shield them from further injuries. Despite the fact that he was out of ammunition and surrounded by the Viet Cong, Yntema stood his ground and refused to surrender. Before being mortally wounded, he had clubbed approximately 15 Viet Cong with the end of his rifle as they were attempting to capture him. Yntema's Medal of Honor citation reads:

"Sergeant Yntema's personal bravery in the face of insurmountable odds, and supreme self-sacrifice were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect the utmost credit upon himself, the 1st Special Forces, and the United States Army."

Amvets Post was instituted on Jul. 20, 1982 in the sergeants honor, as well as the noncommissioned officers club at Fort Bragg, N.C., where he trained for three years from 1964-1967. Gordon Yntema is buried in Pilgrim Home Cemetery.