

Remember Our Heroes

The world loves to honor and remember its heroes. This has been true in every age. When David slew Goliath, he was proclaimed a hero; when the Duke of Wellington met Napoleon at Waterloo and changed the current of European history, he was accounted a hero; when Washington won American independence on the battlefield, he was accorded the title of father of his country; when Grant demanded "unconditional surrender" of the Southern forces and obtained it, he was glorified; when Iowa "boys in blue" fought at Shiloh and Vicksburg and when they marched with Sherman to the sea, they were regarded as heroes; when Iowa men battled at Chateau-Thierry, at St. Mihiel, and in the Argonne Forest, many of them were cited for bravery and all were remembered as heroes; and when Iowa boys make the supreme sacrifice at the ends of the earth in the present struggle for liberty, surely they will be honored as heroes.

Iowa, throughout its history, has for the most part been a peaceful land. Indeed, since the coming of the white settlers, no major battle has been fought on Iowa soil. But Iowa men have partici-

pated in wars and have contributed much to the cause of freedom. Moreover, in every war in which Iowa men have fought there is an honor roll of Iowa heroes.

Iowa sent a company of 113 men to participate in the Mexican War. Many more enlisted but were not mustered into active service. A battalion of Mormons was recruited at Kaneshville, but they were only sojourners in Iowa. During the years from 1846 to 1848 Iowa supplied 209 men to the regular Army.

In a sense, all those who in war times have gone forth to battle are heroes. In a race, all must run; but not all will win the prize. So also in the struggle for freedom — all must strive and all will in a measure attain; but not all will be remembered as heroes. Among the Iowa men who served in the Mexican War the names of at least three leaders have remained distinct on the pages of history. Frederick D. Mills, Edwin Guthrie, and Benjamin S. Roberts deserve the tribute accorded to heroes.

A native of Massachusetts and a graduate of Yale, Frederick D. Mills came to Iowa in 1841, settled at Burlington, and began the practice of law. Five years later he was commissioned by President James K. Polk as a major in the Fifteenth United States Infantry, six companies of which were recruited in Ohio, two in Michigan,

one in Wisconsin, and one in Iowa. While leading a charge at the Battle of Churubusco, Major Mills was killed. His name was inscribed on a tablet in the chapel of the Military Academy at West Point as one of the heroes of the Mexican War. And the General Assembly of Iowa named a county in honor of him.

The only company of Iowa men that served in Mexico during this war was Company K, Fifteenth United States Infantry, of which Edwin Guthrie was captain. Guthrie was a native of New York who came to Iowa about 1840. He was warden of the penitentiary at Fort Madison before the outbreak of the war. As one of the organizers of Company K, he was elected captain and led his men in the campaign against Mexico City. Mortally wounded on June 20, 1847, in the skirmish at Lahoya Pass, on the road between Vera Cruz and Perote, Captain Guthrie died at Perote a month later. His name, like that of Mills, is perpetuated in the name of an Iowa county.

Benjamin Stone Roberts was a native of Vermont. Upon graduating from West Point, he was brevetted second lieutenant and assigned to duty in 1835 with the First United States Dragoons stationed at Fort Des Moines, a frontier post on the western bank of the Mississippi River. Later he retired from the army and began the practice of

law at Fort Madison. But when the war with Mexico began he reentered military service as a captain. He participated in several battles of the war. On September 14, 1847, he led the advance of J. A. Quitman's army into the City of Mexico, and to him was assigned the honor of raising the first American flag over the palace of the Montezumas.

For this distinguished service Roberts was highly commended by the Iowa General Assembly in 1849. A resolution was passed by that body referring to Captain Roberts as one who had "won for himself a brilliant distinction, which reflects a lustre upon the character of the American soldier, and an honor upon this State." Later he served as a colonel and brigadier general in the Civil War.

Iowa heroes of the War of the Rebellion were numerous and noteworthy. There were heroes on every battlefield; heroes in every regiment, in every battalion, and in every company. Every Cavalry troop and every Artillery battery had its heroes. Nor were Iowa heroes lacking in the Navy and Marines. Some, because of early training and long service, became officers of high rank. At the close of the war about one hundred Iowa men had attained the rank of colonel, in many instances on account of heroism in action.

There were those, too, who were heroes of the

hour — men who by sheer bravery changed defeat into victory. One of the most courageous exploits of the whole war was performed by Brigadier General John M. Corse of Iowa. While Sherman was advancing into Georgia, the Confederate General, John B. Hood, started to invade the North. In alarm Sherman at Kenesaw Mountain signaled to Corse, who was at Rome, to rush to the narrow Allatoona Pass and hold it "to the last extremity".

With only two thousand men, including the faithful Thirty-ninth Iowa Infantry, Corse hastened to the scene early in the morning of October 5th. Presently he received a message from the Confederate commander, calling upon him to surrender "at once, and unconditionally", to "avoid a needless effusion of blood". To this Corse replied: "Your communication demanding surrender of my command I acknowledge receipt of, and respectfully reply that we are prepared for the 'needless effusion of blood' whenever it is agreeable to you."

A vigorous attack followed this defiant reply. When Sherman saw the smoke of the fierce struggle he signaled Corse, "Hold on to Allatoona to the last. I will help you." To those who watched with him, Sherman said: "If Corse is there, he will hold out: I know the man."

At one time during the battle Corse fell unconscious on the field. When he was revived and questioned about his own welfare, he answered: "I am short a cheek bone and one ear, but am able to whip all hell yet." It was this dramatic "holding of the fort" that brought immortal fame to the Iowa general.

But not all heroes are renowned. Of the soldiers who fell in battle during the Civil War there are some whose names are remembered, and many whose names are forgotten. It has frequently been said that Private Shelby Norman, a youth from Muscatine and a member of Company A, First Iowa Infantry, who was killed in action on August 10, 1861, was the first Iowan killed in service. The Grand Army Post at Muscatine was later named in honor of Norman, and his likeness was used to typify the Infantryman on the Soldiers and Sailors Monument at Des Moines. More recent researches, however, reveal the fact that Cyrus W. West of Mahaska County, a member of Company H, Third Iowa Infantry, was killed in action on July 11th, and was, therefore, probably the first Iowan to give his life for the cause of freedom in the Civil War. But the matter of priority in this instance is not important. Each of these men in turn made the supreme sacrifice, and each is representative of the unnamed

heroes in the ranks of the Army. It was their bravery and sacrifice that saved the Union.

The circumstances of heroic deeds soon fade from memory, and the identity of heroes is presently lost in anonymity. To assure the preservation of records and to render honor where honor was due, President Lincoln, on December 21, 1861, placed his signature of approval upon legislation authorizing the medal of honor as the supreme American decoration for military valor. This is the only medal of the United States Government authorized to be presented by the President "in the name of Congress"; and for that reason it is frequently called the Congressional Medal of Honor. It is usually given to the common soldier, sailor, or marine for extraordinary deeds of valor while in service.

One of the first soldiers to receive this award was an Iowa man. At the Battle of Pea Ridge, on March 7, 1861, Private Albert Power, Company A, Third Iowa Cavalry, a resident of Davis County, under "a heavy fire and at a great personal risk went to the aid of a dismounted comrade who was surrounded by the enemy, took him on his own horse and carried him to safety". For this rescue Power was proclaimed a hero and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The Congressional Medal is not frequently

awarded. But, through the years, on several occasions it has been bestowed upon Iowa men. Among other Iowans to whom it was awarded during the Civil War was James Dunlavy, Company D, Third Iowa Cavalry, a resident of Davis County, for the capture of Major General John S. Marmaduke at Osage, Kansas, on October 25, 1864. Corporal Luther Kaltenbach, Company F, Twelfth Iowa Infantry, of Clayton County, won the Congressional Medal for capturing a Confederate regimental flag at Nashville, Tennessee, on December 16, 1864. James P. Miller, Company D, Fourth Iowa Cavalry, of Henry County, and Andrew W. Tibbets, Company I, Third Iowa Cavalry, of Appanoose County, also distinguished themselves by capturing Confederate flags. In 1900 the medal was awarded to Calvin Pearl Titus, a former resident of Vinton serving with the Fourteenth United States Infantry in the Boxer Rebellion. He was the first "to scale the wall" of Peking. All the men who have received the Congressional Medal of Honor are officially recognized as heroes by the Federal Government.

The sinking of the battleship *Maine* in the harbor of Havana precipitated the Spanish-American War. To Iowa the tragedy was personified, for Assistant Engineer Darwin R. Merritt of Red Oak was one of the American sailors whose life

was claimed in that disaster. Soon after his graduation from the Naval Academy at Annapolis in July, 1897, he was assigned to duty on the *Maine*. The sacrifice of his life seemed particularly sad because it occurred without warning and the men had no chance to save themselves or retaliate.

And what shall be said of the Iowa heroes of the World War? That terrible cataclysm was so recent that most of the participants are still living. Yet thousands of their comrades lie forever "somewhere in France". They are all accounted heroes. But heroism is something more than service, something more than sacrifice; it is a quality of the soul. As flowers in the forest may bloom, send forth their fragrance, and fade quite unobserved by human eyes, so also heroes may serve and fall without recognition. Whole regiments fought bravely, but only the conspicuous instances of courage were specially honored.

The first Americans to fall in France were lost in a surprise raid by the Germans early in the morning of November 3, 1917. "A group was caught in a box barrage", reported General John J. Pershing, "and although the men made a courageous resistance against the large raiding party three were killed, five wounded, and twelve captured". One of the dead was Private Merle D. Hay of Glidden, Iowa.

A large number of French soldiers as well as American troops attended the funeral ceremony to pay tribute. "This joint homage to our dead, there under the fire of guns", Pershing said, "seemed to symbolize the common sacrifice our two peoples were to make in the same great cause. It seemed as though their death had sealed a new pact of understanding and comradeship between the two armies." For this achievement an Iowa boy was first to give his life.

Feeling the need of more adequate awards for heroic service President Woodrow Wilson in January, 1918, issued an executive order creating the Distinguished Service Cross. His action was confirmed by Congress in July, 1918. This decoration is a bronze cross, and bears an American eagle superimposed on a plain laurel wreath. A scroll below the eagle bears the inscription "For Valor".

The Distinguished Service Cross was awarded not only to World War soldiers, but it was also authorized "as a retroactive award". Accordingly, it was conferred upon soldiers of previous wars who had performed distinguished service. One of the most prominent of these cases was the award to Lieutenant Andrew Summers Rowan of Virginia who carried the "Message to Garcia" in the Spanish-American War. After a perilous trip

across Cuba, he met the revolutionary leader, General Calixto Garcia, on May 1, 1898, and returned to the United States with valuable military information. He received his Distinguished Service Cross with full military honors on August 21, 1922.

More than five thousand Distinguished Service Crosses, and nearly one hundred bronze oak-leaf clusters in lieu of a second award, have been presented for valor in the World War. Iowa men rendered their full share of heroic service during the war, and accordingly the pages of Iowa history are dotted with names of heroes who received this coveted prize.

In the 168th United States Infantry alone there were at least twenty-six Iowa men who won the Distinguished Service Cross. This list includes the following names: David V. Binkley, George R. Boustead, *Arthur F. Brandt, Guy S. Brewer, *Charles R. Burks, Charles J. Casey, John C. Christopher, Merl E. Clark, *Emmett E. Collins, Clarence A. Davis, Thomas J. Gray, Byron W. Hamilton, Claude V. Hart, Glenn C. Haynes, James B. Lepley, Bernard Nelson, *Oscar B. Nelson, Liberty Pease, Winfred E. Robb, Lloyd D. Ross, *Mathew S. Spautz, Alt C. Wilken, *George A. Wilkinson, Frank L. Williams, Earle W. Wilson, and John H. Wintrobe. The six

whose names are starred were killed in action and were given posthumous awards. It is interesting to note that five who received the Distinguished Service Cross — Casey, Christopher, Lepley, Ross, and Wilson — were residents of Red Oak. Brewer, Collins, Robb, and Williams were residents of Des Moines.

Iowa soldiers in other regiments and in other branches of the service were also awarded Distinguished Service Crosses for their bravery. Representative of this larger group is Hanford MacNider of Mason City, who as captain in the 9th Infantry, 2nd Division, near Medeah Ferme, France, on October 3, 1918, "voluntarily joined an attacking battalion, and accompanied it to its final objectives". During a second attack on the same day MacNider "acted as a runner through heavy artillery and machine gun fire". Later, when higher authorities could not be reached, he assumed responsibility and gave the necessary command to stabilize the troops. Moreover, leading new troops, he went forth to uncover and destroy German machine gun nests. For other deeds of valor and "extraordinary heroism", in the fall of 1918, MacNider was awarded the oak-leaf cluster.

Corporal Robert Colflesh of Des Moines was another Iowa youth who received the Distin-

guished Service Cross. "After his men had been caught in an intense artillery shelling, Colflesh although wounded, refused to seek shelter until all his men had taken cover. While aiding the last man into a trench, he received a second wound."

The Army Distinguished Service Medal was created in 1918 for the purpose of decorating persons who served with distinction in positions of great responsibility. It is usually awarded to officers. Colonel Mathew A. Tinley and Colonel Donald Macrae were two Iowa men who received this award. Colonel Tinley "displayed exceptional qualities of leadership in command of the 168th Infantry, 42nd Division, which under his able leadership fulfilled every mission assigned to it." Macrae, commanding officer of Mobile Hospital No. 1 at Coulommiers and Chateau-Thierry, June to August, 1918, rendered efficient service in a most difficult situation.

In addition to the American medals of honor, Iowa men were decorated by their allies. The French Croix de Guerre was pinned on many a breast as the ceremonial kiss was administered to the cheek. Similar decorations were received from the British, Belgian, and Italian governments. Two Iowans who attained the rank of major general were several times recognized. For heroism at Cantigny in May, 1918, Hanson E. Ely re-

ceived the Croix de Guerre and the distinction of Officer in the Legion d'Honneur. During the summer he was cited for the Distinguished Service Cross. Major General George W. Reed received the Distinguished Service Medal, was made Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath by Great Britain, and by France he was designated Commander in the Legion d'Honneur and decorated with the Croix de Guerre with a palm.

In 1939 war again broke out in Europe. America hoped to remain aloof. But it was a vain hope. Young men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five were required to prepare for battle. Military camps were established and large-scale maneuvers were practiced in anticipation of national defense. New tactics were learned. Mechanized warfare on land, sea, and in the air modified the character of military training and revolutionized industry. It was a period of uncertainty and hope. Then, in an hour when least expected, Pearl Harbor was bombed. Instantly the conditions changed. Duty and responsibility were clear and the people faced their destiny with heroic fortitude.

Iowa boys, many of them, were caught in the first onslaught. How bravely some of them died, the world may never know. How bravely others fought is now becoming a matter of history. But

whether it be at Pearl Harbor or in other areas; whether it be in the air, on the land, or on the sea, in every situation Iowa boys have responded nobly, and for this they have been signally honored. There are those among them who have been decorated with the Purple Heart, the Silver Star, the Navy Cross, the Distinguished Flying Cross, or some other award of honor.

Since the bombing of Pearl Harbor many decorations, awards, and citations have been given, and Iowa men have been granted their full share. Private Robert Eugene Taylor, Captain Robert Brice Moore, Sergeant Joseph M. Romanelli, and Greeley B. Williams are Iowans who have been honored in recent weeks. But these are only representative of the much larger group of Iowa men who have won distinguished honors. If it were possible to print today a complete list of Iowans who have been decorated for bravery, we would awake tomorrow only to find that the list had been supplemented. Surely in this new generation of Iowa youth, when their deeds have been recorded, there will be found a multitude of heroes.

Thus it has been throughout the years. It is fitting that now and again we should pause to remember our heroes.

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