

COMBAT MEDICINE *The Dark Side of War ...*

<http://www.medicalcorps.org/history.htm>



Combat Corpsmen checking casualties for signs of life. Iwo Jima took its toll of men with 648 American Marines dead, 4,168 wounded and 650 missing in the first 58 hours! (Iwo Jima assault, February, 1945)

The following is an account of a select group of America's finest who lived and died for the greater good.

The Honorable James Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy during World War II, had these words to say about the men and women of the Naval Hospital Corps for their singular attainments during that deadly conflict. This was the first time in military history any single corps had been commended by that office.

"Out of every 100 men of the United States Navy and Marine Corps who were wounded in World War II, 97 recovered.

That is a record not equaled anywhere, anytime... So, to the 200,000 men and women of the Hospital Corps, I say, Well done. Well done, indeed!"

The knowledge which yielded this "unequaled record" was not the brainchild of some coin-flipping bureaucrat, but hard won by the personal sacrifice and bravery of men and women in the bloody cauldron of battle.

From World War II until this day, of all the Congressional Medals of Honor presented to Naval enlisted personnel, Corpsmen own the lion's share with well over half the number awarded.

Other personal medals such as the Navy Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Hearts won by Combat Corpsmen, number in the multiple thousands and are almost too numerous to count.

Korea was no different. During the Inchon-Seoul operation of 1950 in the period between Sept-15 and Oct-7, Corpsmen attached to the 1st Marine Division treated over 2,800 casualties.

Secretary Forrestal described the horrific conditions under which the Corpsmen tended the wounded.



A Combat Corpsman (himself wounded) leads a wounded Marine to safer ground. (Okinawa assault, April, 1945)

" ... while shell fragments ripped clothing from their bodies and shattered plasma bottles in their hands..."



Of the seven Congressional Medals of Honor awarded to Naval personnel during Korea, a total of five were conferred upon Corpsmen for their heroic service.

The Corpsmen, Doctors, and Nurses manning the hospital ships in the Korean waters off those beaches found themselves in no better conditions handling 20,000 combat casualties, 30,000 non-combatant casualties and 80,000 outpatients.

On February 22, 1945 John Bradley proudly participated in the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima along with the Marines whom he served. John Bradley was one of those Corpsmen.

Medical practice or attendant service which has not been touched and enhanced by Combat

Those men and women of the Hospital Corps did not suffer and die for themselves, but presented their minds and bodies to their units for a greater purpose. This willingness to serve is the esprit de corps to which they were drawn.

As Americans we would do well to learn from their struggles and the men they loved. From these nameless heroes came priceless information which revolutionized the world of medicine and surgery. To this day there is no

Medical practice or attendant service which has not been touched and enhanced by Medicine.

Yet, what is so unique about Combat Medicine which eclipses all other forms of Emergency Medical Technique? Probably the best way to answer this is to tell what the field is **not**.

Combat Medicine is not just First Aid, First Response, or any of the other euphemistic terms for, "keep 'em alive until the doctor arrives." Neither is it Natural Medicine which is suddenly being "rediscovered" by the masses.

It is definitely not "Crude Medicine" unless the saving of lives can be considered crude. Combat Medicine is the very best of all of the above, and without question, it is much, much more.

Field Corpsmen are trained to not only respond, but to be the **only** response in obstetrics, mass casualties, surgery, pharmacy, orthopedics, nutrition, sanitation - even pest control. When there's no 911, ambulance, MEDEVAC, aid station or E.R., whether on a hunting trip or atop Mt. Suribachi, the basic principles of Combat Medicine cannot be equaled when it comes to survival.

What is accomplished in the field is done without the aid of the marvelous life-saving machinery found in sickbays, emergency rooms and O.R.s. Combat Medicine is a technique borne by the heart, mind and hands of the individual Responder which insures the survival of the sick and injured.



Navy Doctors and Corpsmen deliver a Filipino woman's baby aboard an L.S.T. after the invasion of Mindoro. (December, 1944)

Above all things, Combat Corpsmen learned that response is not glory. It is a river of Blood, Bone, Bullets, Bandages ... and **Babies....**

If our country does collapse into chaos, we must be ready to **respond**.

However, there is a natural order for this response. We must first have food, shelter and medical training... and more importantly; that **Esprit de Corps**.

Like those Corpsmen, Americans should understand that Combat Medicine is not just a tool, it is an overriding spirit and essential discipline for what may come. Sic Semper Paratus

Here are just a few of those who gave this site life.

Hospital Corpsman Third Class

Robert R. Ingram

United States Navy



For service as set forth in the following **CITATION**:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as Corpsman with Company C, First Battalion, Seventh Marines, against elements of a North Vietnam Aggressor (NVA) battalion in Quang Ngai Province, Republic of Vietnam on March 28, 1966.

Petty Officer Ingram accompanied the point platoon as it aggressively engaged an outpost of an NVA battalion.

As the battle moved off a ridge line, down a tree-covered slope, to a small rice paddy and a village beyond, a tree line suddenly exploded with an intense hail of automatic rifle fire from approximately 100 North Vietnamese regulars.

In moments, the platoon was decimated. Oblivious to the danger, Petty Officer Ingram crawled across the battlefield to reach a downed Marine. As he administered aid, a bullet went through the palm of his hand.

Calls for "corpsmen" echoed across the ridge. Bleeding, he edged across the fire-swept landscape, collecting ammunition from the dead and administering aid to the wounded. Receiving two more wounds, with the third wound being a life-threatening one, he looked for a way off the face of the ridge, but again he heard the call for help and again he resolutely answered.

He gathered magazines, resupplied and encouraged those capable of returning fire and rendered aid to the more severely wounded until he finally reached the right flank of the platoon.

While dressing the head wound of another corpsman, he sustained his fourth bullet wound.

From sixteen hundred hours until almost sunset, Petty Officer Ingram pushed, pulled, cajoled, and doctored his Marines.

Enduring the pain from his many wounds and disregarding the probability of his own death, Petty Officer Ingram's gallant actions saved many lives.

By his indomitable fighting spirit, daring initiative, and unfaltering dedication to duty, Petty Officer Ingram reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.



**HOSPITALMAN
JOHN E. KILMER
UNITED STATES NAVY**

For service as set forth in the following **CITATION:**

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty in action against enemy aggressor forces on 13 August 1952.

With his company engaged in defending a vitally important hill position well forward of the main line of resistance during an assault by large concentrations of hostile-troops, Hospitalman Kilmer repeatedly braved intense enemy mortar, artillery, and sniper fire to move from one position to another, administering aid -to the wounded and expediting their evacuation.

Painfully wounded himself when struck by mortar fragments while moving to the aid of a casualty, he persisted in his efforts and inched his way to the side of a stricken Marine through a hail of enemy shells falling around him.

Undaunted by the devastating hostile fire, he skillfully administered first aid to his comrade and, as another mounting barrage of enemy fire shattered the immediate area, unhesitatingly shielded the wounded man with his body.

Mortally wounded by flying shrapnel while carrying out this heroic action, Hospitalman Kilmer, by his great personal valor and gallant spirit of self-sacrifice in saving the life of a comrade, served to inspire all who observed him.

By his exceptional fortitude, determined efforts, and unyielding devotion to duty,

Hospitalman Kilmer reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for another.

**HOSPITAL CORPSMAN THIRD CLASS
DONALD E. BALLARD
UNITED STATES NAVY**



For service as set forth in the following **CITATION:**

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a Corpsman with Company M, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, 3rd Marine Division in connection with operations against enemy aggressor forces on 16 May 1968.

During the afternoon hours, Company M was moving to join the remainder of the 3rd Battalion in Quang Tri Province. After treating and evacuating two heat casualties, Petty Officer Ballard was returning from the evacuation landing zone when the Company was ambushed by a North Vietnamese Army unit employing automatic weapons and mortars, and sustained numerous casualties.

Observing a wounded Marine, he unhesitatingly moved across the fire-swept terrain to the injured man and swiftly rendered medical assistance to his comrade.

Petty Officer Ballard then directed four Marines to carry the casualty to a position of relative safety. As the four men prepared to move the wounded Marine, an enemy soldier suddenly left his concealed position and, after hurling a hand grenade which landed near the casualty, commenced firing upon the small group of men.

Instantly shouting a warning to the Marines, Petty Officer Ballard fearlessly threw himself upon the lethal explosive device to protect his comrades from the deadly blast.

When the grenade failed to detonate, he calmly arose from his dangerous position and resolutely continued his determined efforts in treating other Marine casualties.

Petty Officer Ballard's heroic actions and selfless concern for the welfare of his companions served to inspire all who observed him and prevented possible injury or death to his fellow Marines.

By his courage, daring initiative, and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of extreme personal danger, Petty Officer Ballard reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

**HOSPITAL CORPSMAN THIRD CLASS
EDWARD C. BENFOLD
UNITED STATES NAVY**



For service as set forth in the following **CITATION**

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a Hospital Corpsman attached to a company in the 1st Marine Division during operations against enemy aggressor forces in Korea on 5 September 1952.

When his company was subjected to heavy artillery and mortar barrages, followed by a determined assault during the hours of darkness by an enemy force estimated at battalion strength, Petty Officer Benfold resolutely moved from position to position in the face of intense hostile fire, treating the wounded and lending words of encouragement.

Leaving the protection of his sheltered position to treat the wounded when the platoon area in which he was working was attacked from both the front and rear, he moved forward to an exposed ridge line where he observed two Marines in a large crater.

As he approached the two men to determine their condition, an enemy soldier threw two grenades into the crater while two other enemy charged the position. Picking up a grenade in each hand, Petty Officer Benfold leaped out of the crater and hurled himself against the onrushing hostile soldiers, pushing the grenades against their chest and killing both the attackers.

Mortally wounded while carrying out this heroic act, Petty Officer Benfold, by his great personal valor and resolute spirit of self-sacrifice in the face of almost certain death, was directly responsible for saving the lives of his two comrades.

Petty officer Benfold's exceptional courage, personal initiative, and selfless devotion to duty reflected great credit upon himself and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

He gallantly gave his life for others.