

## CONVERSION OF THE PURPLE HEART

Actually there was a basis for award of the Bronze Star on the basis of a previous award, though this was never directly addressed in regulations pertaining to the Bronze Star. When the Purple Heart was redefined as an award to be made solely for injuries sustained as a result of enemy action and a posthumous award for those killed in action, the status of Purple Heart awards made earlier in the war for other acts of "meritorious essential service" became ambiguous. Those who had been awarded the Purple Heart in WWII for other than combat wounds were offered an option of having the decoration converted to another "appropriate decoration". This was not automatic. The recipient had to request the conversion, at which time the circumstances of the original award were reviewed by the Adjutant General's Office and the appropriate replacement award determined. Most individuals who made such application did not do so until the end of the war, at which time the Bronze Star was available and the most likely replacement for most situations.

## THE "V" DEVICE

As soon as the first awards had been made, and a few ribbon bars started to be worn in overseas R&R Centers, a significant problem became apparent. A combat veteran who had been awarded the Bronze Star for heroism wore the same ribbon as the support soldier who had been awarded the medal for devising an improved inventory system in a rear area supply depot. Both awards were well deserved, but there was a strong feeling among commanders that the character of the awards should be distinguished in a visible way. General Marshall asked his theater commanders for their recommendations, and received a suggestion from General Eisenhower's headquarters that the red and the blue colors in the ribbon be reversed for the heroism awards. One feature of this proposal was that this would bring the Bronze Star for heroism in line with the other combat valor decorations, each of which had blue as the predominant ribbon color.

The War and Navy Departments, operating under authority in the original Executive Order, did not modify the ribbon, instead creating the "V" device (combat distinguishing device in the case of the Navy). This was a bronze block letter "V" 1/4 of an inch in height, with seraphs at the top of the members. The "V" was to be worn on the service ribbon as well as the suspension ribbon of the medal when awarded for heroism. Large scale separations were already in progress when this decision was first announced in War Department Circular 383 of December 22, 1945. While commercial versions of the "V" may have been promptly struck, stocks for issue were not available for at least a year. Thus many WWII veterans entitled to wear the "V" probably never received it and may never have known about it. The Army Circular specified that only one "V" would be worn, so that on a ribbon with a "V" and two oak leaf clusters, there was no way of knowing visually how many of the three awards were for heroism. Commanders awarding the Bronze Star were also directed to specify the basis for the award, heroism or meritorious service, in the awarding orders, though most commands had already been doing this.

The last official tabulation of quantities of decorations awarded by the Army to Army personnel for WWII was as of June 30, 1947. This listed 395,379 awards of the Bronze Star. There was no breakout of original awards and oak leaf clusters, awards for heroism and service, and no practical way at that date to gather such information. The data were obtained primarily from feeder reports from the field, and probably

understated the number of awards by at least ten percent. However, a large number of Bronze Star awards for WWII had not yet been made.

## **CONVERSION FROM THE COMBAT INFANTRYMAN AND COMBAT MEDICAL BADGES**

The award of the Bronze Star on the basis of the Combat Infantryman and Combat Medical Badges was covered in detail in an article in the May 1979 issue of *The Medal Collector*.<sup>1</sup> This decision was first announced in War Department Circular 162 of June 20, 1947, which stated:

"Those individuals who . . . were cited by name on or after 7 December 1941 and prior to 3 September 1945, in orders or in a formal certificate, for meritorious or exemplary conduct in ground combat against the armed enemy, may make application to The Adjutant General . . . for award of the Bronze Star Medal on the basis of such citation. A citation in orders for the Combat Infantryman Badge or Medical Badge awarded during the period of actual combat against the armed enemy is considered as a citation for meritorious conduct in ground combat. These citations in orders . . . were not automatic, but were based upon recommendations of unit commanders thoroughly familiar with the achievement of the individuals cited and after a careful evaluation of their work."

With regard to conversion based on the CIB or CMB the procedure was quite straight forward. Awards were made only on application, had to be based on general orders, and resulted in award of the Bronze Star for meritorious achievement (without "V" device). The award of the Bronze Star did not rescind the previous award of the CIB and it was announced in AGO letter orders, not general orders. The letter orders referenced the original general orders for the CIB or CMB and gave a specific date of the date of action, which was actually the date the original order was published. By 1947 War Department certificates were available for issue, and the medals, when dispatched from the Philadelphia QM Depot, were named.

(Part II will address Bataan/Corregidor DUC conversion awards.)

## **NOTES**

1. Brook, Vernon R., "Bronze Star Medals for WWII Combat Badges," *The Medal Collector*, Vol. 30, No. 5, May 1979, pp 4-9.

---

## **US LOCAL WORLD WAR II SERVICE MEDAL LISTINGS**

Data continues to be gathered on local World War II service medals (see article on pages 36-37 of April JOMSA). A number of additions and corrections have been received. This project will remain open until the end of September, with an update or new list planned for the November JOMSA. Additional information is still solicited by: Charles "Skip" Pfeiffer, OMSA #3313, 1401 Druid Rd, Maitland, FL 32751.

---

## GULF WAR MEDAL UPDATE

**FRANCE** The MOYEN ORIENT bar for the Overseas Medal to be awarded for service in the Gulf will be gilt. This will distinguish it from the earlier silver MOYEN ORIENT bar issued for Suez.

**UNITED STATES** A cutoff date for award of the Southwest Asia has not been determined. The Department of Defense has announced that the medal will continue to be awarded to military personnel assigned to the theater of operations until the last combat forces participating in security roles leave the area. The new Merchant Marine Expeditionary Medal will also be awarded for service in support of Gulf operations as noted in the article beginning on page 15.

(Submitted by Vicken Koundakjian, OMSA #3503 and Gary R. Glaeser, OMSA #1872.)

---

## NEW FRENCH MEDAL: THE MEDAL FOR TOURISM

Decree No. 89-693 of September 21, 1989 established the Medal for Tourism, which is intended to reward those who have contributed to the development of tourism in France. The medal has three classes: bronze, silver and gold. The number of awards is limited to 60 gold, 200 silver and 500 bronze medals per year.

Potential recipients must have at least twelve years of service in tourism, and must have held the preceding class for five years before being eligible for promotion to the next class. Foreign citizens may be awarded the Medal for Tourism. Recipients of the National orders (i.e. Legion of Honor and National Order of Merit) are not eligible for the new medal.

The medal is round, 36mm in diameter, in bronze and silvered or gilt bronze, depending on the class. The obverse has *La République* standing, wearing a phrygian cap, making a welcoming gesture (obviously to tourists), with the map of France as background. At her feet, in a semi-circle, is the inscription *République Française* in relief.

The ribbon, 36mm wide, is sky blue, with 2mm dark red edge stripes flanked by 2mm stripes of green. The ribbon of the silver medal has a 1.5mm wide central white stripe, and the ribbon for the gold medal has a 1.5mm wide central gold-yellow stripe.

On the occasion of the creation of the award, 456 persons received 14 gold, 107 silver and 335 bronze medals (Decree of 23 August 1990). The regular 1990 awards included 528 recipients, who received 15 gold, 100 silver and 413 bronze medals (Decree of 15 March 1991). A further series of awards was made in April 1991 to 25 non-French citizens, including Austrian, Belgian, British, Danish, Japanese, Spanish and Swiss nationals. The regular 1991 awards are due around 14 July, the French National Day, after the selection committee meets in the later half of June.

(Submitted by General Yves Dion, OMSA #2000 and Vicken Koundakjian, OMSA #3503)