Assumptions and Extrapolations

Having reached the final item in the magic box (the "bottom of the barrel," so to speak), the incidental reporter would probably summarize and go on to his next project. However, with whatever additional information was available, it was thought that a final look at Thomas Stark’s awards would paint a better picture of the man’s achievements. The *Army Register* lists Thomas Stark’s decorations as: Legion of Merit, Silver Star (with one oak leaf cluster), Bronze Star, Air Medal and Purple Heart. His service awards include the World War I Victory Medal and the American Defense Service Medal. However, based on the documentation available, that list would most certainly have included the American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal (with one service star for the Luzon Campaign), World War II Victory Medal and the Philippine Liberation Medal also with one bronze service star (see cover).

Final Disposition

In spite of the rather informal manner in which the two Stark Family medal groups came into the possession of the Liberty Bell Museum, the reader can rest assured that they did NOT end up in a dumpster behind our building. Instead, through the diligent efforts of the Liberty Bell Museum staff and the skills of the Patrick Air Force Base Framing Facility, they are now on display in our Uniforms and Awards Section where they proudly serve as the focal point of the fascinating careers of two dedicated military officers.

![Figure 28: Headstone for Colonel A. N. Stark.](image)

Taps

Colonel Alexander Newton Stark died on 8 May 1926 and his younger son, Colonel Thomas Newton Stark passed away on 12 October 1983. Both were buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery (Figures 28 and 29). While writing this article, my mind kept asking the question: “Who were the Starks and why would anyone care about them?” After all, in spite of their rank and achievements, they lived in relative obscurity. But after researching their lives as epitomized by their awards, I soon came to realize that it’s their “just below the radar” careers that have formed the backbone and success of our Armed Services throughout our history. For every MacArthur, Eisenhower or Bradley, there are thousands of incredibly bright and capable personnel who are invaluable to our military but will never receive the grand tributes and plaudits of the public. Suffice it to say that all Americans appreciate their efforts and to Alexander and Thomas Stark, we can all say: “Well Done” and “Rest in Peace.”

![Figure 29: Headstone for Colonel T. N. Stark.](image)

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to express his appreciation to the following individuals, without whose cooperation, this article would never have seen the light of day: Ray Ochs (Major General, USA Retired)- original donor of the Magic Box that got our collective adrenaline running and pulses pounding; Peter Diaz (Major, USAF, Retired)- Who gave me the opportunity and inspiration to dive back into my hobby research after a medical hiatus and for his sterling photographic efforts on my behalf; Charles McDowell, Former President of the Orders and
Medals Society of America for his unstinting efforts to attribute the medal treasure trove and for his helpful suggestions with the article text and format; Dick Flory, Editor of JOMSA who so kindly provided the critical information on Thomas Stark’s career and medals via his dusty copies of the Army Register; Ms. Joan Klein, Archivist of the Walter Reed Yellow Fever Collection at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA for holding my electronic hand while I surfed through Dr. Alexander Stark’s career in Cuba; Mrs. Suzanne Christoff, Archivist of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY for her instant response to my inquiries with regard to the Stark brothers; finally, the lovely Beverly Borts, my wife, best friend and soul mate of nearly 52 years, for putting up with my two full-time hobbies with unstinting humor and patience above and beyond the call of duty.

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In the News

Medal of Honor for Battle of Ia Drang

During a White House ceremony on February 26, 2007, Lieutenant Colonel Bruce P. Crandall, A Company, 1, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) received the Medal of Honor from President George W. Bush for heroic actions during the Battle of Ia Drang on November 14, 1965.

The citation for his Medal of Honor is as follows:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty:

Major Bruce P. Crandall distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism as a Flight Commander in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company A, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). On 14 November 1965, his flight of sixteen helicopters was lifting troops for a search and destroy mission from Plei Me, Vietnam, to Landing Zone X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley. On the fourth troop lift, the airlift began to take enemy fire, and by the time the aircraft had refueled and returned for the next troop lift, the enemy had Landing Zone X-Ray targeted. As Major Crandall and the first eight helicopters landed to discharge troops on his fifth troop lift, his unarmed helicopter came under such intense enemy fire that the ground commander ordered the second flight of eight aircraft to abort their mission. As Major Crandall flew back to Plei Me, his base of operations, he determined that the ground commander of the besieged infantry battalion desperately needed more ammunition. Major Crandall then decided to adjust his base of operations to Artillery Firebase Falcon in order to shorten the flight distance to deliver ammunition and evacuate wounded soldiers. While medical evacuation was not his mission, he immediately sought volunteers and with complete disregard for his own personal safety, led the two aircraft to Landing Zone X-Ray. Despite the fact that the landing zone was still under relentless enemy fire, Major Crandall landed and proceeded to supervise the loading of seriously wounded soldiers aboard his aircraft. Major Crandall’s voluntary decision to land under the most extreme fire instilled in the other pilots the will and spirit to continue to land their own aircraft, and in the ground forces the realization that they would be resupplied and that friendly wounded would be promptly evacuated. This greatly enhanced morale and the will to fight at a critical time. After his first medical evacuation, Major Crandall continued to fly into and out of the landing zone throughout the day and into the evening. That day he completed a total of 22 flights, most under intense enemy fire, retiring from the battlefield only after all possible service had been rendered to the Infantry battalion. His actions provided critical resupply of ammunition and evacuation of the wounded. Major Crandall’s daring acts of bravery and courage in the face of an overwhelming and determined enemy are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Crandall retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1977 and became the city manager of Dunsmuir, California. He also received the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, 24 Air Medals, Army Commendation Medal and Purple Heart.
World War II Bronze Star Medals:
Can Manufacturers Be Identified?

George N. Wilhelmsen

Introduction

This article originated out of my display at the 2006 OMSA convention in Arizona. The main objective was to answer the following question: Is it possible for a collector to identify the specific wartime manufacturers of World War II Bronze Star Medals? This study is based on five World War II Bronze Stars with a slot brooch from five manufacturers. They are contained in their wartime manufacturers’ small cardboard shipping boxes. Using these as the type set, I described and characterized both common and unique features of the Bronze Star from each of the five manufacturers. This article presents the information and investigates the usefulness of this information to identify the manufacturers of Bronze Stars found in medal groups or without a manufacturer’s box.

The focus of this study is only on Bronze Stars with a slot brooch, because they are so abundant and occur in many variations, and they have not been studied in depth. The Bronze Star manufactured by the United States Mint for the U.S. Navy is excluded because it is so distinctive that it can be readily identified. Bronze Stars with a crimp brooch are excluded because they post-date the period of interest.

The Five Types

The type set consisted of Bronze Stars made by the following manufacturers:

- American Emblem Co. Inc., Utica, New York
  Contract date: January 29, 1945

- N. S. Meyer, Inc., New York City
  Contract date: April 13, 1944

- Swank, Inc., Attleboro, Massachusetts
  Contract date: December 30, 1944

- Uncas Manufacturing Company, Providence, Rhode Island
  Contract date: February 7, 1945

- The Whitehead & Hoag Company, Newark, New Jersey
  Contract date: December 18, 1944

Number of Bronze Stars Examined and Scarcity

I was able to examine two Bronze Stars from each of the five manufacturers with the exception of Swank Inc., where I examined nine examples in their small cardboard shipping boxes. The other four types are seldom found in their small boxes. The Bronze Stars manufactured by Swank Inc. are readily available to the collector.

Award Criteria and History

The Bronze Star Medal was “authorized on February 4, 1944, retroactive to December 7, 1941. It was awarded to individuals who, while serving in the United States Armed Forces in a combat theater, distinguished themselves by heroism, outstanding achievement, or by meritorious service not involving aerial flight” (Foster, 2001).

The focus of this article is to show the numismatics of the Bronze Star that distinguish one manufacturer’s version from another. For a more in-depth study on the award criteria and history of the Bronze Star, see the book, The Bronze Star Medal, by Fred L. Borch.

Description and Symbolism

Rudolf Freund, who was with the jewelry firm of Bailey, Banks and Biddle, designed the Bronze Star Medal.