

MEDICINE

Medical Heroes

Members of the medical corps of all services, officers and enlisted men alike, won six per cent of all decorations for service beyond the call of duty.

By HILLIER KRIEGHBAUM

► THE MEN of mercy—the doctors and enlisted men of the medical corps—were heroes, too.

A survey of Army and Navy records today shows that when the awards and decorations were presented for acts of bravery during World War II, the medical men had matched and in some cases surpassed their comrades in arms.

In his final report on the war, General of the Army George C. Marshall said that 6% of all decorations given for meritorious service and gallantry went to medical department personnel. It was the same in the Navy.

For example, the Congressional Medal of Honor, highest award that a grateful nation can bestow on its wartime heroes, was given to six Army "medicos" and to three Navy corpsmen. That meant a total of nine out of the slightly less than 350 medals awarded for transcending heroism. This figure compares favorably with the proportion granted to the fighting men.

North and south, east and west—all sections of the country were represented by these elite of medical heroes. Some were farm boys who had never left their home communities except for brief excursions to nearby cities until they joined the armed services and were sent to distant battlefields. One had been a conscientious objector. And one, as if in answer to Noel Coward's facetious slur, came from Brooklyn, N. Y.

First to Win Honor

Lloyd C. Hawks, who came from Park Rapids, Minn., was the first from the medical corps to win the Congressional Medal of Honor. Then there was Harold A. Garman of Albion, Ill., who plunged into the Seine River through a hail of machine gun bullets to rescue three wounded men stranded in an assault boat; Thomas J. Kelly of Brooklyn, who ten times went through brutal machine gun fire to rescue wounded men of his unit; and Alfred L. Wilson, of Fairchance, Pa., who gave his life in

an attempt to treat wounded infantry comrades under shell fire.

The bloody fields of Iwo Jima and Okinawa were the scenes for all three Navy incidents. Robert Eugene Bush, a 19-year-old Navy hospital apprentice, helped fight off a Japanese counterattack while giving a blood transfusion to an injured Marine officer in a shell hole. George Edward Wahlen of Ogden, Utah, continued through enemy gunfire repeatedly on Iwo Jima until, on March 2, he crawled to aid a fellow comrade despite his own injuries so serious he could not walk. John Harlan Willis of Columbia, Tenn., was killed when a Jap hand grenade exploded in his hand after he had hurled back eight others as he administered blood plasma to a wounded Marine in an Iwo Jima fox-hole.

Two of the Army awards were won in the Pacific area. Desmond T. Doss of Lynchburg, Va., after repeatedly staying in fire-swept areas on Okinawa, crawled off a litter when wounded himself to aid a more seriously injured man. Laverne Parrish of Ronan, Mont., won a posthumous medal for bravery while administering to wounded soldiers in the Southwest Pacific.

The story of Hawks, who still was on crutches when the blue and white ribbon of the Congressional Medal of Honor was pinned around his neck, remains one of the thrilling dramas of the war. It is simply but eloquently told in his citation:

"On 30 January 1944 at 1500 hours (3 p.m.) near Carano, Italy, Private First Class Hawks braved an enemy counter-attack in order to rescue two wounded men who, unable to move, were lying in an exposed position within 30 yards of the enemy. Two riflemen, attempting the rescue, had been forced to return to their fighting holes by extremely severe enemy machine gun fire after crawling only 10 yards toward the casualties. An aid man whom the enemy could plainly identify as such had been critically wounded in a similar attempt. Pfc. Hawks nevertheless crawled 50 yards through a veritable hail of machine gun

bullets and flying mortar fragments to a small ditch, administered first aid to his fellow aid man who had sought cover therein and continued toward the two wounded men 50 yards distant. An enemy machine gun bullet penetrated his helmet, knocking it from his head, momentarily stunning him. Thirteen bullets passed through his helmet as it lay on the ground within six inches of his body.

"Pfc. Hawks crawled to the casualties, administered first aid to the more seriously wounded man and dragged him to a covered position 25 yards distant. Despite continuous automatic fire from positions only 30 yards away and shells which exploded within 25 yards, Pfc. Hawks returned to the second man and administered first aid to him. As he raised himself to obtain bandages from his medical kit his right hip was shattered by a burst of machine gun fire and a second burst splintered his left forearm. Displaying dogged determination and extreme self-control, Pfc. Hawks, despite severe pain and his dangling left arm, completed the task of



HIGHEST AWARD—During October President Harry S. Truman presented the Congressional Medal of Honor to PhM 2/c G. E. Wahlen, USNR.



REAL HEROES—These men received the highest award of our country for service beyond the call of duty. Top, left to right: Sgt. Thomas J. Kelly, Hospital Apprentice 1/c R. E. Bush, Pfc. Desmond T. Doss, AUS, Pvt. Harold A. Garman. Bottom: Pfc. Lloyd C. Hawks, USA, received the Medal of Honor from the late President Roosevelt. Official U. S. Army and Navy photographs.

bandaging the remaining casualty and with superhuman effort dragged him to the same depression to which he had brought the first man. Finding insufficient cover for three men at this point, Pfc. Hawks crawled 75 yards in an effort to regain his company, reaching the ditch in which his fellow aid man was lying."

The 19-year-old Bush of Raymond, Wash., braved many artillery, mortar and machine-gun fire on Okinawa to administer to the wounded falling under murderous Japanese barrages. Despite a Jap counterattack, he continued to administer life-giving plasma to a wounded Marine officer.

Bush's citation tells the rest of the story as follows:

"With the bottle held high in one hand, Bush drew his pistol with the other and fired into the enemy's ranks until his ammunition was expended. Quickly seizing a discarded carbine, he trained his fire on the Japanese charging point-blank over the hill, accounting for six of the enemy despite his own serious

wounds and the loss of one eye suffered during his desperate battle in defense of the helpless man.

"With the hostile force finally routed, he calmly disregarded his own critical condition to complete his mission, valiantly refusing medical treatment for himself until his officer had been evacuated and collapsing only after attempting to walk to the battle aid station."

While all the Congressional Medals of Honor were given to enlisted men of the medical corps, thousands of doctors have been cited for conspicuous bravery. Countless others performed their deeds of valor but went unrewarded with any award or decoration.

Army figures for the European theater of operations are the only ones now available in a formal report because those from the Pacific have been slower in being tabulated.

In addition to the Congressional Medals of Honor, this tabulation showed 97 awards of the Distinguished Service Cross, the Army's second highest medal

for distinguished bravery; 217 of Legion of Merit and 2,849 of the Silver Star. The Bronze Star was the most frequent of the combat awards to the medical personnel with 13,779 going to enlisted men; 2,716 to officers and 322 to Army nurses. Clusters to the Bronze Star for additional valor were awarded to 1,117 individuals.

Army nurses received a total of 572 awards, including 237 Air Medals or clusters for bravery in the air. Seventeen nurses were awarded the Purple Heart; one was taken prisoner; and four were killed in action.

100 Navy Crosses

The Navy's figures are not expected to be completely tabulated for many months but an officer in the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery estimated that approximately 100 Navy Crosses had gone to doctors and corpsmen.

Doctors unwittingly were caught in the midst of battle as lines swung back and forth. An example from the dozens to pick from is the surprise dawn attack by Japanese down a road leading to the Third Marine Division hospital on Guam. Although the 25 Japs were flanked by snipers and machine gunners on the hillsides, they infiltrated toward the medical corps' tents. Despite rifle fire, the enemy charged, yelling, "Yip yip." Patients fled, clad only in brief hospital smocks or in blankets.

Surgeons were operating in the initial daylight when a Jap mortar ripped through their tent in the middle of the camp site. Lt.-Comdr. Clarence C. Piepergerdes, of Bisbee, Ariz., organized a group of pharmacist's mates and marines. He led them so effectively that the advance toward the hospital area was halted. The group held a defensive position on the right flank until division reserves could relieve this motley army.

When presented the Silver Star medal, Comdr. Piepergerdes received a citation which praised his action, which had "undoubtedly saved the lives of wounded patients, prevented panic, and inspired others who observed him."

Army counterpart of Comdr. Piepergerdes was Maj. Reuben K. Pliskin, an Akron, O., surgeon in civilian life, who was ordered to move his hospital group to the rear during the campaign on Mindanao. In his case, too, the Japs infiltrated through the American lines and overtook the caravan which had been held up by a destroyed bridge as it moved to a rear area. (Turn to next page.)

Do You Know?

Ginger is one of the few spices obtained from roots.

The *clove tree*, source of the well-known spice, is an island tree that is said to require salt air.

There are about 13 *penicillin-producing* establishments in the United States and Canada, representing an investment of some \$20,000,000.

Small portable *turbine*, reported developed and in use in Russia, requires only about two cubic meters of water a second to operate and can furnish electric light for 600 homes.

A few of the *snowy owls* of the Arctic region visit northern United States each winter, but when food is very scarce thousands come south, sometimes as far as North Carolina.

When a jumping *spider* leaps from a perch, a safety line emerges from its spinnerets which hardens on exposure to the air; if it misses its objective, it can haul itself back to the perch by the line.

Electric plants under the U. S. Department of the Interior during the year ended June 30, 1945, generated nearly 9% of the total American output of electrical energy.

Pre-packaged fresh meats, fruits and vegetables will soon become common in food stores; protection against contamination, loss of weight, bruising and spoilage are promised by pre-packaging.

The *agate stone* logs found in the Petrified Forest in the southwestern United States were tree logs millions of years ago, into whose cell cavities and intercellular spaces silica in solution and other minerals entered.

Nitrogen, the chief growth-producing stimulant in the soil, is responsible for the hardy stem and leaf; with a lack of nitrogen, these characteristics are absent; with too much, the plant runs to foliage and not to fruit.

Spices are obtained from the buds, leaves, seeds, bark, roots and berries of tropical aromatic pungent plants; seasoning herbs are obtained usually from the leaves of temperate-zone annual or perennial plants.

Here is Maj. Pliskin's description of the encounter in which he received 14 bayonet and saber slashes:

"The Nips came down the road. We could see them faintly because of the burning truck. First we heard footsteps, then we could see them. About 15 feet away from me, a stream of fire came at me from the bank at the side of the road. I used my .45, and I guess I got the Nip. There were two more, one in front, one to the right. The one in front opened up, and I emptied my pistol at him. The third man attacked.

"I threw my pistol, probably stunned him, and we started to tussle. Then two more moved up, and began to jab at me with a bayonet as I struggled. The third stab cut my wind-pipe and I fell back. I don't know how long I was unconscious. When I came to, I rolled into the ditch, under the brush, I stuck a handkerchief into my face wound, and lay face down. The Nips came back, blowing up trucks. Five or six were burning, and the grass was afire. Luckily, the area around the truck nearest me didn't catch fire.

"About 1 a.m., our troops came back, and started to drive away the trucks that

could still move. I yelled at them. They refused to come in, thinking I was a Nip and I had to crawl out. A corporal in my outfit recognized me. Our troops took care of me."

Even behind enemy lines, American medical men performed their life-saving duties. A Bronze Star medal went to Lt. Joshua P. Sutherland of Haysi, Va., for his work in the German Stammelager IX B Prisoner of War camp from December, 1944, to April, 1945.

Although entitled to live in officers' quarters after he was captured, Lt. Sutherland voluntarily remained at the enlisted men's camp when he realized that the Nazis did not intend to give sick and dying American enlisted men any medical attention. He was medical officer for some 3,000 men and had to work in filthy and louse-infected rooms.

When the Nazis planned to evacuate the camp's prisoners by forced marches, the doctor convinced them of dire consequences that could follow such a plan. Thus he delayed the proposed move long enough for United States troops to reach the camp and liberate the prisoners.

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METEOROLOGY

Typhoons Were Hunted

Data on position, course and violence of storms sent in by American airmen in the Pacific were of immense value in sea and air operations.

► AMERICAN AIRMEN flew out hunting typhoons, which rate as the world's worst weather, during the closing months of the Pacific campaign. When a typhoon was found it was tracked by these determined and daring weather scouts as if it were a hostile force—which indeed it was. Data on position, course and violence of the storm, radioed to island bases and fleets at sea, were of immense value in operations.

The daring work of these weather-chasing flyers, unpublicized during the war, has been made known by the Navy Department.

Three types of four-engined land-based bombers were used in the typhoon reconnaissance. They were all given extra fuel capacity to enable them to make flights of thousand-mile radius. No extra oxygen was carried, and flights were all made at low altitude—frequently hundreds of miles at less than 1,000 feet above the waves. Ditching and

parachuting were out of the question because the water was always impossibly rough. And many of the flights had to be made over waters then dominated by the enemy.

Two kinds of operational flights were regularly made. One was a questing flight over a given course, searching wide areas for possible typhoon conditions. Once a typhoon was found in action, planes followed it regardless of area boundaries, keeping track of it day after day, until it had blown itself out. Half-hourly reports were radioed to the base, giving the plane's position and present weather. A full verbal report was given by the aerological observer upon return to base. All reports received urgent precedence and were rushed by radio to all commands operating near the storm.

Setting up typhoon reconnaissance as a regular Navy aviation job was determined upon as a result of rough experiences of American forces at sea and in