

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen and Distinguished Guests...

Thanks to Village, Township Leaders, and Senator Howard Marklein and State Representative Tony Kurtz as without their help this wouldn't have happened. To everyone who took the time to come and be here today as you had a choice to be anywhere else, but chose to be with us!

More Importantly to our Veterans and their families as without them we wouldn't be the people we are as our military service shaped us, but, without their support, we wouldn't be whom we are today. Our families are the forgotten ones who have always stood behind the scenes as we trudged through our lives with the good and bad during some of the hardest times of our lives.

Bear with me as the history is a bit lengthy, but extremely important...

The Purple Heart Medal is the world's oldest military medal still in use today. Its genesis dates back to General George Washington and the American Revolution; when General George Washington created the Badge of Military Merit on August 7, 1782.

*A stated from the Mount Vernon Library*

*On August 7, 1782, George Washington created three new military badges that would honor the service of ordinary, common soldiers. As Washington explained, his motives were to honor acts of bravery amongst his regular soldiers, because "The road to glory in a patriot army and a free country is thus open to all." In his General Orders of August 7, 1782, Washington outlined the creation of both Honorary Badges of Distinction and a Badge of Military Merit.*

*The first Badge of Distinction was to be "conferred on the veteran Non-Commissioned Officers and soldiers of the army who have served more than three years with bravery, fidelity and good conduct," and would consist of "a narrow piece of white cloth of an angular form...to be fixed to the left arm on the uniform Coat." Non-commissioned officers and soldiers worthy of honor who served more than six years were "to be distinguished by two pieces of cloth set in parallel to each other in a similar form."*

*In addition, Washington established the creation of a Badge of Military Merit because he was "ever desirous to cherish virtuous ambition in his soldiers. . ." The General Orders explained that "whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed, the author of it shall be permitted to wear on his facings over the left breast, the figure of a heart in purple cloth, or silk, edged with narrow lace or binding."*

*Only three individuals are known to have received the Badge of Military Merit during the American Revolution. On May 3, 1783, Sergeant William Brown of the 5th Connecticut Regiment of the Connecticut Line, and Sergeant Elijah Churchill of the 2nd Continental Light Dragoons were awarded the Badge of Military Merit. A month later, on June 10, 1783, Sergeant Daniel Bissell of the 2nd Connecticut Regiment of the Connecticut Line was also awarded a Badge of Military Merit. With this order, Washington established a policy of formal recognition of the heroic contributions of regular soldiers, rather than just solely members of the officer class. In addition, Washington created the precedence for the eventual establishment of the Purple Heart, adopted by the army in 1932 at the behest of General Douglas MacArthur in conjunction with the two hundredth anniversary of Washington's birth.*

Personally stated, the original award was forgotten for nearly 150 years after the revolution, until its rediscovery and reintroduction in 1932 on the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Washington's Birth. The medal was reborn as what is now known as the Purple Heart Medal. The original badge created by Washington was

the figure of a heart in purple cloth or silk worn over a soldier's left breast. In its redesign, the modern Purple Heart includes the bust of Washington at its center with Washington's family coat of arms at the top. The same words "For Military Merit" is inscribed on the back of the medal.

The medal is awarded on behalf of the President of the United States to any member of the Armed Forces who was killed as a result of being wounded in battle, or any service member wounded in battle or killed by terrorist acts against the United States. As such, the Purple Heart Medal is one of the most recognized and respected medals awarded to the members of the United States Military.

While each story leading to the recipient's Purple Heart is different, each recipient and their family are deserving of the love, respect, and undeniable thanks from a grateful nation. When seeing the face of a family member who has had to bear the burden of the ultimate sacrifice of a loved one, the faith and support of the country is one of the most heartfelt Thank You's a family member can receive in their time of deep burden.

You may not know, but, the Badge of Military Merit or the Purple Heart Medal was not awarded to every deserving son or daughter of WI who served from the time of the Civil War to World War I. These conflicts include the number of casualties and not our states wounded... They are, the Civil War 12,212, Spanish-American War 134 (these numbers included only WI units of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Regiments and did not count Federal Units), Mexican Border Service, and World War I 3,932. In all, over 26,783 of WI sons and daughters have given the ultimate sacrifice since the Civil War until April of 2019 from WI to our country. Please note, these numbers come directly from our 2019-2020 WI Blue Book located on Page 691.

These numbers I spoke of, leave a gap compared to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice and were not honored like the preceding generations from World War II and into today's Global War on Terror with a Purple Heart Medal by our nation.

As stated before, The Badge of Military Merit was forgotten or not awarded for whatever reason soon after the Revolution, until its reintroduction on Feb. 22, 1932, this was in observance of George Washington's 200th birthday. The U.S. War Department reintroduced the Purple Heart, an award for Military Merit which could be awarded retroactively to veterans of World War I — these numbers also including those authorized to wear "wound chevrons" at the time. Over 1.6 million recipients of the medal to date have this honor.

Understand, the total numbers of 26,783 do not include the wounded of our state. There is no way to advise you of the wounded numbers during these conflicts b/c there is no Government, or State Repository, or even an official tracking mechanism of wounded since the inception of the Badge of Military Merit and Purple Heart Medal. The Purple Heart Hall of Honor is now trying to capture this information to capture the legacy of each and every Purple Heart Recipient wounded or Killed In Action.

It's important for all generations to remember; when brave men and women of America's military take a stand, the spines of others are stiffened. Because of this, our dedication today will no doubt be a lasting legacy of each and every WI son and daughter for generations to come. Please note that every Purple Heart Recipient has a deeper story coming with a prized history and sometimes a burden of wearing and being awarded the world's oldest military medal. Those men and women are here due to the actions of

others, and we are the lucky ones who made it home as many of our comrade's families have been left the burden of losing their heroes of this nation.