

9th Annual Pueblo Home of Heroes Association essay contest

**“Which of the living Medal
of Honor recipients would
you most like to meet and
why? What questions would
you ask them and why?”**

Sponsored by the Pueblo Home of Heroes Association
and Pueblo City-County Library District



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The mission of the Pueblo Home of Heroes Association is to preserve and expand the memorial dedicated to Medal of Honor recipients; to advance the history of the Medal of Honor; honor the legacy of those who have received the Award nationwide; to promote democratic ideals; and encourage among the people of the United States, and especially its youth, citizenship, character, integrity and selflessness as epitomized by the Medal of Honor.

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2017 Pueblo Home of Heroes Association essay contest

“Which of the living Medal of Honor recipients would you most like to meet and why? What questions would you ask them and why?”

Pueblo Home of Heroes Association, in cooperation with Pueblo City-County Library District, is pleased to announce the winners of its 9th Annual Pueblo Home of Heroes essay contest.

The following guidelines were required:

All entries must be typed.

Elementary School – grades 4 and 5; 300-500 words.

Middle School – grades 6–8; 400-700 words.

High School – grades 9–12; 500-1,000 words.

Select a Medal of Honor recipient other than our local Pueblo heroes.

Pueblo Home of Heroes Association judges:

Elementary School – Don and Mary Gray, Nathan and Mary Cape, Chris Bolt

Middle School – Ray LeMasters

High School – Andy Hauk and Caroline Parsley

There were 414 entries - 247 elementary school level, 66 middle school level and 101 high school level.

Pueblo Home of Heroes Association and Pueblo City-County Library District wish to thank teachers and parents for encouraging their students and children to participate in this essay contest. It was clear to the judges that the contest achieved its purpose of encouraging students to look at the stories of many Medal of Honor recipients and find a story that was special to them. Many of these heroes will be in Pueblo in September 2017 for the Congressional Medal of Honor Society Convention. All 2016 and 2017 contest winners, plus a guest, will be invited to a welcoming breakfast with the Medal of Honor recipients on Wednesday, Sept. 13 of the Convention.

Winners

Elementary School

- 1st Place Dylan Moran – Goodnight Elementary School – Mr. Shue
2nd Place Nicholas Schmitz – Belmont Elementary School – Mrs. Leyh
3rd Place Kiersten Kinney – Corwin International Magnet School – Ms. Schwager
Honorable Mention Isaiah Miller – Haaff Elementary School – Ms. Elson
Honorable Mention Gerald Montez – South Park Elementary School – Mrs. Hedrick
Honorable Mention Antero Rodriguez – Corwin International Magnet School – Mrs. Sefovic

Middle School

- 1st Place Demi Winters – Skyview Middle School – Ms. Maez
2nd Place Stephen Wietzke – Homeschool – Ms. Wietzke
3rd Place Hadley Perry – Connect Charter School – Mr. Preston
Honorable Mention Hallee Ocana – Connect Charter School – Mrs. Medina

High School

- 1st Place Peyton Fernandez – Pueblo West High School – Lieutenant Colonel Emond
2nd Place Brendan Rushing – Pueblo West High School – Lieutenant Colonel Emond
3rd Place Maggie Turner-Jackson – Pueblo West High School – Lieutenant Colonel Emond
Honorable Mention Delaney Barela – East High School – Ms. Pacheco
Honorable Mention Marianna Gonzales – East High School – Ms. Vivoda
Honorable Mention Dakota Lucero – East High School – Ms. Vivoda
Honorable Mention Carol Romero – Centennial High School – Mr. Bell
Honorable Mention Evan Ward – Pueblo West High School – Ms. Sloan



Dylan Moran

Goodnight Elementary School – Mr. Shue

Ty Carter

Medal of Honor recipients are few and far between, as these amazing soldiers risk everything to help others. They go above and beyond the call of duty. They are constantly willing to pay the ultimate price to provide freedom and safety for those they serve. One of those amazing recipients is Ty Carter.

Ty Carter was not only awarded the Medal of Honor, but he also has a Purple Heart, and a Combat Action Badge. This goes to show that this incredible man has a pattern of heroic deeds and that his character in the face of extremely dangerous odds is flawless. Carter earned that very special medal (the Medal of Honor) in The Battle of Kamdesh. Under intense fire he took ammunition 100 meters to his base, soon retrieving back to get machine gun oil and even more ammunition. Once more Ty went back to retrieve more supplies that his team counted on, all while being fired on by the enemy. He was running with heavy objects back and forth to get supplies, when he noticed an injured soldier. Not only was Carter risking his life grabbing supplies, but he found a wounded man groaning on the ground in pain so Carter carried him 100 meters to an aid station. The supplies could have been heavier but carrying a person had to be difficult. Ty was instrumental in helping save that soldier's life, while helping supply and defend all of his other fellow soldiers. One question that I would die to get an answer for would simply be, "How were you able to do it? Running through bombs and gunfire with the chance of death, how did you build up the courage to do that?"

This amazing man showed patriotism, and that he loved his country so much that he actually put his life in the line of fire. Soon after his heroic acts, President Barack Obama awarded Carter with the Medal of Honor. I can't imagine what that could have been like, there would be many questions to ask but the most important one for me would be, "What drove you to risk it all for your fellow soldiers?"

I can't imagine how tough and strong this man is and was. He was running through death, ignoring the gunfire and bombs, saving lives and doing his duty. His love for country and his comrades in arms was truly showcased during this time in his life, so much so that he risked it all. So, suffice it to say, Ty Carter is not an everyday American man, he is an American hero.



Nicholas Schmitz

Belmont Elementary School – Mrs. Leyh

William Kyle Carpenter

Although all Medal of Honor recipients are heroes to me, I would most like to meet William Kyle Carpenter. He has a lot of bravery, which was shown when he jumped on a grenade in Afghanistan in 2010 in order to save his fellow Marine's life. Even more heroic to me, however, is afterward when Mr. Carpenter showed perseverance by deciding to overcome his injuries and become an example to everyone that we should be true to ourselves and live a life full of purpose. Whenever I am going through a rough time, I think of Kyle Carpenter and everything he overcame, and he inspires me to never give up.

Another thing that I admire about Kyle Carpenter is that he doesn't let his experiences in the past define who he is in the present. He plays sports, works with charities, travels around the world, and even parachutes out of planes! He is the perfect example of how to live in the moment instead of letting hardships take over your whole life.

If I were fortunate enough to meet Kyle Carpenter in real life, I would ask him, "How were you able to stay positive even with all of the pain and injuries you had to endure?" I would ask him this because I think his answer would teach me a lot about overcoming obstacles and tough times. It would help me remember that there are people in the world who have gone through much more difficult things than I ever have and would encourage me to stay positive and hopeful.

Next, I would also like to ask Kyle Carpenter who his inspiration was as a child, and who taught him to choose a life of service and purpose. I would be interested in his answer, because he is that person to me and is my inspiration to want to grow up and be a surgeon so I can help others.

Finally, if I'm ever able to meet Kyle Carpenter, I would ask if I could shake his hand and tell him how much he means to me. I would thank him for his service and for inspiring kids like me to choose selflessness instead of selfishness. If more kids knew about heroes like Mr. Carpenter, the world would be a better place.



Kiersten Kinney

Corwin International Magnet School – Ms. Schwager

Peter Lemon

A Medal of Honor is given to someone when they make an extraordinary act of bravery during combat. After this act is witnessed they recommend the award to the valor soldier. If the soldier is approved, the president of the United States of America will award the person. The Medal of Honor is the highest award that can be given in the U.S.

Peter Lemon was in the U.S Army, and earned a Medal of Honor. The base in Vietnam Peter was in was under attack. So he fended off the enemies with a machine gun and a rifle. But, both guns malfunctioned, so Peter Lemon used grenades instead. He killed all but one of the soldiers, so the soldier and Peter had to do hand to hand combat before Peter killed the enemy. Despite wounds from a grenade, Peter carried a seriously injured comrade to an aid station while being fired at. Then Peter Lemon realized that the defense sector was in danger, so he threw a grenade and engaged in hand to hand combat again. Yet wounded, again he successfully drove the soldier from his position. Peter was able to secure an operable machine gun, and stood atop a fully exposed embankment. He shot at the enemies till he collapsed from wounds and exhaustion. After regaining strength at the aid station, Peter wouldn't allow medical evacuation till more wounded soldiers received treatment.

I would like to meet Peter Lemon because he was a risk taker, and I think he would make me more confident in myself and make me more daring. If I could ask Peter Lemon some questions I would ask, did you ever think twice before making your heroic act? Do you have nightmares about Vietnam? What was it like when the cold Medal of Honor hit your chest?

Peter Lemon once exclaimed, "True heroism is not a matter of chance, it's a matter of choice."



Isaiah Miller

Haaff Elementary School – Ms. Elson

Sammy Lee Davis

The Medal of Honor is truly an award of respect and gratitude. The first Medal of Honor was created in 1861. This date was for the U.S. Navy. The Army had it created in 1862, the Air Force 1964. Those are the three types of this amazing award. So, as you can see, the Medal of Honor goes way back and has some very important history. Many people have received this great achievement. One of these important people was Sammy L. Davis.

Sammy L. Davis was a recipient of the Medal of Honor, and served in the U.S Army in the Vietnam War. He was referred to as, "The real Forrest Gump" by his comrades. What inspired me to write about this amazing hero is that he was unique. What I mean by this is that Sammy Davis had kept firing his gun for his comrades even when he was wounded. I did not see anyone else that had done this in the many people I had researched. Now that I have told you about later years, let's go back to his childhood. Sammy Lee Davis was born in 1946 in Dayton, Ohio, and raised in California. Davis' family had a history for serving in the wars. His grandfather, brothers, and dad served in the many wars that were happening at those rough times. I think that his family members serving set that high standard that helped him earn the great awards he earned. The Medal of Honor was not the only high standard award he had earned in his career. He had also earned a Silver Star and a Purple Heart. Truly, Sammy Lee Davis had a lot of great things that led up to his fabulous military career.

If I were to meet Mr. Davis, I would ask him many questions. One question I would ask him is, "Did the war make you different?" What I mean by this is, "Did you get PTSD or did it make you stronger or weaker? Do you treat people differently now?" Stuff like that. Next, I would ask him what gave him the strength to keep fighting. After that I would ask him, "If you had to do it again, would you do anything differently?" Another question would be, "How did it feel to meet President Lyndon B. Johnson?" Last, I would ask him, "Do you still remember the day it happened?" Discussing these things would give me a greater understanding of what the experience was like.

The Medal of Honor is the highest military award there is and has been received by many great people. The description of a winner is very hard to describe, but many people have fulfilled that great description. But, most importantly, Sammy Lee Davis fits it better than anyone I've heard of, and that is why I chose to write about him. So truly, Sammy Lee Davis (the real Forest Gump) deserves all the awards he earned, especially the Medal of Honor.



Gerald Montez

South Park Elementary School – Mrs. Hedrick

Arthur Jackson

Arthur was a Private First Class in World War II and he was born in Cleveland, Ohio on October 18, 1924. After reading about Arthur, I wanted to learn more about him because he was a Private First Class, which means that he saw a lot of action. I want to know more about World War II. I have always been interested in history, so learning more about the men that fought in the war is important to me.

One courageous act Arthur performed was that he single-handedly destroyed 12 enemy pillboxes and took the lives of 50 enemy soldiers. I felt that had to be extremely dangerous and frightening. This made me want to learn more about Private Jackson. He also saved the life of a wounded Marine in January of 1944 during the Gloucester Campaign. He had to carry the Marine up a steep hill during heavy enemy fire from the Japanese. Jackson was presented with the Letter of Commendation for this act of heroism. I thought this information showed how brave and courageous Arthur was during this battle. I could not imagine what Private Jackson was thinking and feeling as he continued to put himself in danger. He is credited with almost single-handedly wiping out the enemy in the southern part of the Island of Peleliu. I found Private Jackson's story to be extremely interesting.

If I had the opportunity to meet Private Jackson, I have several questions in mind. The first thing I would ask is about the gun he carried in battle. I would like to know what type of gun he used to protect his country against the enemy. I am interested in the types of guns they used back in World War II. The article I read does not state if Private Jackson was wounded during this time. I would like to ask him if he had been shot at or wounded during his time in battle. I believe it would be even more difficult to continue to fight the enemy if you were hurt also. I also wonder about how hard it is to get used to a normal life after being in a war. I have heard of people having flashbacks, nightmares, and other troubles after fighting in a war. Since Private Jackson was on the front lines and seeing an extraordinary amount of action, I wonder if it was hard for him to fit back into his normal life after the war.

In conclusion, this is the reason why I would like to meet Private Jackson and what I would say to him if I had the chance to meet him.



Antero Rodriguez

Corwin International Magnet School – Mrs. Sefovic

Harvey Barnum

The Congressional Medal of Honor is the highest military award a person can receive. There are three different types of Congressional Medals of Honor. Each military branch, the Navy, the Army, and the Air Force has a Medal of Honor. The Marine Corps and Coast Guard receive the Navy Medal of Honor. The President of the United States gives the award to the courageous soldiers during a ceremony. If a soldier earns this award, it is because they went above and beyond the call of duty against their enemy even if it is dangerous or against their orders. Their actions can be life threatening but they still chose to put their life in danger for others. They are American heroes (CMOHS.org).

In Cheshire, Connecticut a brave hero was born on July 21, 1940. He joined the Marine Corps on November 12, 1958. He was a member of the 9th Marines, 3rd Marine Division when he went to Vietnam. He received the Congressional Medal of Honor for valor on February 27, 1967 as a member of the Marine Corps for his brave actions in the Vietnam War. His rank was First Lieutenant. During a battle, his commander died in combat and he took charge of the other soldiers. He told engineers to blow up some trees to clear a landing area so that helicopters could land so they could take the wounded and dead out of the area. He was quoted as saying, "If I could stand here, you could land here". This military hero is Harvey C. Barnum, Jr. He spent 27 years serving his country. His final rank was Colonel (CMOHS.org).

There are many reasons why, I would like to meet Harvey C. Barnum, Jr. One reason is because, he is an American Hero and famous for his brave actions. Also, my grandfather fought in the Vietnam War so maybe they worked together. Finally, I would like to meet him because I have many family members that were in the military and two of my uncles were also Marines.

One question I would like to ask him would be, "How did it feel when all the young Marines looked up to you during the battle after the commanding officer died?" Another question would be, "Did you think your actions during the war would allow you to still be here today?" Another question I would like to ask him would be, "What advice would you give young soldiers facing similar situations?"



Demi Winters

Skyview Middle School – Ms. Maez

Hershel Williams

Corporal Hershel W. Williams, retired Medal of Honor recipient, gallantly battled in World War II as a U.S Marine. I personally applaud him out of the 75 living awardees. Corporal Williams was an ingenious man when it came to war; he attempted to halt devastating machine gun fire from immovable positions with only four riflemen covering him. It was four long hours of combat. Corporal Williams attained flamethrowers and cleared one position after another. When an enemy attempted to stop his brave rampage, he killed him with his flamethrower. He really got creative and mounted a pillbox to implant the nozzle of his flamethrower through the air vent, assassinating his rival. In conclusion, this man was a daring, brave, and innovative Marine.

There are countless things I would want to ask Mr. Williams, but I have a few very important ones to me. I would ask Corporal Williams why he cared so greatly about that single encounter? No matter the response I would receive from him I still immensely respect his dedication and audacious spirit. Another question I would ask Corporal Williams is if he was drafted into the war? Also what were his feelings going into the war? During war the Commander in Chief makes the decisions, so I would ask Hershel Williams if he thought the president was making ethical decisions for World War II. The following question I would ask him is what gave you the idea to implant the nozzle of your flame thrower into an air vent? The last question I would ask him is that if he feels that he was backed by the general public. Those are the questions I would ask Hershel Williams.

The reason I would ask why he cared so greatly about that single encounter is because in his biography on www.cmohs.org it stated "...he fought desperately for 4 hours..." If someone is in a confrontation for four hours, they definitely care about that battle. The reasoning behind my asking him if he was drafted into the war is because it was extremely typical for men to be drafted into World War II. I would also want to discover his feelings going into the war, that's why I would ask his feelings going into the war. I would ask if the president was making ethical decisions for WWII because he would know first hand what the effects of the president's orders are. I have a feeling that shoving the nozzle of his flame thrower into the air vent to execute the enemy was not a first resort, so I would love to know what made him think of this unhinged plan. Although World War II was not a very controversial war, I'm still intrigued on whether or not Mr. Williams thinks that he was supported by America's citizens. I would love asking these questions to Corporal Williams.

Mr. Hershel Williams' story is incredible and unbelievable. I would be ecstatic and it would be one of the most memorable experiences to ask him these questions in person. He is a true American hero and deserved every bit of that Medal of Honor.



Stephen Wietzke

Homeschool – Mrs. Wietzke

Leo Thorsness

The Vietnam War was a war to keep Vietnam from becoming communist. If Vietnam became communist then probably other countries in Asia would become communist. Vietnam was split into two parts the northern half and the southern half. Ho Chi Minh was the leader of the north side and wanted the country to become whole, so he asked China and other communist countries to help him. The communists were happy to help him, but the U.S. didn't want Vietnam to become communist so they sent in their forces to help the southern side.

After a long fight the U.S. citizens saw that they were getting nowhere in the war and the citizens started protesting about the war. So then the U.S. took their troops out of Vietnam and the north side crushed the south side.

Leo K. Thorsness was a Lieutenant Colonel fighting for the U.S. Air Force over North Vietnam. He was on a mission to stop the enemies from shooting down their planes. Thorsness and his wingman used missiles to destroy one base and bombs to destroy another. While he was destroying the second base his wingman got shot down by the enemy. The two people abandoned the plane and unleashed their parachutes. Leo K. Thorsness circled them and kept them in view and told the rescue team where their position was. Then an enemy plane came to the area and Leo K. Thorsness immediately fired at him and shot him down. Because he was low on fuel he had to go find a tanker to get fuel, but on being told that there were helicopters rescuing them and there were four hostile planes in the area, he went back, despite being low on fuel, and fought off the planes. In the process he injured one plane and scared the others off. Instead of using the tanker to get back to a safe base he let the rescue aircraft get the tanker fuel so they could get back to a safe base. He had to land on the forward base in danger of being shot down. What a brave and heroic man he was.

There are a lot of questions I would like to ask him in this story. For example I heard that his plane was called the F-150 (or also called the Thunder Chief). What was it like to ride in that? I also wanted to ask him, what made him want to risk his life to save others, or if he was scared. I might ask about what kind of tanker it was: a flying tanker or a ground tanker? What was it like when he got back to the U.S.? Did people treat him as a hero, or did the people who protested the war treat him badly? Those are some of the questions I would like to ask him.



Hadley Perry

Connect Charter School – Mr. Preston

Dakota Meyer

Some people may ask why I picked Mr. Dakota Meyer for the Home of Heroes Medal of Honor recipient essay. Well I picked Mr. Meyer because he did many amazing things. When I found out that he wrote a book about how he killed enemy soldiers and saved U.S. and Afghan soldiers' lives while under attack giving him the honor to receive the Medal of Honor, I knew I wanted to write about him. He wasn't just a soldier, but a writer. I am an avid reader, so I thought Mr. Dakota would be an amazing choice. It truly is amazing that I am able to learn about Mr. Meyer. He knew exactly what to do and did not panic. He made many rounds and gunned down many insurgents and rescued hurt U.S. and Afghan soldiers.

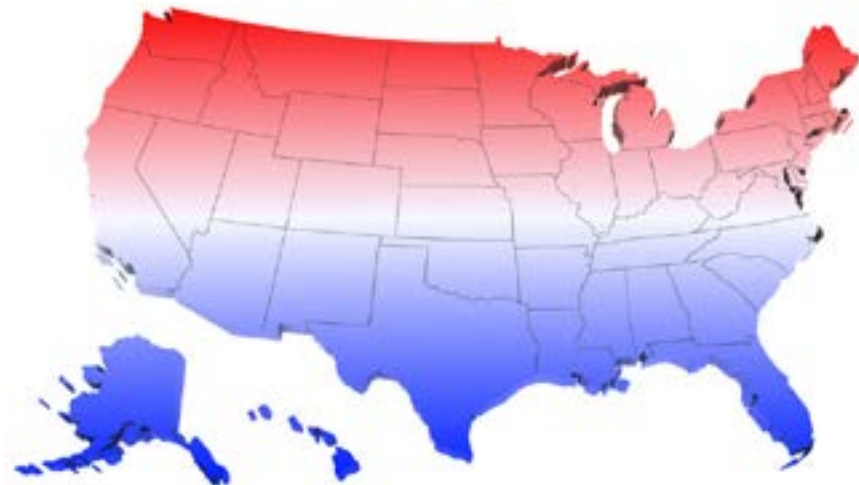
Also recovering his brothers in arms that had died, I admire him because he did all of this without being told. Putting his life on the line to save others is so honorable and courageous.

I would like to ask him if he was scared, because if I was in that situation I know I would be. What was it like to have to stand up and be brave with everyone depending on you? That would be very hard for me. As a teenager you have to do things you don't want to do and your emotions make a lot of your decisions. As a soldier, do you ever have that happen or are you trained to not show or let your emotions make decisions? Please explain that to me; I am only 14.

My brother is a soldier in Afghanistan, also. What can I do to help him transition back into our life when he returns home?

- Was it hard and how did you transition back into civilian life?
- How long were you deployed and how long were you in the military service?
- We all have battle scars in life, how do you think people could help themselves with these scars?
- Were you always a quick thinker? I think that is a very important skill to have in life.
- What was the terrain like?
- Which military base were you deployed from and what was your battalion number?
- Where in Afghanistan were you deployed?
- Did you receive support, packages, and letters from your loved ones back home?
- How much support did the military give you after you returned home?
- Did you get a lot of time to visit with your family without the worry of being called back to work?
- What was it like to be with the Afghan army; did they like cooperating with you?
- Do you think the American people appreciate what you did and service enough, or even at all?
- If you could make all Americans feel and hear one thing, what would it be and why?

Thank you so much for your service.



Hallee Ocana

Connect Charter School – Mrs. Medina

Melvin Morris

When I first got the prompt to write about a living out of town medal of honor recipient, I thought that this would be no easy task finding some hero I could relate to that's not from my town. However, somehow, I found the perfect recipient, Sergeant First Class Melvin Morris. He voluntarily served two tours in Vietnam.

Voluntarily going to war is a feat in itself but during the 1960s, that's worth noting. Morris first joined the military in 1959 for the Oklahoma Army National Guard and later requested to join the active Army. He became one of the first soldiers to don the "green beret" at the command of President John F. Kennedy at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in 1961. On Sept. 17, 1969, while commanding the Third Company, Third Battalion of the IV Mobile Strike Force near Chi Lang, led an advance across enemy lines to retrieve a fallen comrade and single-handedly destroyed an enemy force that had pinned his battalion from a series of bunkers.

Staff Sgt. Morris was shot three times as he ran back toward friendly lines with the American casualties, but did not stop until he reached safety. The Distinguished Service Cross was awarded to then Staff Sgt. Morris in April 1970 for extraordinary heroism during this 1969 battle. After receiving the award, he returned to Vietnam the same month for his second tour. He retired at Fort Hood, Texas in May 1985. Morris currently resides in Cocoa, Fla. "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty: Staff Sergeant Melvin Morris distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as Commander of a Strike Force drawn from Company D, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, during combat operations against an armed enemy in the vicinity of Chi Lang, Republic of Vietnam on September 17, 1969. On that afternoon, Staff Sergeant Morris' affiliated companies encountered an extensive enemy mine field and were subsequently engaged by a hostile force. Staff Sergeant Morris learned by radio that a fellow team commander had been killed near an enemy bunker and he immediately reorganized his men into an effective assault posture before advancing forward and splitting off with two men to recover the team commander's body.

Observing the maneuver, the hostile force concentrated its fire on Staff Sergeant Morris' three-man element and successfully wounded both men accompanying him. After assisting the two wounded men back to his forces' lines, Staff Sergeant Morris charged forward into withering enemy fire with only his men's suppressive fire as cover. While enemy machine gun emplacements continuously directed strafing fusillades against him, Staff Sergeant Morris destroyed the positions with hand grenades and continued his assault, ultimately eliminating four bunkers. Upon reaching the bunker nearest the fallen team commander, Staff Sergeant Morris repulsed the enemy, retrieved his comrade and began the arduous trek back to friendly lines. He was wounded three times as he struggled forward, but ultimately succeeded in returning his fallen comrade to a friendly position. Staff Sergeant Morris' extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army."

The type of questions I would ask this true hero would be something along the lines of why his part in Vietnam was so important to him. Sure, in class all kids ever hear about is how people rushed to sign up for the war, but what American history seems to forget is that soldiers are people too. I know not all heroes volunteered to run off to battle. So, my question is why? Why was it so important to run off and take a documented three shots on September 17, 1969 and then go back for round two of protecting America. I, by all means mean no offense to the U.S. or Mr. Morris, but that specific time in history was not very appealing for anyone. Another question I would ask is what it was like for someone of his race and age to be in the army when people at the time were still so biased. Of course I would ask several other questions like what his experience was like and how hard was it adjusting back to a semi-civilian life. Clearly, this all American hero and I would end up talking for



Peyton Fernandez

Pueblo West High School – Lieutenant Colonel Emond

Don Jenkins

Being tasked with choosing a hero from a list of several Congressional Medal of Honor Recipients, was extremely hard, and very humbling. It is amazing to me how the human spirit can push beyond the normal limits when faced with such danger and impossible obstacles. Where most people would lay down and take cover, these men showed that there is no stopping and no resting until everyone is safe, and the mission is complete.

From this amazing list of super humans, I choose S/Sgt (then Private First Class) Don J. Jenkins. After reading through several profiles, his stood out to me for several different reasons, but first and foremost I admired how hard he pushed to achieve the goal that was given to him. Even though he knew each time he went to rescue another person, that it meant possibly losing his own life, and doing this all while having debilitating wounds himself, he continued to push onward, until he had accomplished what he set out to do. It was not just one occasion that S/Sgt Jenkins risked his life, but in fact there were several times that he put himself in harm's way to complete the mission and to protect his fellow soldiers. There are many reasons that I chose S/Sgt Jenkins, but another main reason I would love to meet and talk to him is because he not only risked his life, but he also kept his head on his shoulders, and knew what his objective was the whole time, and never lost sight of that even while being fired at. I could only hope that if I was in his shoes, that I could show the amazing strength and grit that S/Sgt (then Private First Class) Jenkins showed.

If ever given the honor of meeting S/Sgt Jenkins, there are many things I would like to ask him. While words may fail me for a period of time, I know I would come away with a wealth of knowledge about strength and perseverance. These are the questions I would ask him.

A natural human emotion is fear and fight or flight, when your machine gun jammed, did you think even for a second to back down and go attempt to repair it yourself to get out of the heavy gunfire? What did you do to try and keep your mind clear and focused on the task at hand amidst all of the gunfire and explosions around you? Was there ever a time where you had to stop and collect yourself before moving forward? I find it hard to put into words the courage it must have taken for you to maneuver from enemy lines back to friendly territory, each time crawling back on your own, to grab more ammunition, in which you ended up sustaining serious injuries. Do you feel that you learned this courage from your time in the military, or is this something that you learned growing up? As you went not once, but three separate times to rescue soldiers from the beleaguered unit, did you ever feel like because of your injuries you may need to stop, or that you could not go anymore? Was each subsequent trip to rescue harder than the prior, and did you feel during any of those trips that you could not push anymore?

I know that there are probably many more accomplishments that S/Sgt Jenkins showed not only on that day, but on the days prior to that, and after, that he probably has never shared. It takes a very strong, level headed, determined and fearless person to do the things that he did. We can all learn a lot from what S/Sgt Jenkins did during battle. This can be applied to our everyday lives in how we choose to live and treat others around us. I salute you for your service, your courage and your compassion to do all the things you did that day to save so



Brendan Rushing

Pueblo West High School – Lieutenant Colonel Emond

Wilburn Ross

Something that I have found out in my studying for this essay is that while the Medal of Honor recipients did amazing things, the battle could have very well been won without them.

This almost certainly isn't the case with PVT Ross. From what I understand, his Company was decimated and the Germans just kept on coming. By doing what he did, he not only saved his company from extinction, but also won the battle, almost singlehandedly. He killed or wounded at least 58 Germans in five hours of nonstop fighting, forcing them to retreat.

If I were to meet this man, there are plenty of questions I would ask him. What was going through your mind at that time? What were you fighting for? How do you feel about being awarded the Medal of Honor? As a PVT, did you feel pressured to prove yourself? Who did you look up to when you were younger? Who do you look up to now? There are answers that I would expect to hear seeing as most recipients seem to have very similar responses to these questions, but it would be nice to have the definitive answers from the man himself. I would then get more creative with my questions. If taken back in time and told in no uncertain terms that you will die if you do it again, would you?

Master Sergeant Ross is a very interesting person. I would love to meet him in real life. He won a battle almost singlehandedly. He put himself in danger to force the German troops back. He stayed far longer than any normal person would have. His Company was nearly wiped out, but he kept on fighting. He is the epitome of duty and responsibility and I haven't seen much of anything that he has personally said. Has he not had any interviews? If so I haven't seen them. There is so much to know about him, but so little that I know.

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Maggie Turner-Jackson

Pueblo West High School – Lieutenant Colonel Emond

Dakota Meyer

The most interesting Medal of Honor recipient is Marine Sergeant Dakota Meyer. In 2009 Dakota Meyer, a corporal at the time, maintained security at a rally point in Afghanistan, while other members of his team were headed for a scheduled meeting with the Ganjgal village elders. What was supposed to be a meeting actually turned out to be an ambush of more than 50 enemy soldiers with rocket propelled grenades, mortars, machine guns and fortified positions in the slopes above. Corporal Meyer heard over the radio that four U.S. team members were cut off, so he and a fellow Marine took a gun-truck, with Meyer in the exposed gunner's position, and they drove down the steeply terraced terrain to rescue their team and stop the enemy attack. Once there, the two marines had intense gunfire concentrated on their vehicle alone. Despite that, Corporal Meyer killed a number of enemy soldiers with the mounted machine guns and his rifle, some at near point blank range. They made three solo trips to the ambushed area; the first two were used to evacuate two dozen Afghan soldiers, and the third trip Meyer coordinated had himself directly helping the remaining ally soldiers, who were trying to make an exit, with the accurate fire he placed on the enemy. Although he had acquired a shrapnel wound to his arm, he made two more trips with a new gun-truck and four Afghan vehicles to rescue more wounded soldiers. During this six-hour fight, Corporal Meyer successfully disrupted the enemy attack and showed unwavering courage and dedication to his comrades in the face of death.

Therefore, to begin, if I could meet any of the living Medal of Honor recipients, I would want to meet Sergeant Dakota Meyer. One citation of the events had said that, by saving the lives he did, Sergeant Meyer had to go against direct orders. Another citation said that he did not go against orders at all. Whether he actually did or did not defy orders does not change the fact that he represented something that we should all strive to be: not sheep. Humans are, by nature, more obsequious to authority than we like to think. And perhaps that is not a bad quality to have in the military; but there comes a time when we need to have the initiative to do what we believe is right, even if it turns out to be wrong. Sergeant Meyer is an outstanding example of this, and that, personally, is a quality I look for in idols. If I were given the opportunity to meet Sergeant Dakota Meyer I would truly be honored.

Firstly, if given the chance, I would ask Sergeant Dakota Meyer what was going through his head during the battle and if there was any hesitation in putting himself into such danger, or even killing the enemy. These are obvious questions (especially since if the answer to the last one is “yes” then he shouldn't be in the military), but it's important to understand a person's point of view before you can understand his actions. So, before asking anything else, I would want to fully understand his view on everything that happened during the battle.

Next, I would ask Sergeant Meyer a more personal question; one that he might not even admit to himself. Which action brought more satisfaction: saving fellow comrades or killing the enemy? I feel that if you asked any Medal of Honor recipient that, they would say it was the former, unless they were really true to themselves. In most cases, this satisfaction is subconscious anyway. So, if there was a way I could get an answer in its most honest form, that is what I would ask him.

In conclusion, the most interesting Medal of Honor recipient that is still living is Sergeant Dakota Meyer. The qualities he expresses are hard to find in most people. I would ask him questions to fully understand his experiences and what it is that makes him so outstanding. It would truly and completely be my honor to be able to meet Sergeant Dakota Meyer.

Delaney Barela

East High School – Ms. Pacheco

John Baca

John Baca, born in 1949, was drafted into the United States Army in 1968 with little contemplation of receiving the Medal of Honor award for his heroic actions. Two years later, in 1970, he was stationed in Vietnam as a Specialist Four. On February 10 in Phuoc Long Province, he was serving on a recoilless rifle team when the lead patrol of his team was ambushed. John Baca stepped up to the plate and began to lead his team forward until a fragmentation grenade was launched into their surroundings. Without concern for his own safety, he unhesitatingly threw himself at the bomb and covered it with his helmet and his body. His outrageous decision saved eight fellow vets from a disaster that could have led to death or serious injury. Baca survived, and on March 2, 1971 was awarded the Medal of Honor by Richard Nixon.

John Phillip Baca had paid his dues to our nation, but yet felt the need to do more to preserve our country. Twenty years later, he traveled to a village north of Hanoi with other Vietnamese soldiers to build a health clinic. Baca rarely speaks publicly about his act of courage, but describes another story that was on Christmas Day, about a young Vietnamese soldier that he'd discovered sitting on top of an enemy bunker. Baca did not kill the young man, but told him to surrender.

Those were the words the young man searched for, and was later a soldier that was engaged in creating the health clinic for the war. John Phillip remains active in social causes and helps with the plight for the homeless. He writes poems about living an easy life in a peaceful world.

I chose this Medal of Honor recipient because he was humble, and his story was how he went from a troubled teenager, to getting involved in the army. John Baca's misbehavior could have led him into time in prison, and so he said, “joining the army was the best thing for me at the time.” I also chose this hero for his explanation of the feeling he experienced when the grenade had collision with his was praying just for an advantage or another peaceful day to go by. I also would like to discuss how his attitude was so positive. It amazes me how effortless the young soldier had made it look. Through the horrible circumstances that he was in, it was lucid that he was able to handle all tasks and duties precariously and with heedfulness.

I would clarify with him his thoughts at the direct moment he put his life at risk. I would also ask this to see an open idea of what was running through this mind. I would also ask if he was unsure what to do in the moment or if it came naturally.

Questions pertaining to his religion, responsibilities, and thoughts are mainly the questions that I would expect answered. All in all, I believe I picked the right Medal of Honor recipient for his bravery, and his incredible boldness.



Marianna Gonzales

East High School – Ms. Vivoda

William Kyle Carpenter

I can't even imagine the type of bravery it takes to risk your own life for someone else's. Can you? William Kyle Carpenter. was one of these people who was courageous; he was determined to save a life without even thinking about himself. Carpenter is a medically retired United States Marine who received the highest military honor, the Medal of Honor. He was awarded for his actions that took place in Marjah District, Helmand Province, Afghanistan on November 21, 2010. William Kyle Carpenter was exceedingly heroic for placing someone's life first before his own.

To begin, Carpenter's actions were extremely bold. He was 21 years old at the time when he jumped on a grenade to save another Marine's life named, Nicholas Eufrazio. Kyle was severely wounded from this selfless act. He suffered a skull fracture requiring brain surgery, multiple broken bones in his face, and lost a third of his lower jaw. Carpenter also had a collapsed right lung; he spent five weeks in a coma from all of his injuries. William Kyle Carpenter has had almost 40 surgeries. He didn't worry about his life because it was more important to save his fellow Marines. What Kyle did was truly unforgettable.

Next, why did I select this incredible Marine. I chose William Kyle Carpenter because he has an amazing story and he had no hesitation in his actions. Kyle's story reveals to people that he cared more about his fellow Marine than himself. He shares with people how courageous he was when he jumped on top of that grenade. Because of Carpenter's actions, he has inspired me to care for others more than myself. Kyle is admired by many because of his selfless actions.

Finally, what questions would I ask Kyle if I had the chance to meet him? The first question I would ask Carpenter would be, "Why did you become a Marine?" I would ask him this because I want to know what made him pursue this specific profession. Then I would ask, "Did you ever think you would get the Medal of Honor and how did you feel when you received the Medal?" My last question to Kyle would be, "What was going through your head when you decided to jump on top of the grenade?" It would completely be a great opportunity if I had the chance to meet William Kyle Carpenter.

In conclusion, the Medal of Honor isn't just handed out to anyone. It is awarded to those who display selfless and courageous actions. In spite of receiving the Medal of Honor, Carpenter is incredibly humble through everything he does. Kyle's actions show people that he is fearless. To me Carpenter will encourage others to be strong in everything that you do, no matter what it is. He will always be a person that comes to mind for people to tackle things without fear. Also for people to just get the job done and push through because you should fight through every hard situation that life throws at you. Let's all be courageous fighters like William Kyle Carpenter.



Dakota Lucero

East High School – Ms. Vivoda

William Kyle Carpenter

As many of us have learned in our history classes throughout the years, a Medal of Honor recipient is someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty ordered. Since it started being awarded in 1863, 3,515 of these awards have been given to these outstanding people. I would like to speak about a man named William Kyle Carpenter. William was an ordinary man who served for our country, and achieved an extraordinary action with nothing but love in his heart. Carpenter's story is truly moving and I would be privileged to meet him.

Mr. Carpenter received his medal on June 19, 2014 due to a previous move four years prior in Afghanistan, 2010. In Afghanistan he was ordered to open a "patrol base" in Kareze Saydi. Surviving two days in the location he followed his call of duty. But here's where he takes the extra step; three grenades were thrown into his area. Seeing that one of them had landed by him and his partner Eufrazio he stepped between Eufrazio and this deadly weapon; risking his own life for his partner's, not expecting one thing in return. Luckily both men survived, but they were medically retired from the military. Eufrazio sadly suffered brain trauma which led to doctors saying he'd never be able to speak again. Carpenter on the other hand, healed and moved on to college. Without Carpenter's significant acts, Eufrazio wouldn't be alive today.

Why would I like to meet this outstanding man you ask? Three reasons; It'd be an honor to meet anyone that risks their life for our country, second he had the courage to jump in the front of a grenade, anyone who has the guts to do that deserves to be awarded, third I would love to learn about his life after his conclusion from the war and how he is doing. Personally, I have had family members and close family friends that have served in our military and I am really interested in meeting many others to thank them for their time and hear about their duration in the army if they're willing to talk about that journey. Kyle Carpenter risked his life for his partner by shielding the blow with his body. I believe that anybody that has the courage to do that deserves recognition. Enough about his time during the war, another reason I would like to meet Mr. Carpenter would be because I'm interested in what he's doing today. The ones of us who have done research on him learned that after retirement he went back to school but what about now? Which leads to my next topic.

Now that we know why I would be privileged to meet Mr. Carpenter, I have a couple questions for him. As we are aware, he jumped in front of a ticking grenade to save his buddy. But what made him choose shielding his partner opposed to running and saving himself from the pain and time of recovery he went through? Being a 16 year old girl I do not know much about how enrolling in the military works. So another thing I would like to ask him is: is he able to re-enroll in the military? If so, would he want to? Back to the topic of saving Nick Eufrazio's life. Does he keep in touch with him or his family? After doing a little research on these men, it really opened up my eyes about what it takes to earn The Medal of Honor, and how courageous that person has to be and I will appreciate the men who serve us a lot more.

William Carpenter is indeed an outstanding man. Men like him are great examples for our future leaders. Whether it is serving for our country or just having integrity in your actions. I would love to hear about his journey in and after the war. I know the Medal of Honor is a highly ranked medal and I believe he deserves that award.



Carol Romero

Centennial High School – Mr. Bell

Thomas Kelley

Captain Thomas G. Kelley was born May 13, 1939 in Boston. He was issued into the Navy on May 14, 1970. He served in the Vietnam War from 1960-1990. The awards he earned are the Medal of Honor and the Purple Heart. Thomas G. Kelly inspires me because of the actions he has done through his life.

He was raised in Boston; his parents were John Kelly and Elizabeth Kelly. His father was a school teacher and a principal. His mother was raised in a Roman Catholic family. Kelly attended Boston College class of 1956, and he also attended the College of Holy Cross class of 1960.

Thomas G. Kelly had a wife named Joan O'Connor he married her in October, 2005. She was also in the Navy but she was in the Navy Reserves but she retired from the Navy Reserves as a commander of 12 years as a public affairs officer and a retired government attorney. They had three daughters; their names were Lisa Duvall, Kate Clark and Jain Kelly. She is also the mother of Brian O'Connor. They have two grandsons named Tom and John Duval.

It all started off one day in his senior year of college getting ready to graduate when his friends came back from being gone all day and told him you would not believe what we did, we signed up for the Navy. He was surprised so he signed up for the Navy too. It was not because of any special reason, it was because his two best pals did. Thomas G. Kelley also looked up to his father that was a school teacher and his cousin that was in World War II and he wanted to take after them and follow in their footsteps. He then went to the Navy and on June 15, 1969 was how he received the Medal of Honor and here is how. It was the worst day to break down, and Kelly was the leader of the column of eight Navy river assault crafts. Moments later, one of the carriers broke down and it was unable to move. The others were firing so Kelley had no choice but to move his own craft in front of the broken down craft. He moved it directly into the line of fire. He was protecting his command when they started firing. They knocked him down to the deck below. He was unable to move and unable to speak but Kelley continued to direct the battle until the craft was fixed. Then Kelley lost consciousness and fell into a coma. The shrapnel had destroyed one of his eyes and part of his skull. After recovery Kelley was declared physically unfit for duty. Kelley then received the Medal of Honor on May 14, 1970. Kelly did not stop working after that. He had many other jobs after that. He also always helped out the homeless. Kelly did a lot of great things in his life and this is why he inspires me because he did not just stop working after the Navy. He continued to work and help out his community.



Evan Ward

Pueblo West High School – Ms. Sloan

Robert Patterson

During the summer I attended the 2016 Colorado Boy's State. I spent a week learning about US Government, Service, and Patriotism. During my stay I had the opportunity to listen to not one, but two Medal of Honor recipients speak about their experiences and what the Medal of Honor meant to them. Although I enjoyed listening to Pueblo Medal of Honor recipient Drew Dix speak, the presentation Robert M. Patterson of Durham, North Carolina gave changed my life forever.

Mr. Patterson's presentation focused on integrity, which is a moral value that I hold near to my heart. I have taken great pride in my integrity throughout my years of leadership, especially this year as Student Body President of Pueblo West High School. His presentation at the Center for American Values left a lasting impact on me and I wanted to share my experience with my peers. I purchased a book from the Center that was composed of quotes from each Medal of Honor recipient. As Student Body President, I am in charge of reading the daily announcements. I added a new feature to the announcements this year: Medal of Honor Mondays. I read a quote from a Medal of Honor recipient every Monday to motivate my peers and promote the strong values upon which United States was founded. Needless to say, Mr. Patterson's quote, "Your integrity is the most valuable asset you have. Never jeopardize it" was at the top of my list. If I could personally meet Mr. Patterson, I would thank him for going above the call of duty to serve our great country. I would also tell him how he influenced my life through the emphasis of patriotism and integrity. I am currently a candidate for the United States Air Force Academy, where integrity is one of the most sacred values.

Given the opportunity, I would ask Mr. Patterson some important questions I have about integrity. Serving as a leader in my school, there are many opportunities to demonstrate integrity and strong character. My first question for Mr. Patterson would be, "Have you ever been in a situation where your integrity was challenged? How did you respond?" This question is important to me because Mr. Patterson has proven to be of the upmost moral character and level of integrity. After watching videos and learning more specific details about Mr. Patterson's acts of valor, I learned that he single-handedly destroyed enemy bunkers that had pinned down his platoon. Using only his rifle and grenades, he charged the bunkers and killed eight enemy soldiers, enabling his unit to reach the objective. I was truly amazed by Mr. Patterson's actions; he acted bravely and without regard for his own safety in order to help his comrades. Based on this information, I would like to know more about how Mr. Patterson's life changed after receiving the Medal of Honor. He said that wearing the Medal of Honor is much more difficult than earning it, and that he wears it with pride for those who were by his side in battle and those who did not make it home. The final question I would ask Mr. Patterson is, "What is the one piece of advice you would give to someone who is in the face of adversity?" Everyone faces an obstacle sometime in his or her life that may seem impossible to overcome. Mr. Patterson faced this challenge in the midst of the Vietnam War. Although he does not remember his specific actions, his character makes it easy to understand how he overcame the immense hardships of war.

I have always admired those who are humble when being honored and venerated. Mr. Patterson exemplifies how to properly wear the Medal of Honor. I am thankful that I had the opportunity to listen to this great man, an American hero, speak. His service to the United States and his emphasis on integrity have changed my life. I wish I could personally meet him and thank him for impacting me in such a positive manner. My questions about handling integrity and facing adversity are highly relevant to my life and I would be interested to hear the advice and perspective of a Medal of Honor recipient.

Even if I never meet him in person, Robert M. Patterson has made a difference in my life, and I am a better human being today because of him.

