

CANADIAN WINNERS OF THE UNITED STATES MEDAL OF HONOR

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The Medal of Honor¹: The Medal of Honor (MOH) is the highest military decoration awarded by the United States government. It is bestowed on members of the United States Armed Forces who distinguish themselves "*conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States.*"²

As the award citation includes the phrase "in the name of Congress", it is sometimes erroneously called the *Congressional* Medal of Honor; however, the official title is simply the Medal of Honor.

Members of all branches of the armed forces are eligible to receive the medal. There are three versions (one for the Army, one for the Air Force, and one for the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard). The Naval and Army versions were introduced during the United States Civil War. The United States Air Force version was introduced in 1965. Prior to then, Air Force recipients were awarded the Army version.



Army MOH



Navy MOH



Air Force MOH

In total, 3,471 medals have been awarded to 3,452 different people. Of these, 625 were awarded posthumously. Nineteen men, including one Canadian (see below), have received a second award: 14 of those received two separate medals for two separate actions, and five received both the Navy and the Army Medals of Honor for the same action.

Canadian Awards: Medals of Honor can only be awarded to members of the U.S. Armed Forces—although being a U.S. citizen is not a prerequisite. Sixty-one³

¹ American spelling to denote the nationality of the award.

² Department of the Army (July 1, 2002). "[Section 578.4 Medal of Honor](#)". *Code of Federal Regulations Title 32, Volume 2*. Government Printing Office.

³ Sixty one is the most commonly cited number although other sources indicate as few as 54 Canadian MOH winners. The difference is probably due to the criteria used for determining the

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Canadians who were serving in the United States Armed Forces have been awarded the Medal of Honor, the majority of which were awarded for actions in the American Civil War. More than 50,000 Canadians fought on one side or the other in the Civil War, and 34 of these earned the MOH. During this time, no other military award was authorized, and this explains why some seemingly less notable actions were recognized by the Medal of Honor. The criteria for the award became stricter after World War I.

PRE – 1900: Two notable Canadian MOH recipients include:

Robert Sweeny, born in Montreal in 1853, was awarded two Medals of Honor⁴:

The first citation reads: *Serving on board the U.S.S. Kearsarge, at Hampton Roads, Va., 26 October 1881, Sweeney jumped overboard and assisted in saving from drowning a shipmate who had fallen overboard into a strongly running tide.*

The second reads: *Serving on board the U.S.S. Jamestown, at the Navy Yard New York, 20 December 1883, Sweeney rescued from drowning, A. A. George, who had fallen overboard from that vessel.*

Willard and **Harry Miller** of Noel Shore, Hants Co., Nova Scotia, while serving

nationality of the individual. A similar discrepancy arises when trying to count the number of Canadian Victoria Cross winners (most commonly cited as 94).

⁴ Prior to 1942, the USN had two versions of the MOH, one of which recognised non-combat acts of gallantry. Post-1942, only one, for combat gallantry, was recognised.

aboard the USS *Nashville* on January 8, 1878, pulled off an impossible mission under heavy gunfire in a Cuban bay. The Miller brothers became the first set of brothers to ever be awarded Medals of Honor.

POST -1900: Since 1900, only four⁵ Medals of Honor are cited as having been awarded to Canadians.

Charles A. MacGillvary moved from Prince Edward Island at the age of 16 to live with his older brother in Boston.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941, MacGillvary joined the US Army. He was convinced by a local enlisting agent that it would be better if he got US citizenship.



In 1945, after landing on Omaha Beach at Normandy, MacGillvary made his way into France with the US Army. On New Year's Day 1945, Sergeant MacGillvary's company, pinned down by a Panzer division, running out of ammunition and talking of surrender, lost its commander. MacGillvary was next in line to take his place. MacGillvary undertook a one-man mission to try and free up his platoon's advance. He made his way forward and around the machine gun nests that were

⁵ Four are cited in most references, but my research has only been able to turn up three names and I wonder if the missing fourth has been attributed to Sgt. Charles F. Carey, USA who won the MOH during WWII and who was born in **Canadian**, Oklahoma.

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pinning down his men. Single-handed, he took out four German machine-gun emplacements. At the final nest, a solitary German soldier fired a machine gun burst at MacGillvary which ripped off his left arm. Despite his injury, MacGillvary took the position and allowed the advance to continue.

Charles MacGillvary died Saturday, June 24, 2000 at the age of 83. He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Douglas Albert Munro was born on October 11, 1919, in Vancouver, BC, to American parents.

Munro grew up in South Cle Elum, Washington. His father was James Munro of South Cle Elum. Douglas Munro graduated from Cle Elum High School in 1937. He



attended Central Washington College of Education (now known as Central Washington University) for a year, before leaving to enlist in the United States Coast Guard in 1939. He had an outstanding record as an enlisted man and was promoted rapidly through the ratings to a Signalman, First Class.

In the Second Battle of the Matanikau, part of the Guadalcanal Campaign, Munro was in charge of a detachment of ten boats landing U.S. Marines. After successfully taking them ashore, he returned his boats to their previously assigned position and almost immediately learned that conditions ashore were different than had been anticipated; it was necessary to evacuate the Marines immediately. Munro volunteered for the job and brought the boats to shore under

heavy enemy fire, then proceeded to evacuate the men on the beach. When most of them were in the boats, complications arose in evacuating the last men, whom Munro realized would be in the greatest danger. He accordingly placed himself and his boats such that they would serve as cover enabling those remaining men to leave. It was during this maneuver that he was fatally wounded—protecting the men after he had evacuated them. He remained conscious sufficiently long only to say, *"Did they get off?"*

In addition to the Medal of Honor, Munro was also posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and was eligible for the American Defense Service Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal. He is the only member of the United States Coast Guard to have received the Medal of Honor.

Aged 22 at his death, Munro is buried at Laurel Hill Memorial Park in Cle Elum, Washington.

Peter Charles Lemon was born in Toronto, Ontario on June 5, 1950.



Lemon is the only Canadian-born U.S. citizen to be presented the medal for fighting in the Vietnam War. About 30,000⁶ Canadians volunteered to fight in South-East Asia. He is the third-youngest living

⁶ Although they did not fight under the national flag, this is a larger Canadian participation than in the Korean War.



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Medal of Honor recipient

He received the award for his actions on April 1, 1970 while serving with the US Army in Tay Ninh province.

The citation for his award reads as follows: "*For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Sgt. Lemon (then Sp4c.), Company E, distinguished himself while serving as an assistant machine gunner during the defence of Fire Support Base Illingworth. When the base came under heavy enemy attack, Sgt. Lemon engaged a numerically superior enemy with machine gun and rifle fire from his defensive position until both weapons malfunctioned. He then used hand grenades to fend off the intensified enemy attack launched in his direction.*

After eliminating all but 1 of the enemy soldiers in the immediate vicinity, he pursued and disposed of the remaining soldier in hand-to-hand combat. Despite fragment wounds from an exploding grenade, Sgt. Lemon regained his position, carried a more seriously wounded comrade to an aid station, and, as he returned, was wounded a second time by enemy fire. Disregarding his personal injuries, he moved to his position through a hail of small arms and grenade fire. Sgt. Lemon immediately realized that the defensive sector was in danger of being overrun by the enemy and unhesitatingly assaulted the enemy soldiers by throwing hand grenades and engaging in hand-to-hand combat. He was wounded yet a third time, but his determined efforts successfully drove the enemy from the position. Securing an operable machine gun, Sgt. Lemon stood atop an embankment fully exposed to

enemy fire, and placed effective fire upon the enemy until he collapsed from his multiple wounds and exhaustion. After regaining consciousness at the aid station, he refused medical evacuation until his more seriously wounded comrades had been evacuated. Sgt. Lemon's gallantry and extraordinary heroism, are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit on him, his unit, and the U.S. Army."

After his military service, he attended Colorado State University, graduating in 1979 with a degree in Speech and received his Masters in Business Administration from the University of Northern Colorado in 1981. He currently works as a motivational speaker and is the author of the book *Beyond the Medal*, as well as being executive producer on the PBS special *Beyond the Medal of Honor*. Lemon has also run several corporations, including American Hospitality Association, Inc.; Darnell-Lemon, Inc.; and Probus, Inc.; as well as working as a semi-professional sculptor.

On May 1, 2009, Mr. Lemon was presented the coveted Outstanding American by Choice award by President Barack Obama at The White House, recognizing his life of professional achievement and civic contribution. This was the first time in history the award was presented by the President of the United States. Lemon is an inductee in the elite Ranger Hall of Fame.

His other decorations include the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Bronze Star with one Oak Leaf Cluster, the Air Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster, the Army Commendation Medal, Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Combat

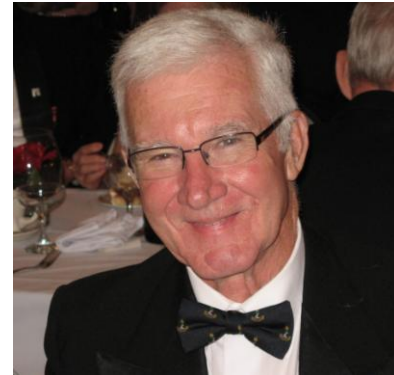
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Infantry Badge, Recondo School Tab, 75th Airborne Ranger Tab, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Civil Actions Medal and the Vietnam Gallantry Cross.

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