



UNITED STATES CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR

Remembered and Forgotten Heroes

by James Christley

Our nations highest military award for bravery is the Congressional Medal of Honor. It is was conceived in the early 1860s and first awarded in 1863. It is actually just the Medal of Honor, but because it is presented "*in the name of the Congress,*" common usage adds "*Congressional.*" The rules for who can be awarded the medal are set forth in a public law which in part reads:

"The President may award, and present in the name of Congress, a medal of honor of appropriate design, with ribbons and appurtenances, to a person who, while a member of the [armed forces], distinguished himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty--

- while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States;*
- while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or*

- *while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party."*

The Navy, with the enactment of Public Law 88-77 was able to and did award the medal in instances of bravery in the line of the naval profession. This recognized the uniqueness of the naval profession in that there is always a conflict with the sea. Thus the Navy could recognize bravery under conditions which would not be combat with the person of an enemy, but during occasions of life saving due to things such as submarine rescue, boiler explosion, fires and other "*disasters unique to the naval profession.*"

Since its inception in 1863, the Medal of Honor has been awarded fourteen times to men who had something to do with the US Naval Submarine Force. Seven were awarded during World War II to men who sailed on submarines and won the medal in action against the enemy. Seven were awarded for valor in submarine rescue efforts and one, which will be covered later, was awarded for actions of one man who sailed on a German submarine.

The Remembered:



JOHN PHILIP CROMWELL

The most senior officer to be awarded the medal was ***Captain John Phillip Cromwell***. He was Commander of a Submarine Coordinated Attack Group, commonly called a wolf-pack and had his flag aboard the *USS Sculpin* (SS-191). He was privy to the use of ULTRA and its importance in decoding the Japanese Naval Codes and how the use of these codes was defining the strategy of the Pacific War. In addition, he was in possession of some of the details of the impending invasion of Saipan. *Sculpin*, on patrol north of Truk, was to combine her efforts with those of *Searaven* and *Apogon* to deliver a coordinated attack on the Japanese forces in and around the Gilberts. On 19 November 1943, *Sculpin* was attacking a fast convoy when sighted by the rear escort. It turned to engage and delivered a close aboard depth charge attack. About noon, a series of eighteen charges caused major damage to the sub and she was forced to surface and fight it out. The destroyer won the fight badly damaging the sub, killing those on the bridge and in the Conning Tower. *Lt. G.E. Brown* ordered the crew to abandon ship. *Captain Cromwell* elected to stay behind and go down with the ship taking with him the secrets he held. He,

Ensign Smith and twelve others rode the ship down. As his citation reads "*he had served his country as he had served the Navy, with deep integrity and an uncompromising devotion to duty.*"



SAMUEL DAVID DEALEY

Samuel David Dealey, was commanding officer of *USS Harder* (SS-257). Well into its fifth war patrol, on 26 May 1944, *Harder* encountered a Japanese destroyer escort which spotted him in the bright moonlight. *Dealey* submerged his ship and waited for the DE to close then sank it. A short time later he encountered another destroyer and instead of diving to evade, he attacked and sank that ship. He continued his penetration of the island group near the Japanese Fleet base and sank two more destroyers. The following day, while clearing the area, he was sighted by a large force of Japanese ships which sent a destroyer to deal with the threatening submarine. That destroyer headed right for *Dealey's* scope. He sank it. The award he received was for this run of sinking five enemy destroyers with five short range torpedo attacks.



EUGENE BENNETT FLUCKEY

USS Barb (SS-220) and **Eugene Bennett Fluckey's** name are forever etched together. On her eleventh patrol in December, January and February 1945, *Barb* under *Fluckey's* command was running down the east coast of China looking for shipping. He sank a large ammunition ship on the eighth of January and damaged or sank a 9000 ton cargo ship. She then surfaced and tracked the rest of the force to a harbor in the lower reaches of Nankuan Chaing (Mamkwan Harbor). He hoped to find at least one large ship still in port when he got there, instead, he found an entire convoy. He decided to attack even though

it would mean a twenty-mile run through badly charted, mined shoal and rocky water at flank on the surface to retire after he was done. He entered the restricted water, approached the enemy and fired his last four forward torpedoes. Then *Barb* does an about face and fires four aft. All eight hit something. Then she ran for deep water at 21 knots. For this audacious action and the fine shooting, *Fluckey* got the Medal of Honor.



HOWARD WALTER GILMORE

The legendary actions of **Howard Walter Gilmore** were the reason he was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously. As Commanding Officer of *USS Growler* (SS-215) on her fourth war patrol, *Commander Gilmore*, turned into an onrushing enemy gunboat and rammed it at 17 knots. As the two ships closed, the gunboat's machine guns raked the bridge of *Growler* killing the AOOD, *Ensign William* and lookout *F3/C Kelley*. *Gilmore* was badly wounded. The order had already been given to clear the bridge and to dive. The vents were open and the ship was submerging. As the men in the Conn waited for the last of the bridge party, *Gilmore*, *Kelley* and *William* to come down, they heard *Gilmore* order "**TAKE HER DOWN.**" It is this unselfish sacrifice that demonstrates the finest in the submarine force tradition.



RICHARD HETHERINGTON O'KANE

USS Tang's (SS-306) fifth war patrol was along the East China coast in October 1944. **Commander Richard Hetherington O'Kane**, Commanding Officer of *Tang* led the ship on a most successful hunting trip which started with a surface attack on a pair of freighters. He next charged into a convoy of Japanese ships headed through the strait. In a surface attack at night, he emptied all *Tang's* tubes, sinking three ships and badly

damaging four more. He even bluffed a destroyer out of the way by running straight for it. The next night, he charged into a second convoy and tore it apart. This time his running straight at an oncoming destroyer was not a bluff, a bow torpedo shot blew it out of the way. *O'Kane* selected a damaged troopship for a *coup-de-gras* and fired two more shots. *Tang's* luck ran out. The very last of her torpedoes left the tube, broached, veered left and began a circular run that *Tang* vainly attempted to avoid. *Tang* was hit aft and sank. *O'Kane* and eight others survived the sinking and in April 1946 *O'Kane* was awarded the Medal of Honor.



LAWSON PATERSON RAMAGE

Lawson Paterson "Red" Ramage was Commanding Officer of *USS Parche* (SS-384). His Medal of Honor was awarded for an extraordinary attack on Japanese shipping which took place 30-31 July 1944. *USS Steelhead* spotted a convoy of Japanese ships, notified *Parche* of their location, track and speed and gave chase. *Parche* bent on her engines and worked her way to intercept the convoy. *Steelhead* hit one freighter and one tanker. *Parche* had to contend with two escorts on her side of the convoy but *Ramage*, with some instinctive maneuvering, got around them. The convoy, in an effort to escape the oncoming *Steelhead* changed course. *Ramage* suddenly found himself facing the oncoming convoy. He commenced firing torpedoes as fast as fire control could get solutions. One, then two tankers were hit. The Japanese opened up with deck guns and machine guns firing in all directions. The convoy started to mill about smartly with *Parche* in the middle. The reload crews forward and aft jammed fish in the tubes as fast as they could and *Ramage* fired them like a sailing frigate crew with her broadside under orders to "fire as you bear." When *Parche* was finished, she had gotten the Japanese ships to open fire at one another, and had sunk 14,000 tons of shipping, damage several thousand tons more and had disrupted yet another convoy. All this from the middle of a convoy of ships, on the surface and at night. He conducted the entire attack from the bridge and had sent below all topside battle station personnel except two lookouts, and a quartermaster who volunteered to man the TBT. Some ships missed *Parche* by less than 50 feet. The entire attack took 46 minutes.



GEORGE LEVICK STREET, III

The bane of the submarine is shallow water. For this reason, Japanese shipping in April of 1945 was using shallow water routes to escape the US submarines even though the routes were longer and slower. This was the hunting ground that *USS Tirante* (SS-420) under the command of **George L. Street III** invaded along the shore of the Yellow Sea. He sank a freighter, tanker and troop transport then after undergoing a severe depth charging sank a patrol vessel. Figuring then, that the ships were using a sheltered anchorage nearby he decided to transit the restricted shallow waters which were most likely mined to get at the ships. With *Tirante's* crew at battle stations and guns crews at the ready, *Street* maneuvered into the harbor, then into the inner harbor. Once there he, he blew up a 10,000 ton tanker. Two frigates had spotted him and were maneuvering to close the escape path to *Tirante*. The crew cranked on maximum turns and *Street* fired his last two fish at the frigates. Both hit, clearing the path for *Tirante's* escape. *Street* got the Congressional Medal of Honor and the crew got a Presidential Unit Citation.

The Forgotten:



General Order Number 125 of 20 February 1924 awards the Medal of Honor to **TM, Henry Berault**. He and *TM Brown* were in the torpedo room of the *USS O-5* (SS-66) in the Panama Canal Zone. The *O-5* collided with the *SS Abangarez* on the morning of 28 October 1923. The *O-5* sank in less than a minute. But in that minute, *Henry Berault* exhibited the kind of heroism and self-sacrifice which should take its place with the seven heroes from WW I I but hasn't. When he felt the collision and felt the boat start to go down, *Berault* headed for the open torpedo room hatch. He had just about reached the top of the ladder when water started to cascade down the hatch. Realizing that he could get out but that *Brown* would be trapped in the room, *Berault* reached up and pulled the torpedo room hatch shut and headed back down to insure the watertight door was shut. He did so with the full realization that he had trapped himself in a sinking submarine but in doing so, he gave his

shipmate the only chance he would have to live. Fortunately, they both survived and were rescued almost two days later when the bow was lifted clear of the water.

The first seven, *Street, Ramage, O'Kane, Fluckey, Dealey, Gilmore* and *Cromwell* have become legendary in the Submarine Force and have served as symbols of what is the best of the brave. The eighth, *Berault* had been forgotten in the rush to remember only World War II heroes. No longer ... as of now he will take his rightful place as a hero of the Submarine Force.

The Force, however, consists of not only the crews of the ships, it includes the support, and rescue forces. It is these men that make possible the actions of the boats and their crews, and give assistance when we are in trouble.

Trouble is what struck *USS F-4 (SS-23)* on the afternoon of 25 March 1915 just one mile off Sand Island at Honolulu Harbor. Battery acid had been leaking into the bottom of the well structure ever since she had joined the fleet. The crew had cleaned it as best they could, but like all ships of a similar type, they couldn't get everything. The acid had weakened the structure under the battery which was also the top of the main ballast tanks. When *F-4* submerged that day, the structure gave way and the ship flooded uncontrollably and sank with the loss of all hands. The depth at which she came to rest was 304 feet. Divers didn't normally work in water this deep, but it was not clear that the crew had perished. Perhaps some had survived in the engine room and could be rescued. Divers went down, located and examined the hull. No one survived. It was decided to raise the boat to determine why she sank so if there were design problems, they could be corrected on other ships. One of the divers working the job, *GMC William F. Loughman* got stuck in the wire hawsers, air hoses and other gear while making a descent. He was at a depth of 250 feet. He could neither go up nor down and he could not get himself free. At that depth, the longer he stayed, the greater the ascent time would have to be before he could surface; if he got free. A dive mate, **Frank William Crilley** also a Gunner's Mate Chief, "*realizing the desperate case of his comrade,*" without hesitation, got ready to make another dive to free his friend. It took over two hours for *Crilley* to free *Loughman*. He risked becoming tangled in the same mess but, in true Submarine Force fashion, laid his life on the line for the good of the force.

Crilley was the first of six divers and rescue personnel who were awarded the Medal of Honor for gallantry during operations involving sunken US submarines. The story of *Squalus* is familiar to most of us. Mr. Carl LaVo's book, *Back from the Deep* recounts the story in fine detail. *John Mihalowski (TM1)* and *Walter E. Harman (GM1)* manned the McCann rescue chamber during the first descent to rescue the survivors. They brought up seven crew. *Chief Machinist Mate William Badders* took over the controls for the next trip because he felt that he could bring up more per trip. When he got to the surface

with nine in the bell, *Cdr. Momsen* told him that he had brought too many, but to do it again. *Badders* made one more trip then turned over control to *Mihalowski* and *James H. McDonald* for the last trip. On this trip, the downhaul winch failed. The chamber had to be lowered to bottom, the cable cut, then the chamber could be hoisted aboard by *Falcon's* lifting gear. *Walter H. Squire* went down to do the job. When the cable was cut, the bell was raised and the last of *Squalus's* survivors were free. No one knew if there were people alive in the afterroom. A diver was sent down to attach a new down haul cable. *Badders* and *Mihalowski* started down. They reached the after escape hatch and cleared the water from the space in the chamber skirt. They didn't know what would happen when they opened the hatch. It was possible that there was a high pressure air bubble in the space under the hatch which could contain high quantities of carbon dioxide, chlorine or both. The room could be flooded and under high pressure and could flood the chamber. *Badders* told *Mihalowski* to be ready for anything and opened the hatch. A blast of high pressure air and a stream of water forced their way into the bell. *Mihalowski* vented high pressure air into the chamber thus forcing the water back out before the chamber could flood. There would be no more survivors. For this unselfish act to risk their lives to insure no one was forgotten, ***Badders, Mihaloski and McDonald*** were each awarded the Medal of Honor as was ***Chief Boatswain' Mate Orson L. Crandall***. *Crandall* was the Master Diver during the *Squalus* rescue operation. His leadership in directing the diving and personally performing "*important and difficult*" dives under most hazardous conditions "*characterize conduct far above and beyond the ordinary call of duty.*"

When the *USS S-4 (SS-109)* sank off Provincetown in the hook of Cape Cod in December of 1927, it became one of the most heartbreaking efforts at rescue in the annals of the sea. The boat was on the bottom at a bit over one hundred feet and there were survivors aboard, but, we couldn't save them. But, it was not for not trying. Divers struggled in the ice cold water and high seas to get to the boat and attach lifting lines, air hoses and to try to seal the hole torn in the hull by the collision with the *USCGC Paulding*. All these efforts were to no avail. During one of the dives, *Chief Michels*, a Chief Torpedoman diver, became badly entangled while trying to attach an air line to the *S-4*. Another diver, ***Chief Gunner's Mate Thomas Eadie***, having already made dives that day, stopped unsuiting and made preparations to return to the bottom to free *Michels*. The risks were great as further diving meant more risks of bends and nitrogen narcosis. *Eadie* made his descent and worked for two hours on the bottom finally freeing *Michels* and bringing him to the surface. For this unselfish act to rescue a shipmate at great risk to himself, *Eadie* was awarded the Medal of Honor.

The list of Submarine Force heros who are recipients of the Medal of Honor now has fourteen members. Seven received the medal for heroism in the combat with an enemy of the United States. Two died in the action. Of these seven, six were sub-skippers and one

was a pack-commander. One man was a crewman who risked his life in the face of almost certain death to save a shipmate and was successful. Six men were divers who, while in action to save or raise submarines, performed heroic acts under arduous circumstances at great risk to themselves. My list has one more. His actions were not on a US submarine but on a German submarine. His actions would make a great movie and he is the only other member of the list of all Medal of Honor winners to have anything to do with submarines. Thus I have included him.

Lieutenant Edouard Victor Michael Azac, USN was aboard the *USS President Lincoln* when it was attacked and sunk by the German Submarine *U-90* on 21 May 1918. He was picked up from the water by that submarine and made a prisoner of war. While being held, he observed the operations of the submarine paying particular attention to the movements of German submarines with which the *U-90* was in radio contact. He felt the information gained on the operations of the enemy was so important that he would have to escape and get back to the Allies to report. After reaching port, he was put under armed guard for transport by train to a prisoner of war camp in Germany. *Azac*, jumped through a window of the moving train and ran into the forest under fire from his guards. He was, however, recaptured a short time later. Shortly after arriving in the prisoner of war camp, he and a few others made a break through the wire. He deliberately drew the fire of guards to give time for the others to escape. This time his escape attempt was successful. In the ensuing days, surviving on only raw vegetables, scrambling through the forests and mountains of southeastern Germany and finally swimming the Rhine River under the eyes of German sentries, *Azac* made it back and turned over his indeed valuable information. For this risk of life, presence of mind and dedication to duty, *Lt. Azac* was awarded the Medal of Honor. His actions were on and after being aboard a submarine, and I'd like to think the only reason he wasn't already a boat sailor is that he hadn't thought of it. I'd also like to think he would have made a great boat sailor (and liberty partner).

Our Force is full of heroes, from the shipmates we sailed with who did the routine, repetitive and the mundane with dedication because it was the right thing to do, to the men who gave their lives so that others might live like the auxiliaryman in the stern room of *Sargo* in 1960. Some were recognized for their actions, many were not. Here are fifteen men who exhibited what we like to think is the best in all of us.

Sources:

- *Roscoe: US Submarine Operations of WW II*;
- *LaVo: Back From the Deep*;

- *Committee Print No. 15, Medal of Honor Recipients 1863-1973 Prepared for the Committee on Veterans Affairs United States Senate.*
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["BACK TO THE DIRECTORY"](#)
