



Women Medal Recipients - Military and Civilian

The Medal of Honor - the nation's highest award.

Dr Mary Walker, a surgeon in the Civil War, was awarded the nation's highest honor by President Andrew Johnson. The citation reads, in part:

"Whereas it appears from official reports that Dr. Mary E. Walker, a graduate of medicine, has rendered valuable service to the government, and her efforts have been earnest and untiring in a variety of ways, and that she was assigned to duty and served as an assistant surgeon in charge of female prisoners at Louisville, KY., under the recommendation of Major-Generals Sherman and Thomas, and faithfully served as contract surgeon in the service of the United States, and has devoted herself with much patriotic zeal to the sick and wounded soldiers, both in the field and hospitals, to the detriment of her own health, and has endured hardships as a prisoner of war four months in a southern prison while acting as contract surgeon...."



1860s Design of the MOH

Dr. Walker's Medal of Honor was rescinded in 1917, along with some 900 others. Some believed her medal was rescinded because of her involvement as a suffragette. Others discredit that opinion as 909 other medals rescinded were awarded to men. The stated reason was to ". . . increase the prestige of the grant."

For whatever reason, she refused to return the Medal of Honor and wore it until her death in 1919. Fifty-eight years later, the U.S. Congress posthumously reinstated her medal, and it was restored by President Carter on June 10, 1977.

The Distinguished Service Cross



Women who received the Distinguished Service Cross - WWI

Jane Jeffery: A nurse serving with the American Red Cross; severely wounded during an air raid, refused to leave her post and continued to help others.

Beatrice M. MacDonald: wounded in Belgium during an air raid at a casualty clearing station and lost

sight in her right eye.

Helen Grace McClelland: also on duty with the surgical team at the British casualty clearing station and cared for Beatrice MacDonald during the air raid.

Eva Jean Parmelee: although wounded in air raid she continued to serve throughout the emergency.

Isabelle Stambaugh: seriously wounded in an air raid at a British casualty clearing station in Amiens, while working in the operating room with a surgical team.

Reconstruction Aide Emma S. Sloan

The Navy Cross



Lenah S. Higbee, Superintendent, Navy Nurse Corps
 Marie Louise Hidell (posthumously)
 Lillian M. Murphy (posthumously)
 Edna S. Pierce (posthumously)

The Silver Star



Mary Roberts Wilson was the first woman to be awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in combat for her action during the battle of Anzio during World War II. With her Army evacuation hospital under German shellfire, Wilson continued supervising her nursing staff of 50, allowing the hospital to continue functioning. Tom Brokaw devoted an entire chapter to Wilson's exploits in his best-selling paean to World War II-era Americans, *The Greatest Generation*.

When the Germans bombed the field hospital at Anzio beach, Italy during WWII medical personnel evacuated forty-two patients by flashlight without incident, and for their bravery four nurses: 1st Lt. Mary Roberts, 2d Lt. Elaine Roe, 2d Lt. Rita Virginia Rourke, and 2d Lt. Ellen Ainsworth, received the first Silver Star medals awarded to women in the U.S. Army. Ainsworth, who was killed during the attack, was awarded the medal posthumously.

Military woman receives Silver Star Medal in Iraq.



Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester, vehicle commander, 617th Military Police Company, Richmond, Ky., stands at attention before receiving the Silver Star at an awards ceremony at Camp Liberty, Iraq, June 16 2005.

Sgt. Hester is the first woman soldier since World War II to receive the Silver Star.

Photo by Spc. Jeremy D. Crisp, USA.

[Full story click here.](#) -

Second military woman receives Silver Star Medal.



Spec. Monica Brown from the 782nd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, stands over Forward Operating Base Salerno in Khowst province, Afghanistan. Brown is the second woman since World War II to earn a Silver Star for gallantry in combat. (Photo by Spc. Micah E. Clare, USAÉ)

The Air Medal



The first woman to receive The Air Medal was Lt Elsie S. Ott, Army Nurse Corps, awarded for her actions in 1943 as an air evac nurse en route from India to the U.S..

Lt Reba Whittle, (later Tobiason), Army Nurse Corps, was flying on an air evac mission when the plane was shot down by the Germans. She and her crew were captured and imprisoned. Lt Whittle was wounded yet performed nursing duties for the prisoners in the camp. They were repatriated to Switzerland. Lt Whittle was awarded the Air Medal and the Purple Heart.

F. Rosalind Westfall was a Red Cross nurse and was drafted in 1942. She elected to go into flight training and was trained at Harding Field, LA. and Bowman Field, KY. She started actively flying in May 1944 from Newfoundland to NY and then the Azores. She flew into Prestwick, Scotland, Iceland, Bermuda, Bangor ME, London, Paris and Miami. She flew a total of 1,299 hours and was awarded the Air Medal April 6, 1946 at Keesler Field, Mississippi.



"Rose" Westfall receiving the Air Medal. She was with the 860th MAET Squadron.

Her service record was in the name: F. Rosalind Westfall. After the war she married Dr. George W. Sellmer, a B-24 pilot, and currently resides in Indianapolis.

Many thanks to Jan Mattingly for graciously providing this information.

Crewmembers of the EP-3E Aries II Surveillance Plane who were detained in China received the Air Medal. Three are military women.



They are:

Lt. j.g. Regina Kauffman, USN, Warminster, Pennsylvania
 Lieutenant Marcia Sonon, USN, Lenharstville, Pennsylvania
 Aviation Machinist Wendy Westbrook, USN, Rock Creek, Ohio



Colonel Ruby Bradley is America's most decorated military woman. She served in WWII - and was a POW for 37 months in a Japanese prison camp. Later she was a frontline U.S. Army nurse in Korea on the day 100,000 Chinese soldiers overran American troops and started closing in on her hospital tent. Col. Bradley has earned 34 medals and citations for bravery, including two Bronze stars. She retired from the Army in 1963, but remained a nurse all her working life.

According to Arlington National Cemetery upon the death of Col. Bradley in 2002 at age 94 - "On December 1, 1999, then 91 years of age, Col. Ruby Bradley received more than a dozen military awards to replace those she had lost over the years. She is the nation's most highly-decorated female veteran. Senator Rockefeller presented the medals and ribbons to Bradley, a veteran of World War II and the Korean War, who lives in Spencer, West Virginia. She was a U.S. Army nurse and a POW for two years in the Philippines and was known as the "Angel in Fatigues" at Santo Tomas Internment Camp in Manila.

The replacement awards reportedly included the Legion of Merit medals, the Bronze Star, two Presidential Emblems, the Meritorious Unit Emblem, The American Defense Service Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the Army Occupational Medal with Japan clasp, three Korea Service medals, the Philippine Liberation Medal, the Philippine Independence Ribbon and the United Nations Service Medal.

The Bronze Star



One of the first women to receive The Bronze Star was 1Lt Cordelia E. Cook, Army Nurse Corps, during WWII in Italy. Lt Cook was also awarded The Purple Heart.

The Purple Heart



The first woman to receive The Purple Heart as a result of combat was 1Lt Annie G. Fox, while serving at Hickam Field during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec 7 1941. Lt Fox was later awarded the Bronze Star.



Lt. Annie G. Fox

Two nurses were awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received when the Japanese bombed their hospital on Bataan Rita Palmer, Hampton, New Hampshire, and Rosemary Hogan, Chattanooga, Oklahoma. Army Nurse Mary Brown Menzie received the Purple Heart as a result of injuries on Corregidor. Several other military women were awarded the Purple Heart during WWII. Over 1600 women were awarded medals including the DSM, Air Medal, DFC, Silver Star, Bronze Star, Soldiers Medal, Legion of Merit and the Purple Heart.



Jacqueline Fleck Kidd received the Purple Heart on Monday, January 14th in a ceremony at Ft. Belvoir, Davidson Air Field for injuries sustained while on duty as an Air Traffic Controller at the Pentagon Helipad on September 11th.

The Soldiers Medal



On March 22, 1989, **Staff Sergeant Joan J. Hahnenberg, United States Army**, was awarded The Soldiers Medal for heroism.

On 17 November 1988, Staff Sergeant Joan Jerilynn Hahnenberg saved the life of a fellow crewmember following an accident aboard the United States Army vessel, LT-981, near Lajes Field in the Azores. Placing herself in a position of extreme peril outside the bulwark of her vessel, Staff Sergeant Hahnenberg was able to grab onto and maintain a hold on a crewmember while he was in the water. She held this position for several minutes until further assistance arrived. During this time, Sergeant Hahnenberg was in danger of being injured and tossed into the sea by the tow cable. Her prompt action, unselfish dedication and personal courage are in keeping with the highest tradition of the United States Army and the Non-commissioned Officer Corps.

On Sept. 1, 1999, **Sgt. 1st Class Jeanne M. Balcombe**, of the 1st Platoon, 55th Military Police Company, was posthumously awarded the Soldiers Medal for heroism in the face of danger. While on duty on Aug. 21st 1999, Balcombe's quick thinking and selfless response safeguarded and protected others at the Troop Medical Clinic at Camp Red Cloud, Korea. She placed herself in harm's way between three soldiers and an armed gunman.



Sgt Jeanne M. Balcombe

On 24 January 1970 in Vietnam then **SP5 Karen L. Offutt, WAC, U.S. Army**, risked her life to rescue Vietnamese adults and children from burning structures. Without regard for her personal safety and in danger from smoke, flames and falling debris she repeatedly entered the buildings to rescue children who had reentered their homes. She was to have received the Soldiers Medal but instead was given a certificate and told that women do not receive the Soldiers Medal.



SP5 Karen Offutt in 1970

On 7 April 2001, Karen Offutt, now a mother of 3, and grandmother of 2, was awarded The Soldiers Medal for her heroism in Vietnam of over thirty years ago. Learn more about Karen by visiting her website at [Walk With Me](#)

The Distinguished Flying Cross



The first woman to receive the DFC was Amelia Earhart which sparked controversy and later it was changed to exclude civilians.

On December 28, 1944, the Distinguished Flying Cross was posthumously awarded to 1st **Lieutenant Aleda E. Lutz**. Lt. Lutz had flown over 800 hours when the C47 hospital plane evacuating wounded soldiers from the battlefield near Lyons, Italy, crashed killing all aboard.

As an Army Flight Nurse she flew 196 missions evacuating over 3,500 men. She earned six battle stars and was the first military woman to die in a combat zone in World War Two. Lt. Lutz was awarded the Air Medal four times, the Oak Leaf Cluster, The Red Cross Medal, and the Purple Heart. She was the first woman awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in a World War.

A VA Medical facility located in her home state of Michigan has been named after her - ironically it was built in 1950 and not so named until 1990 - the first VA facility to be named for a military woman. An Army Hospital Ship and a C-47 plane have also been named in her honor.



Lt. Aleda Lutz

During World War II, Roberta Schilbach Ross served as a 1st Lieutenant Army Flight Nurse, flew over 100 missions, over the Himalayas, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster.

AF Pilot and sound barrier breaker Jacqueline Cochran was awarded the DFC.



Vice President Richard Cheney presents the Distinguished Flying Cross for valiant flying under fire to Chief Warrant Officer 3 Lori Hill in a ceremony at Fort Campbell, Ky. on Oct. 16. U.S. Army photo. Full story at [DFC](#)

The Distinguished Service Medal



World War One Nurses Awarded the DSM:

Lillian Aubert, as Assistant Superintendent of the Army Nurse Corps, in the office of the Surgeon General. She died as the result of overwork; Residence, Shreveport, La.

Celia Brennan, Chief Nurse at the Toul Hospital Centre, France. Philadelphia, Pa.

Katharine Brown, Chief Nurse of the Nantes Hospital Centre, France. Bryn Mawr, Pa.

Sophy Mary Burns, First Lieutenant, Chief Nurse of Base Hospital No. 16 at Bazoilles-sur-Meuse, France, and later of Mobile Hospital No. 9. Fort Sam Houston, Tex.

Reba G. Cameron, First Lieutenant, Chief Nurse at Plattsburgh Barracks, N.Y., and later of the General Hospital at Hampton, Va. San Francisco, Cal.

Edna M. Coughlin, Base Hospital No. 22, emergency medical team in an advanced area under fire.

Jane A. Delano, director, Dept. of Nursing, ARC

Alice H. Flash, Chief Nurse of the Meaves Hospital Centre, France. Hollywood, Cal.

Annie W. Goodrich, contract Nurse, organizer and first dean of the Army School of Nursing. New York City.

Carrie L. Howard, First Lieutenant, Chief Nurse at the Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, New Jersey. Washington, D.C.

Grace E. Leonard, First Lieutenant, assistant director of the Nursing Service, A.E.F. Fort Sheridan, Ill.

Beatrice Mary MacDonald, Chief Nurse, Presbyterian Hospital Unit.

Helen Grace McClelland, Base Hospital No. 10.

Sayres Louise Milliken, Captain, Chief Nurse of the base hospital at Camp Sevier, S.C., and later as assistant superintendent of Army Nurse Corps in office of Surgeon General. Washington, D.C.

Jane G. Malloy, First Lieutenant, Chief Nurse at the base hospital at Fort Devens, Mass. Fort Benjamin Harrison, Ind.

Edith A. Mury, (Mrs. Edith A. Kershaw), Chief Nurse at the Nurses Mobilization Station, Ellis Island, New York, and later as assistant superintendent in the Surgeon General's Office. Oakland, Calif.

Adele S. Posten, Chief Nurse at Base Hospital No. 117 (Psychiatric unit) at La Fauche, France. White Plains, N. Y.

Maria B. Rhodes (Mrs. Clarence Cash), Chief of the Nurses Equipment Bureau of the Military Department. American Red Cross in Paris. San Benit, Tex.

Blance S. Rulon, Captain, Chief Nurse of Base Hospital No. 27, at Angers, France, and later as assistant to the Director of the Nursing Corps, A.E.F., at Tours, France, also in charge of the Claim Department of the Army Nurse Corps. Washington, DC.

Lillian J. Ryan, First Lieutenant, Chief Nurse at the Base Hospital Camp Merritt, N. J. Denver, Col.

Mary E. Sheehan, First Lieutenant, Chief Nurse of the Vichy Hospital Centre, France. El Paso, Tex.

Neena Shelton, First Lieutenant, assistant to the Director of Nursing Services, A.E.F., in Paris. Washington, D.C.

Catherine Glynn Sinnott, Second Lieutenant, Chief Nurse of Camp Hospital No. 28, France. Washington, D.C.

Ethel E. Sweet, (Mrs. Theodore Falconer), Chief Nurse of the Nurses Mobilization Station in New York City. Marlin, Tex.

Dora E. Thompson, superintendent, ANC.

Lynette L. Vandervort, Chief Nurse of the Mars Hospital Centre, France, also as Chief Nurse at the Nurses Embarkation Centre at Cannes, France. Fond du Lac, Wis.

During WWI several nurses were wounded as a result of enemy action. There were more than two hundred deaths largely caused by influenza and pneumonia, and even mustard gas exposure. The

Distinguished Service Cross (second in rank only to the Medal of Honor, the highest decoration in combat) was awarded to 3 Army nurses. The Distinguished Service Medal (highest decoration in noncombat) was awarded to 23 Army nurses. In addition to other United States Army decorations, 28 Army nurses were awarded the French Croix de Guerre, 69 the British Royal Red Cross, and 2 the British Military Medal. Many Army nurses were named in British Army dispatches for their meritorious service.

This list is ongoing and involves a bit of search and research - additions are most welcome as my resources are quite limited.

[| Panama |](#) [| Desert Fox |](#) [| Prisoners |](#) [| Arlington |](#) [| Women Spies |](#) [| Women Pilots |](#)
[| Medals |](#) [| Famous Firsts |](#) [| Astronauts |](#) [| Musicians |](#) [| Sheet Music |](#) [| Monuments |](#)
[| Revolution |](#) [| Civil War |](#) [| 1812-1898 |](#) [| WW One |](#) [| WW Two |](#) [| Korea |](#)
[| Also Served |](#) [| Vietnam |](#) [| Desert Storm |](#) [| Beyond Bosnia |](#) [| Lost Lives |](#) [| Back Home |](#)



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