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War Stories Newsletters

Center for the Study of War and Society

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Fall 2014

## War Stories Fall 2014

Center for the Study of War & Society

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THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE   
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PHOTO MONTAGE OF EAST TENNESSEE MEDAL  
OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

## Hosting America's Greatest Heros

Knoxville welcomed some of America's finest heroes as it hosted the 2014 Medal of Honor Convention, September 10-13. Since 1861, the year of its inception during the Civil War, 3,468 total Medals have been awarded. The Medal of Honor is America's highest military award for bravery and all of East Tennessee was proud to have such a large gathering of recipients visit our area. Many of the recipients toured the area, visited local schools, participated in book signings and town halls. CSWS attended the town hall event held at the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge where the honored speakers included Herschel "Woody" Williams (World War II), Ron Rosser (Korean War), and Wesley Fox (Vietnam). The Center also played a role by participating in WBIR-TV's "Profiles of Courage" series, one minute spots that featured each East Tennessee Medal of Honor recipient from World War I to Vietnam. Tennessee's ties to the Medal of Honor run deep. During the Civil War there were 101 MOH actions in the state, with five of those taking place in Knoxville. One of the most famous East Tennessee recipients was Alvin C. York, from Fentress County, who was famously portrayed in the 1941 film Sergeant York. But there are 13 other recipients from East Tennessee that are without question equally deserving of being remembered and honored. Their names and era of service appear in the following list.

### CSWS STAFF

VEJAS G. LIULEVICIUS, director  
CYNTHIA L. TINKER, program coordinator  
ROSEMARY B. MARINER, scholar-in-residence  
MICHAEL P. MCCONNELL, graduate assistant

# America's Finest Heroes *(continued)*

## WORLD WAR I

**Calvin J. Ward** was awarded more total medals than Alvin York for his service. Ward never received the public accolades that other WWI heroes did. He experienced great difficulty in readjusting after the war and even re-enlisted for a time. He eventually took his own life in 1967.

**James E. "Buck" Karnes** received his medal for action taken together with Calvin Ward. Their Medal of Honor citations are identical. Karnes returned home and served as a Knoxville Police Officer before retiring to California. The Buck Karnes Bridge in Knoxville is named in his honor.

**Milo L. Lemert** was born in Hamblen County as the tenth of his parents' eleven children. He attended Kansas State University and returned to settle in Crossville, Tennessee. He married his wife, Nellie, not long before he departed for overseas with the 30th "Old Hickory" Division. Sadly, he was killed in action on their one-year anniversary.

**Edward R. Talley** was also a member of the 30th "Old Hickory" Division and, like Ward, was a Hamblen County native. After witnessing several of his fellow soldiers killed, Talley single-handedly stormed a machine gun nest, armed only with a rifle, and killed or wounded at least six enemy soldiers.

## WORLD WAR II

**Alexander Bonnyman, Jr.** was a thirty-three-year-old man with a family, deferred from service, but he chose to enlist. During a savage battle in the Pacific, he led an assault on the enemy. A combat photographer caught him on film kneeling at the top of the bombproof shelter, firing into the enemy, and waving forward other marines before he fell, mortally wounded. This film makes Bonnyman's Medal of Honor action one of the few ever recorded.

**Charles H. Coolidge** is Tennessee's only living recipient today. Coolidge spent 128 days on the front line and received his medal for action in France that took place over a four-day period, during which time he displayed superior leadership and bravery, confronting German soldiers and tanks in close proximity at great risk to his own life.

**Elbert L. Kinser** and Alexander Bonnyman were the only two Marines from East Tennessee to receive the Medal of Honor. Kinser's mother was presented the medal by General Clifton Cates, a fellow Tennessean. Camp Kinser, a Marine Corps base in Okinawa, Japan, was named in Kinser's honor.

**Charles L. McGaha** joined the Army in 1937 and was a survivor of Pearl Harbor long before the action in 1945 that earned him the Medal of Honor. He also received a battlefield commission to second lieutenant. He reached the rank of major before retiring from the Army. He was later tragically killed during a robbery attempt in his hometown of Newport, Tennessee.

**Raymond H. Cooley**, one of the few known recipients to cover a grenade blast with his body and survive, was severely wounded and lost his right arm during close combat in the Philippines. His Medal of Honor was presented by President Harry Truman in a ceremony at the White House. Cooley suffered from his wounds after the war and later died in a car accident in 1947.

**Paul B. Huff** was the first paratrooper to receive the Medal of Honor and chose to have it presented by General Mark Clark, surrounded by comrades. Later, a public ceremony with President Roosevelt was held. Huff remained in the army and rose to the rank of Command Sgt. Major of the 3rd Army, and even traveled to Vietnam during the Vietnam War. He was one of the few MOH recipients to never receive the Purple Heart.

**Troy A. McGill** is the only Medal of Honor recipient buried in Knoxville's National Cemetery. Interstate 40 from the Loudon County line to North Carolina is named the Troy A. McGill Memorial Interstate Highway. This great hero ordered the other soldiers back while he covered their withdrawal until he was killed. The next day they found his body surrounded by more than 100 dead enemy soldiers.

## KOREAN WAR

**Ray Duke** was a combat veteran of WWII and stationed in Japan when the Korean War began. He had trained South Korean units and when taken prisoner by the North Koreans, Duke refused to give up any

information. He was tortured and starved to death in the POW camp. He is the only Tennessee Medal of Honor recipient to also be awarded the South Korean Medal of Honor.

## VIETNAM WAR

**Mitchell W. Stout** volunteered for a second tour in Vietnam because he knew the younger soldiers needed experienced veterans to support them through the war. To honor his sacrifice and valor there are local memorials

at Virtue Cemetery and the Interstate 75 Bridge over the Tennessee River. At the home of Air Defense Artillery at Fort Bliss, Texas the base gym is named for Stout.

Please visit the East Tennessee Veterans Memorial website to read each citation:  
[etvma.org/the-memorial/medal-of-honor/](http://etvma.org/the-memorial/medal-of-honor/)



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Our new year sees the Center participating in ongoing commemoration of the World War I Centennial. The center is represented on the State of Tennessee Great War Commission which coordinates activities in Tennessee from 2014-2018, and on the Academic Advisory Council of the National World War I Memorial and Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. In September, we participated in the German Studies Association conference in Kansas City which had a special focus on World War I, and had multiple presentations of papers by graduate students active with the Center. I presented a lecture on World War I in Eastern Europe at Southern Methodist University in Dallas in October and will give a keynote address at the Great War Conference at Georgia Gwinnett College on Nov. 8. In spring 2015, we will host a major lecture on campus on the war in the trenches.

Going much further back in time, in April 2015 the Center is partnering with the MARCO Institute for Medieval and Renaissance studies at UT to host a symposium called 'Cry havoc: War, Diplomacy, and Conspiracy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance.' The conference will link these ancient issues of spying, intelligence-gathering, and conflict to their relevance in the present day.

—*Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, Director*



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**IN MEMORIAM**

**BERNARD LEVENSON**  
World War II  
U. S. Army Air Corps  
China-Burma-India Theater

★ ★

## Celebrating a Record of Graduate Student Successes

This fall, two graduate students active at the center won prestigious research awards. Former graduate assistant Will Rall was awarded a Richard M. Hunt Fellowship for the Study of German Politics, Society, and Culture to support his dissertation research. Will's project is "Nazi Charity: Giving, Emotion, and Morality in the Third Reich." The grant is administered by the American Council on Germany. Our current graduate assistant Mike McConnell was awarded a dissertation-writing award

from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. This award is for Mike's dissertation, entitled "Home to the Reich: The Nazi Occupation of Europe's Influence on Life Inside Germany, 1941-1945". These successes continue an amazing winning streak of eleven major research awards won by graduate students active with the center.

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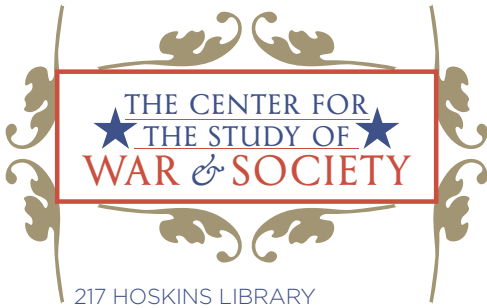
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Bailey, Jr.

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