

AMERICA'S HEROES

The Purple Heart: A Tradition Of Courage

(NAPSA)—Americans know to salute the brave military men and women who have earned the distinguished Purple Heart. But how much do you know about the medal itself?

The Purple Heart is the oldest military decoration still in active use. Originally created as the Badge of Military Merit by General George Washington in 1782, it was revived and redesigned by General Douglas MacArthur in 1931 and reissued on February 22, 1932.

To be eligible for a Purple Heart, one must be wounded by an instrument of war inflicted by the enemy. That makes the medal the only decoration that attests, without question, to the bearer having been in combat.

Purple Heart Status

To learn if next of kin has been awarded the Purple Heart, a written request, signed and dated, must be mailed to the Military Personnel Records facility of the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). The address is 9700 Page Ave., St. Louis, MO 63132-5100.

After 10 days or so, you may send an e-mail requesting status of your request. The e-mail address is mprstatus@nara.gov. Or you may call to ask about the status at (314) 801-0800. E-mailed original requests will not be honored.

It's important to note, however, that because of privacy issues, not anyone can seek information about a veteran. The veteran must give



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written permission for even next of kin. Next of kin can seek this information for deceased veterans by proving relationship.

Protecting The Purple Heart

The Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), a veterans service organization consisting of 40,000 combat-wounded veterans, is the keeper of the medal and actively seeks out those that would wear or claim it without authority.

Under the provisions of the Stolen Valor Act, those persons could face stiff fines and jail time.

For more information on the Purple Heart, visit the Web site www.purpleheart.org.