

The **Medal of Honor** is the United States of America's highest and most prestigious personal military decoration that may be awarded to recognize U.S. military service members who have distinguished themselves by acts of valor. The medal is normally awarded by the President of the United States in the name of the U.S. Congress. Because the medal is presented "in the name of Congress", it is often referred erroneously as the "**Congressional Medal of Honor**".

There are three versions of the medal, one each for the Army, Navy and Air Force. Personnel of the Marine Corps and Coast Guard receive the Navy version. The Medal of Honor was introduced for the Navy in 1861, soon followed by an Army version in 1862. The Air Force version came in 1965. (Previously the Air Force was part of the Army, known as the Air Corps) The Medal of Honor is the oldest continuously issued combat decoration of the United States' armed forces

According to the Medal of Honor Historical Society of the United States, there have been 3,525 Medals of Honor awarded to 3,506 individuals since the decoration's creation, with over 40% awarded for actions during the American Civil War.

There have been 17 awards to Jewish Americans. Following are who they are/were.

CIVIL WAR



Benjamin Levy

Private, U.S. Army

1845-1921

Place of Birth: New York, New York

Date of Death: July 20, 1921

Battle or Place of Action: Glendale, Virginia

Date of Action: June 30, 1862

Citation: "This soldier, a drummer boy, took the gun of a sick comrade, went into the fight, and when the color bearers were

shot down, carried the colors and saved them from capture."



David Urbansky

Private, U.S. Army

1843-1897

Place of Birth: Lautenberg, Prussia

Battle or Place of Action: Shiloh, Tennessee and Vicksburg, Mississippi

Date of Action: 1862 & 1863

Citation: "Gallantry in action."



Abraham Cohn

Sergeant Major, U.S. Army

1832-1897

Place of Birth: Guttentag, Silesia, Prussia

Battle or Place of Action: Wilderness Campaign & at the mine, Petersburg, Virginia

Date of Action: May 6 & July 30, 1864

Citation: "During Battle of the Wilderness rallied and formed, under heavy fire, disorganized and fleeing troops of different

regiments. At Petersburg, Va., 30 July 1864, bravely and coolly carried orders to the advanced line under severe fire."



Leopold Karpeles

Sergeant, U.S. Army

1838-1909

Place of Birth: Prague, Austria-Hungary

Battle or Place of Action: Wilderness Campaign, Virginia

Date of Action: May 6, 1864

Citation: "While color bearer, rallied the retreating troops and induced them to check the enemy's advance."

INDIAN WARS



Simon Suhler

Name used during service: Charles Gardner

Private, U.S. Army

1844-1895

Place of Birth: Bavaria, Germany

Battle or Place of Action: Arizona

Date of Action: August – October 1868

Citation: "Bravery in scouts and actions against Indians."

HAITI



Simon Margulies

Name used during service: Samuel Gross

Private, U.S. Marine Corps

1891-1934

Place of Birth: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Battle or Place of Action: Fort Riviere, Haiti

Date of Action: November 17, 1915

Citation: "... Gross participated in the attack on Fort Riviere, Haiti. Following a concentrated drive, several different detachments of Marines gradually closed in on the old French bastion fort in an effort to cut off all avenues of retreat for the Caco Bandits. Approaching a breach in the wall, which was the only entrance to the fort, Gross was the second man to pass through the breach in face of constant fire from the Caco Bandits and, thereafter, for a ten-minute period, engaged the enemy in desperate hand-to-hand combat until the bastion was captured and the Caco resistance neutralized."

WORLD WAR I



William Sawelson

Sergeant, U.S. Army

1895-1918

Place of Birth: Newark, New Jersey

Battle or Place of Action: at Grand-Pre, France

Date of Action: Oct. 26, 1918

Citation: "Hearing a wounded man in a shell hole some distance away calling for water, Sgt. Sawelson, upon his own initiative, left shelter and crawled through heavy machine gun fire to where the man lay, giving him what water he had in his

canteen. He then went back to his own shell hole, obtained more water, and was returning to the wounded man when he was killed by a machine gun bullet."



Sydney Gumpertz

First Sergeant, U.S. Army

1879-1971

Place of Birth: San Raphael, California

Battle or Place of Action: in the Bois-de-Forges, France

Date of Action: Sept. 29, 1918

Citation: "When the advancing line was held up by machine gun fire, 1st Sgt. Gumpertz left the platoon of which he was in command and started with 2 other soldiers through a heavy barrage toward the machine gun nest. His 2 companions soon became casualties from bursting shells, but 1st Sgt. Gumpertz

continued on alone in the face of direct fire from the machine gun, jumped into the nest and silenced the gun, capturing 9 of the crew."



William Shemin

Sergeant, U.S. Army

1899-1973

Place of Birth: New York, New York

Battle or Place of Action: Vesle River, South East of Bazoches, France

Date of Action: August 7-9, 1918

Sergeant William Shemin was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, in June of 2015.

Citation: "Sergeant Shemin distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a Rifleman with G Company, 2d Battalion, 47th Infantry Regiment, 4th Division, American Expeditionary Forces.... Sergeant Shemin left cover and crossed open space, repeatedly exposing himself to heavy machine gun and rifle fire, to rescue wounded. After Officers and Senior Noncommissioned Officers had become casualties, Sergeant Shemin took command of the platoon and displayed great initiative under fire until wounded on August 9."



Benjamin Kaufman

First Sergeant, U.S. Army

1894-1981

Place of Birth: Buffalo, New York

Battle or Place of Action: in Argonne Forest, France

Date of Action: Oct. 4, 1918

Citation: "He took out a patrol for the purpose of attacking an enemy machine gun which had checked the advance of his company. Before reaching the gun he became separated from his patrol and a machine gun bullet shattered his right arm.

Without hesitation he advanced on the gun alone, throwing grenades with his left hand and charging with an empty pistol, taking one prisoner and scattering the crew, bringing the gun and prisoner back to the first-aid station."

WORLD WAR II



Raymond Zussman

Second Lieutenant, U.S. Army

1917-1944

Place of Birth: Hamtramck, Michigan

Battle or Place of Action: Noroy le Bourg, France

Date of Action: Sept. 12, 1944

Citation: "...2d Lt. Zussman was in command of 2 tanks operating with an infantry company in the attack on enemy forces ... his command tank bogged down. Throughout the ensuing action, armed only with a carbine, he reconnoitered

alone on foot far in advance of his remaining tank and the infantry. Returning only from time to time to designate targets, he directed the action of the tank and turned over to the infantry the numerous German soldiers he had caused to surrender. He located a roadblock and directed his tanks to destroy it. Fully exposed to fire from enemy positions only 50 yards distant, he stood by his tank directing its fire. Three Germans were killed and 8 surrendered. Again he walked before his tank, leading it against an enemy-held group of houses, machine gun and small arms fire kicking up dust at his feet. The tank fire broke the resistance and 20 enemy surrendered. Going forward again alone he passed an enemy-occupied house from which Germans fired on him and threw grenades in his path. After a brief fire fight, he signaled his tank to come up and fire on the house. Eleven German soldiers were killed and 15 surrendered. Under 2d Lt. Zussman's heroic and inspiring leadership, 18 enemy soldiers were killed and 92 captured."



Isadore Jachman

Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army

1922-1945

Place of Birth: Berlin, Germany

Battle or Place of Action: Flamierge, Belgium

Date of Action: Jan. 4, 1945

Citation: "... when his company was pinned down by enemy artillery, mortar, and small arms fire, 2 hostile tanks attacked the unit, inflicting heavy casualties. S/Sgt. Jachman, seeing the desperate plight of his comrades, left his place of cover and

with total disregard for his own safety dashed across open ground through a hail of fire and seizing a bazooka from a fallen comrade advanced on the tanks, which concentrated their fire on him. Firing the weapon alone, he damaged one and forced both to retire. S/Sgt. Jachman's heroic action, in which he suffered fatal wounds, disrupted the entire enemy attack, reflecting the highest credit upon himself and the parachute infantry."



Benjamin Salomon

Captain, U.S. Army

1914-1944

Place of Birth: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Battle or Place of Action: The island of Saipan, near the village of Tanapag

Date of Action: July 7, 1944

Captain Ben L. Salomon was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, in May of 2002.

The Citation: "[Captain Ben L. Salomon's] Regiments were attacked by an overwhelming force estimated between 3,000 and

5,000 Japanese soldiers. the enemy soon penetrated the Battalions' combined perimeter and inflicted overwhelming casualties. In the first minutes of the attack, approximately 30 wounded soldiers walked, crawled, or were carried into Captain Salomon's aid station, and the small tent soon filled with wounded men. ... He then saw a Japanese soldier bayoneting one of the wounded soldiers lying near the tent. Firing from a squatting position, Captain Salomon

quickly killed the enemy soldier. Then, as he turned his attention back to the wounded, two more Japanese soldiers appeared in the front entrance of the tent. As these enemy soldiers were killed, four more crawled under the tent walls. Rushing them, Captain Salomon kicked the knife out of the hand of one, shot another, and bayoneted a third. Captain Salomon butted the fourth enemy soldier in the stomach ... Captain Salomon ordered the wounded to make their way as best they could back to the regimental aid station, while he attempted to hold off the enemy until they were clear. Captain Salomon then grabbed a rifle from one of the wounded and rushed out of the tent. After four men were killed while manning a machine gun, Captain Salomon took control of it. When his body was later found, 98 dead enemy soldiers were piled in front of his position.”

KOREAN WAR



Tibor Rubin

Corporal, U.S. Army, Company I, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division

1929 - 2015

Place of Birth: Hungary

Battle or Place of Action: Republic of Korea

Date of Action: July 23, 1950 to April 20, 1953

Citation: "...On October 30, 1950, Chinese forces attacked his unit at Unsan, North Korea, during a massive nighttime assault. That night and throughout the next day, he manned a .30 caliber

machine gun at the south end of the unit's line after three previous gunners became casualties. He continued to man his machine gun until his ammunition was exhausted. His determined stand slowed the pace of the enemy advance in his sector, permitting the remnants of his unit to retreat southward. As the battle raged, Corporal Rubin was severely wounded and captured by the Chinese. Choosing to remain in the prison camp despite offers from the Chinese to return him to his native Hungary, Corporal Rubin disregarded his own personal safety and immediately began sneaking out of the camp at night in search of food for his comrades. Breaking into enemy food storehouses and gardens, he risked certain torture or death if caught. Corporal

Rubin provided not only food to the starving soldiers, but also desperately needed medical care and moral support for the sick and wounded of the POW camp.”



Leonard M. Kravitz

Private First Class, U.S. Army

1931 - 1951

Place of Birth: Brooklyn, New York

Battle or Place of Action: Republic of Korea

Date of Action: March 6, 1951 to March 7, 1951

Citation: "...the enemy launched a fanatical banzai charge with heavy supporting fire and, despite staggering losses, pressed

the assault with ruthless determination. When the machine gunner was wounded in the initial phase of the action, Private First Class Kravitz immediately seized the weapon and poured devastating fire into the ranks of the onrushing assailants. The enemy effected and exploited a breach on the left flank, rendering the friendly positions untenable. Upon order to withdraw, Private First Class Kravitz voluntarily remained to provide protective fire for the retiring elements. Detecting enemy troops moving toward friendly positions, Private First Class Kravitz swept the hostile soldiers with deadly, accurate fire, killing the entire group. His destructive retaliation caused the enemy to concentrate vicious fire on his position and enabled the friendly elements to withdraw. Later, after friendly troops had returned, Private First Class Kravitz was found dead behind the gun he had so heroically manned, surrounded by numerous enemy dead.”

VIETNAM WAR



John Lee Levitow

Sergeant (at time of action: Airman First Class), U.S. Air Force
1945-2000

Place of Birth: Hartford, Connecticut

Battle or Place of Action: Over Long Binh Army Post, Republic
of Vietnam

Date of Action: February 24, 1969

Citation: "... Sgt. Levitow's aircraft was struck by a hostile
mortar round. ... Sgt. Levitow, though stunned by the
concussion of the blast and suffering from over 40 fragment

wounds in the back and legs, staggered to his feet and turned to assist the man nearest to him who had been knocked down and was bleeding heavily. As he was moving his wounded comrade forward and away from the opened cargo compartment door, he saw the smoking flare ahead of him in the aisle. Realizing the danger involved and completely disregarding his own wounds, Sgt. Levitow started toward the burning flare. ... Sgt. Levitow struggled forward despite the loss of blood from his many wounds and the partial loss of feeling in his right leg. Unable to grasp the rolling flare with his hands, he threw himself bodily upon the burning flare. Hugging the deadly device to his body, he dragged himself back to the rear of the aircraft and hurled the flare through the open cargo door. At that instant the flare separated and ignited in the air, but clear of the aircraft. Sgt. Levitow, by his selfless and heroic actions, saved the aircraft and its entire crew from certain death and destruction."



Jack Jacobs

Captain (at the time of action: First Lieutenant), U.S. Army

Born: August 2, 1945

Place of Birth: Brooklyn, New York

Battle or Place of Action: Kien Phong Province, Republic of Vietnam

Date of Action: March 9, 1968

Citation: "... The 2d Battalion was advancing to contact when it came under intense heavy machine gun and mortar fire from a Viet Cong battalion positioned in well-fortified bunkers. As the 2d Battalion deployed into attack formation its advance was

halted by devastating fire. Capt. Jacobs... called for and directed air strikes on the enemy positions to facilitate a renewed attack. ... Although wounded by mortar fragments, Capt. Jacobs assumed command of the allied company, ordered a withdrawal from the exposed position and established a defensive perimeter. Despite profuse bleeding from head wounds, Capt. Jacobs, with complete disregard for his safety, returned under intense fire to evacuate a seriously wounded advisor to the safety of a wooded area where he administered lifesaving first aid. He then returned through heavy automatic weapons fire to evacuate the wounded company commander. ...On 3 separate occasions, Capt. Jacobs contacted and drove off Viet Cong squads who were searching for allied wounded and weapons, single-handedly killing 3 and wounding several others. His gallant actions and extraordinary heroism saved the lives of 1 U.S. advisor and 13 allied soldiers."

Of the 17 listed, Jack Jacobs is the only living recipient – he is 74. May the others be with God and have eternal rest. May we never forget the sacrifices and bravery of all these great heroes.