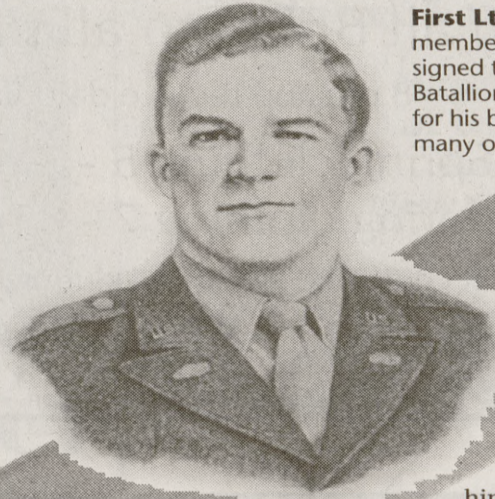


A salute to gallantry

Seven Aggies have earned the Congressional Medal of Honor. Memories of their valor live upon the walls of the MSC.

Story by Aaron Meier
Artwork by Dave House



First Lt. Turney W. Leonard was a member of the Class of '42. He was assigned to the 893rd Tank Destroyer Battalion and received a Medal of Honor for his bravery in Komerscheid, Germany on Nov. 4, 5 and 6, 1944.

First Lt. Eli L. Whiteley, Class of '41, received the Medal of Honor for his bravery in an Allied assault on a French town. Leading his platoon through the war-torn streets of Sigolsheim, France, Whiteley was injured twice during the battle.

The first injury rendered one arm useless, and the second blinded him in one eye. Battling these injuries and enemy gunfire, Whiteley forced the surrender of German soldiers stationed in the town.

"By his disregard for personal safety, aggressiveness while suffering from severe wounds, determined leadership, and superb courage, Lieutenant Whiteley killed nine Germans, captured 23 more and spearheaded an attack which cracked the core of enemy resistance in a vital area," his medal citation reads.

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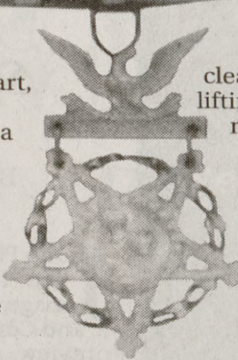
"I'd rather have this medal than be president."

Former President Harry Truman

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life, above and beyond the call of duty ... These lines precede the citation for the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest military award for bravery that can be given to a United States serviceman. Since its official inception in 1917, over 3,400 individuals have been awarded the medal. Of those, 1,000 have been former students of Texas A&M. Spanning the class of '37 to '43, all were veterans of World War II. The Medal of Honor was first awarded in the Civil War and did not have the prestige it has today. According to the National Medal of Honor Museum of Military History in Chattanooga, Tenn., the medal was used as an incentive to keep men enlisted during the Civil War. The commander of the 27th Maine Infantry promised the Medal of Honor to all men who elected to extend their tour of duty. Of the 864 men, 309 volunteered to remain, but poor record-keeping forced the army to give all 864 men the medal. In recent years, the Medal of

Honor has made the most loyal American soldiers yearn to wear the pale blue silk ribbon around their necks. Even President Harry Truman once said, "I'd rather have this medal than be president." Second Lt. Thomas W. Fowler, Class of '43, was one of seven Aggie Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. Born in Wichita Falls, Texas, Fowler received a degree in agriculture from A&M College. Lt. Porter L. Oakes, Fowler's brother-in-law, said in a 1944 article for the Wichita Falls Record News, "Thomas was a 'boy's boy' and grew up to be a 'man's man.'" Immediately after graduation in May 1943, the young man reported for military duty and was sent to offi-

cer candidate school at Fort Knox. The same month, Fowler married his high-school sweetheart, Anne Oakes. On May 23, 1944, in a battle near Carano, Italy, Fowler came upon two nearly-defeated Allied infantry units. Although Fowler was a tank officer, he rallied and organized the two units, who were trapped in a mine field.



"He then made a personal reconnaissance through the mine field, clearing a path as he went by lifting the anti-personnel mines out of the ground with his hands," his medal citation reads. Risking his own life, Fowler returned to the crippled units and led them through the mine field, one squad at a time. Further imperiling

mission objective and saved the lives of his men. Fowler survived the assault at Carano and was promoted to head of the 191st Tank Battalion. However, just 10 days later, Fowler was killed by an enemy sniper bullet. Fowler was posthumously awarded the medal on Nov. 11, 1944, to the pride and sorrow of his family, including his young wife and infant son, who Fowler had never seen.

Life more precious since brother's car accident

Some people are risk takers. Some people aren't — and some people don't have a choice. Every time people walk out of their houses, they put their lives in danger. People jump into cars every day to grab a bite to eat or to run an errand and never think twice about it. I felt the same way until something happened to me that severely altered my outlook on life. Sometimes we don't realize how precious life is until reality slaps us in the face. About a month ago, my brother was on a business trip in Tennessee and went furniture shopping in North Carolina. In an

Columnist



Melissa Price
Senior journalism major

instant, my brother's life changed forever, as did mine. I can play back my mother's words in my head as if I had used a tape recorder. "Now, Missy, he's OK, but —" my mom's voice was trembling as I had never heard it do before, and I immediately knew something was wrong. Oh, my God. A thousand horrible thoughts raced through my mind: My dad was robbed at gunpoint; my sweet old dog was near death. But no, it was worse. My oldest brother had been in a car accident — a bad one. He was involved in a head-on collision

in which the other driver died. It took only one brief moment, but the effects will last a lifetime. As I was driving to class the next day, a wreck occurred right behind me. As if the screeching tires weren't enough to send me into cardiac arrest, in my rearview mirror I saw the glass shatter and the car crumple with the ease it takes a person to crumple a piece of paper — all in slow motion. Humans take life for granted. Students expect their parents to be there for them when they need extra cash or, worse yet, need to be bailed out of jail. Sometimes they don't return phone calls right away because they figure they can just call the person back the next day. But what if to-

morrow never comes? This is a nation obsessed with getting things done fast. Fast-food restaurants were not established because the selection in the grocery store was not up to par. There have been countless times I have arrived somewhere with no recollection of how I got there. This has probably happened to most people. Even though it is easy to get caught up in the hassles of daily life, it is important that we remember to stop and look around every once in awhile. Although activities such as bungee jumping and skydiving are considered by some to be high-risk, some of the seemingly thoughtless routines we fall into have the potential to be far more damaging. It is not uncommon to see a

woman driving, putting on her makeup and changing the radio station at the same time. Although it is true that life in itself is dangerous, one cannot be expected to stay inside his or her home for fear of dying. People die every day. Everyone has read stories about people who wish they had been given a chance to say goodbye to a loved one. Do not be one of those people who regrets never saying "I love you" or "You make a difference in my life" to someone you care about. Most of us lead such busy lives that all too often we forget to appreciate life and the people we love the most. My brother is one of my favorite people in the world, yet I doubt he knew that — until now.

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